

**ETHNIC ART AND RITUAL IN THE
NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY**

**The social role of bark-cloth in
Vatulele Island, Fiji**

by

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DECLARATION

This Thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University of Tasmania or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the Thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the Thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Roderick H. Ewins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roderick" being the most prominent part.

Roderick H. Ewins

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ABSTRACT

Bark-cloth is the traditional art of the women of Vatulele. Though many Fijian artforms have declined or disappeared, Vatulele's production of bark-cloth has increased steadily for over forty years. Its commercialisation as a tourist souvenir has been widely credited for this, but it is shown here that while this did initially stimulate production, today it accounts for a relatively small proportion of output, most remaining within the indigenous domain. A survey of the literature on tourism fails to produce credible explanations for why this is occurring, and this thesis seeks answers in the continuing indigenous social role of bark-cloth.

First at a theoretical level, and then in relation to Fiji and Vatulele, the social role of art is argued both semiotically and historically to relate to intentionally embedded and inscribed meaning. Today, bark-cloth's greatest importance is as ritual art — as symbolic paraphernalia, vestments, and as an official valuable in the inter-group goods presentations fundamental to Fijian ritual. Ritual is therefore also examined both theoretically and from empirical Vatulele data. It is shown to also be increasing, both in Vatulele and the wider Fijian community, and much of the increased bark-cloth production is to supply this ritual. However, it is argued that the underlying demand relates to the role both art and ritual play in constructing, maintaining, and negotiating changes in social identity.

Social identity is defined here in terms of the constantly evolving inter-relationship of the group's history, collective bonds, solidarity, and norms. In small, face-to-face societies, these structures are clearly defined, yet susceptible to rapid change and erosion. The evolution of Vatulelean identity is explored, and the impact of the external forces of colonialism, capitalism, tourism and the communications explosion are analysed. In mobilising their traditional mechanisms such as art and ritual, Fijians are argued to be attempting to maintain steerage of their identity, community solidarity, and social norms in times of increasingly rapid change.

It is shown that, in addition to exchanging it ritually, Vatuleleans had long traded their bark-cloth as a commodity. This positioned them well to capitalise on the emergent tourist market, and subsequently the burgeoning indigenous market, resulting in considerable prosperity. But on the case made here, the demand is less a cultural revitalisation than an attempt to mitigate increasing social and cultural stress. That may be a dubious foundation for longterm security.

Spelling and pronunciation

Written Fijian has a number of peculiarities of spelling and pronunciation which are confusing to unfamiliar readers. These are clarified as the first Note in Appendix 1, and it may save confusion if it is referred to before proceeding to the main text.

Indigenous words in the text

Following normal anthropological practice, when a Fijian or Vatullean concept is first introduced in the text, the appropriate indigenous term is provided. To assist non-Fijian speaking readers, English terms are generally used subsequently. However, some frequently-used concepts are more specifically and succinctly rendered in the indigenous language, so are used consistently in the text. Standard Fijian is used where the discussion is general, Vatullean where it is specific to Vatullee. Thus *masi* is used generally for bark-cloth, though *mahi* is used when quoting Vatullean informants or referring to specialist types particular to the island. Where the discussion is predominantly about Vatullee, the Vatullean term is used. The Glossary (Appendix 1) provides both Vatullean and Standard Fijian forms.

Abbreviations used in the text

Cession	Cession of Fiji to Great Britain, 10 October 1874
Coup	Military Coup, 14 May 1987
Independence	Autonomy from British rule, 10 October 1970
post-War	post-World War 2
FLC	Fiji Labour Corps (during World War 2)
KBHotel	Korolevu Beach Hotel
NLC	Native Lands Commission
NLTB	Native Lands Trust Board
NLTO	Native Lands Trust Ordinance
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Forces
(SF ...)	Standard Fijian form of words
VIResort	Vatullee Island Resort
(VL ...)	Vatullean form of words
WW2	World War 2

Symbols and Equivalences

F\$	Fijian Dollar, during the period of fieldwork roughly equivalent to the Australian dollar, about 0.65 US dollars at the time of writing
ft <u>or</u> '	foot (approximately. 30 cm)
fathom, <i>katu</i>	six feet (approximately 1.8m) or an outstretched-arm span, very common in Fijian measurement and historical accounts

Conventions used in the thesis

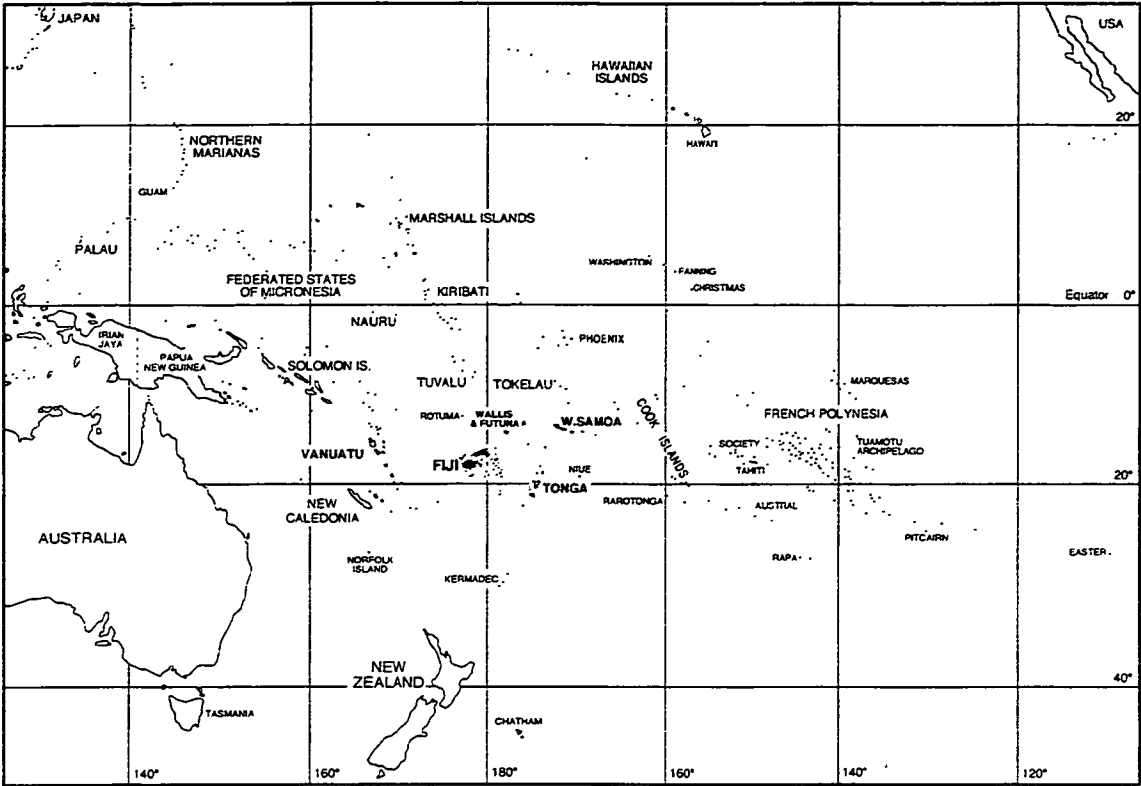
Fijian(s): Throughout this thesis, whenever the words 'Fijian' or 'Fijians' are used as either adjective or nouns they should be understood to refer to things and people indigenous to Fiji. In referring to the country or nation, Fiji is used as both noun and adjective.

Vatulelean(s): This personal neologism is shorthand for the cumbersome 'people of Vatulele,' who do not refer to themselves in either way, but as 'Kwai Vahilele.'

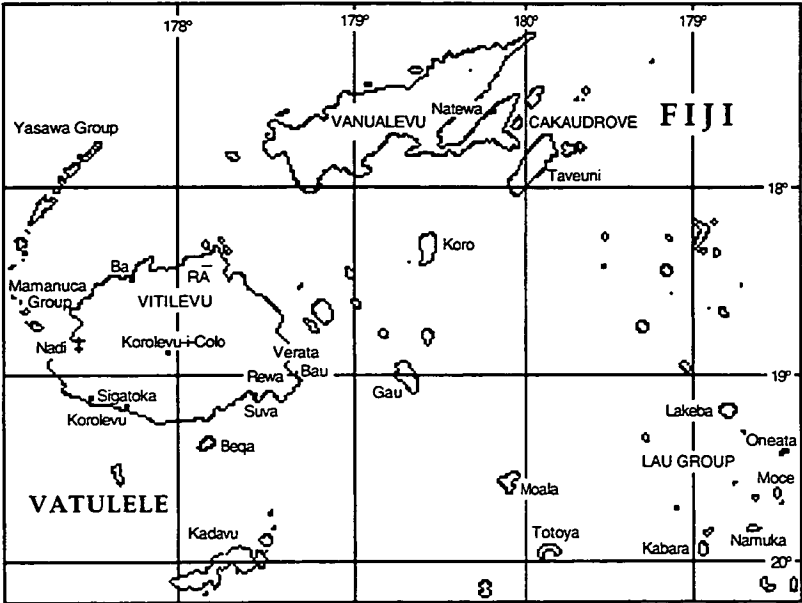
'Others': People or cultural elements of other ethnic groups resident in Fiji are normally referred to merely in terms of ethnic origin and persistent ethnic and cultural identity (Chinese, European, and Indian). Terms such as Indo-Fijian, or Sino-Fijian, Euro-Fijian are not used, to avoid any implications of either ethnic mix or political agenda. The term 'British' refers to the colonising power and its agents and policies. 'European' = Caucasian in local understanding, and is not a geo-political descriptor.

West, Western: Used as blanket terms to refer to the technologically-advanced Euramerican powers and/or globalising influences which have affected Fiji.

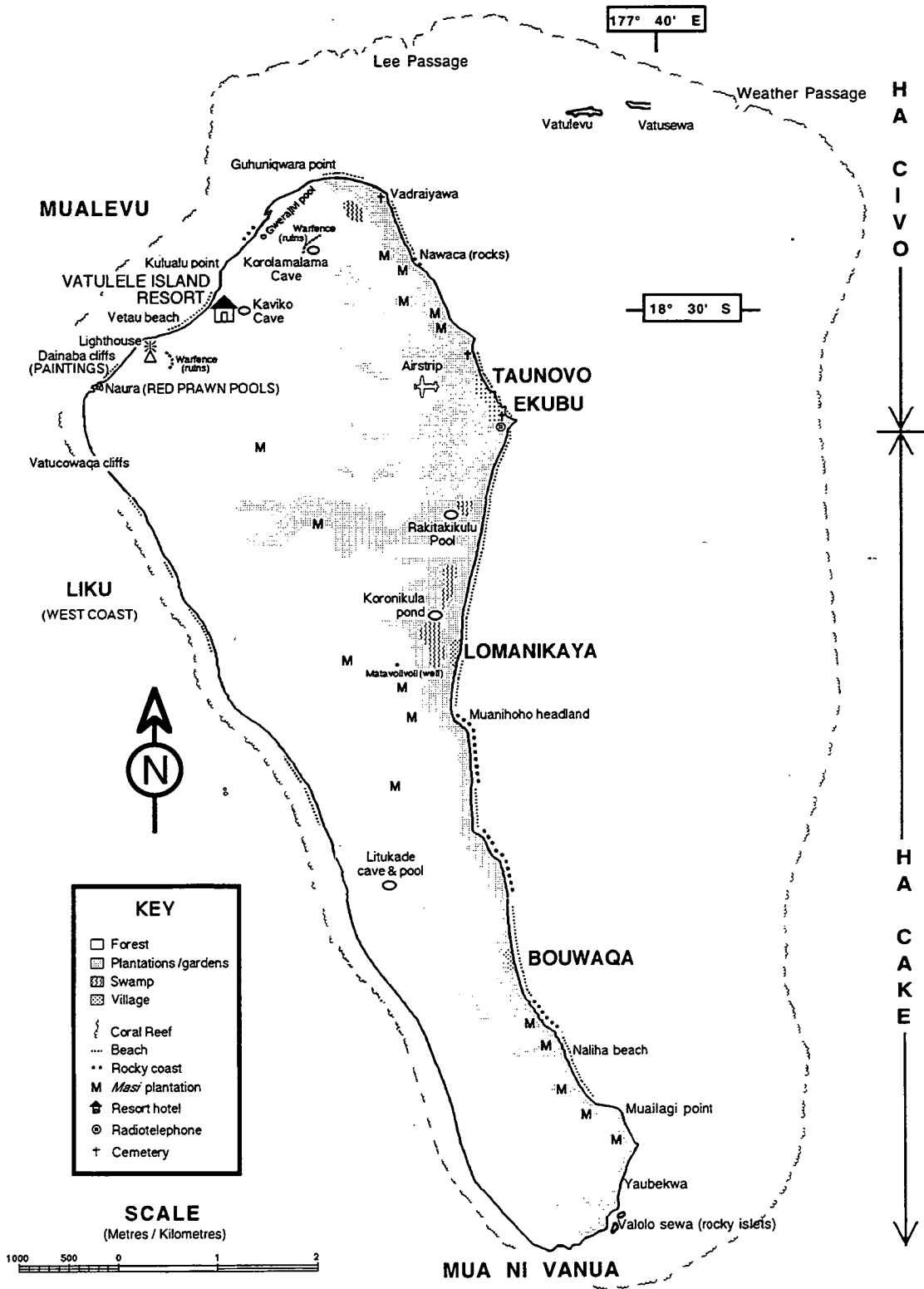
Map 1. The Pacific



Map 2. Fiji Group



Map 3. Vatulele Island



PREFACE

This thesis has arisen as the logical extension not of an undergraduate course of study, but of my own origins, lifelong interests, and an extended research project. I was born in Ba, Fiji in 1940, the fourth generation of my family to live in Fiji. During my first seven years I spent part of every day in a Fijian fishing settlement near our house. When I was six my assigned 'uncle' gave me my first art lesson: making a pronged fishing-spear. I also learned when and where to stand and sit in a Fijian house, when to speak and when not to, where I could run and shout and where it was *tabu*. At home I spoke Hindustani to the Indian cook, and often visited the homes of Indian tenant sugarcane-farmers with my father. I moved between languages and cultures seamlessly.

Going to school in Suva changed the detail but not the essence. Europeans in Fiji in those years enjoyed a life of social (though not always economic) privilege, which as a child I exploited unthinkingly. But I was also, like all colonials of the time, a product of 'reverse acculturation,' shaped by the colonised cultures. Over forty years have passed since I left, but I have always thought of myself as a *gone ni Viti*, a 'child of Fiji,' and have returned there frequently.

My career has been as an artist, tertiary educator and administrator. At a conference in Adelaide in 1977 I met some ethnic Fijian schoolteachers who urged me to come and document the 'declining' traditional arts and crafts in Fiji. To my response that they should do this themselves, they said they lacked the confidence. After much thought, I decided to do what I could, and embarked on my first field-trip in 1980, during which I also first visited Vatulele, the island which is the focus of this thesis. In retrospect, I had the familiar rather naive 'salvage' agenda (see Marcus & Fischer 1986: 24; Foster 1987: 121-50), but rapidly developed more realistic and less paternalistic goals, resulting from concurrently gaining a greater understanding both of the people with whom I worked, and of myself.

Lévi-Strauss (1972: 62) wrote: 'Anthropology affords me an intellectual satisfaction: it rejoins at one extreme the history of the world and at the other the history of myself, and it unveils the shared motivation of one and the other at the same moment.' I came to understand this. My fieldwork reaffirmed aspects of my own identity which I thought had been lost through emigration, submerged under the layers of self-reconstruction required by living in different countries: Australia, Great Britain, and the USA. But I came to recognise the *gone ni Viti* in all of these

identities, and for the first time in many years, to 'ground' myself. Perhaps it was this self-awareness that brought me to realise that what I was seeing in the bark-cloth manufacture and ritual life of Vatulele came from the same need to reassert valued aspects of identity which are felt to be lost or threatened, and to integrate these into new composite identities. This thesis is a product of that perception.

Acknowledgments:

I wish to thank those who have helped in this long saga. First and above all my wife Beverley, who has shared all of the vicissitudes with me, and without whose unfailing encouragement and support this research would never have been done or this thesis written, and next my sons Rory and Grahame whose interest and support has also been invaluable. Rory's graduate studies in Fiji politics, and subsequent publications, have made him a uniquely well-informed sounding-board and discussion partner. I also thank my colleagues in the Tasmanian School of Art, particularly my friend Professor Geoff Parr, who could embrace the spirit of cross-disciplinary synergy well enough to see value in my conducting ethnographic research in conjunction with my art practice, teaching and administration.

In Fiji, my first professional contact and subsequent close friend, Latileta Kiti Makasiale, has helped me in her various capacities as manager of the Government Handicraft Store, then Secretary of the Fiji Arts Council, and now executive in the Ministry of Women and Culture. She introduced me to the late Sir Josua Rabukawaqa, musician and chronicler of Fijian oral history, who in turn introduced me to Rātū Sir Penaia Ganilau,¹ then Permanent Secretary of Fijian Affairs, later Governor-General and finally inaugural President of the new Republic until his death. He smoothed my path and provided me with the most distinguished entrée to Fijian society one could wish for. Rātū Kinijioji Vosailagi, Rokotui Nadrogā-Navosā, provided the imprimatur for my initial visit, and assigned Mataika Tuicakau of Totoya, at that time Assistant Roko, to introduce me to the island and people of Vatulele. My friend and colleague Fergus Clunie, the Director of the Fiji Museum (who by his remarkable knowledge and unflagging industry lifted the

¹ Rātū is a Fijian honorific title which also occurs in some other Austronesian-based languages (e.g. Sumatra - see Sakai 1997: 48). It denotes high hereditary status, somewhat resembling the British title 'Sir,' but it cannot be earned or acquired. The female equivalent title is 'Adi' in many parts of Fiji, but in Vatulele and some other places the term is 'Bulou.' In the case where Fijians have acquired titles (such as British knighthoods) they choose to privilege their hereditary title in the order of use, since it more clearly signifies their status in Fijian society. Thus we see Rātū Sir Kamisese Mara, or Adi Lady Lala Mara. Such a title clearly 'outranks' a knighthood alone, such as that of the late Sir Josua Rabukawaqa, a man of great musical and academic distinction, but forever a commoner in his assigned status.

Museum to the highest level of its achievement), provided for me the sort of help, support and insight for which he was so esteemed among Fiji researchers during his decade of stewardship until the Coup.

In Vatulele, I owe thanks to too many people to list them all, but some must be singled out: First, the late Rātū Jioji Toge, the much-loved and respected paramount chief of Vatulele, who first welcomed me to his island and secured my ongoing place in the chiefly village of Ekubu. His sister Bulou Iva Domonatani, equally loved by the people, and highest-ranking woman on the island, has been a fountain of information, and his son Rātū Apenisa Racava has been both supportive and helpful since his accession to the paramountcy. The leaders and people of other villages have also been generous with time and information: the Takala-i-Ekubu, Amori Nasautorocake and people of Taunovo; the Tui Namō Rātū Semi Boseiwaqa and people of Lomanikaya; and Rātū Meli Livailagi and people of Bouwaqa.

But my most special thanks must go to my Vatulele family, who have unselfishly shared with me their home, their lives and their seemingly inexhaustible knowledge of the island and people: second son of Rātū Jioji, Rātū Mitieli ('Tumiti') Narukutabua, his wife Lavenia Lave and latterly their children Bulou Mereula and Rātū Meli. Through them I thank also the extended family and Nalimolevu clan who have made me so welcome. The ethics guidelines of this university stipulates the anonymity of informants, who are therefore listed as 'Informant A' etc. While an important safeguard, this unfortunately also hides their active involvement in, and commitment to, this project. Many became respected artistic colleagues, and all became valued friends who generously shared their lives and philosophy with me. It became also their project, from their wish to convey something about their identity, values, and life-strategies to the wider world. I hope this thesis is able to convey a sense of our shared experiences, and do justice to their view of their art, its place in their lives, their indomitable spirit and enquiring minds.

Finally, I also wish to acknowledge the friendly hospitality and informativeness, on recent visits to Vatulele, of Martin Livingstone, co-proprietor of the Vatulele Island Resort Hotel.

During my candidacy for this degree, I have been indebted to a number of faculty members in the School of Sociology and Social Work: Professor (now Emeritus) Rod Crook, for having enough faith in my capacity to accept my candidature despite my unorthodox background, and my wish to incorporate a great deal of Art Theory and Anthropology into a Sociology PhD; Professor Jan Pakulski for conducting such stimulating graduate seminars over three years and provoking a number of ideas that are found in this thesis; Professor Malcolm Waters, Dr Peter

Gunn, Associate Professor Gary Easthope and Dr Roberta Julian for their collegial support; Dr Nerida Cook, for providing useful comment and suggestions early in the piece; and my fellow candidates for their friendly interest and stimulating ideas. Finally I thank Dr Adrian Franklin, for agreeing to supervise my difficult cross-disciplinary fusion, walking me through the difficult early stages and giving amiable support in the latter stages, and showing forbearance in the face of my periods of 'PhD black despair' through the long process. May the trout of your dreams be forever only one cast away, Adrian!

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the traditional bark-cloth of Vatulele, a small island in the Republic of Fiji in the Southwest Pacific. At a specific level, the thesis examines a number of issues related to bark-cloth's function within the society of Vatulele island and the wider Fijian community. At a more general level, it argues that indigenous art performs crucial adaptive functions. Art has traditionally been located at the centre of social life, particularly in the ceremonial life through which many societies have constructed, maintained, and negotiated changes in their social identities.

Identity is about belonging. It is a shared self-definition, reflecting the group's history, collective bonds, solidarity, and norms. These elements are, in small community-like societies such as Vatulele's, both clear and fragile. Clear because of the high density of interpersonal social relations, fragile because of the rapidity with which social change can occur within such small groups. Such change — generated both by external agencies such as colonialism and by the internal dynamics of social transformation — causes social stress which prompts rapid and constant re-definitions of identity.

It is argued here that for Vatuleleans bark-cloth, their traditional art product, has always been an important tool in this process of coping with change. This role will be shown to be more critical to the sustained vigour of Vatulele's bark-cloth production, than is the tourism-based commercialisation which is commonly presumed to explain it. While less visible to non-Fijians, this indigenous role has not diminished, but in fact become increasingly important as the society perceives its identity to be under threat from both ethnic competition and globalising forces. This, it is proposed, explains the high level of use on the island, while the decreasing availability to other Fijians of alternative artforms explains the growth of a large indigenous market for bark-cloth, operating alongside the tourist market.

What is analysed here is the product, bark-cloth, its importance as sign, the processes of production, distribution, and utilisation in which it is implicated. Its principal social role is as ritual art, both as the accoutrements of ritual and as a key item of exchange. The capacity of art to mediate identity is argued to operate through its intentional, assigned, meaning, which is carried by its sign-functions. When powerful enough, these can be generalised into myths — in the case of bark-cloth, embodiments of identity — which are most powerfully mobilised through

ritual. Ritual also has capacities for sustaining and reconstructing social identity. It has a conservative capacity to sustain the histories and traditional values of society, but it also has capacities for negotiating ongoing relationships with 'Others,' defining commonalities and differences, defining power relationships within the group and between groups, and providing mechanisms for transgressing the boundaries. By its incorporation into ritual, bark-cloth shares in all of these social functions.

Masi

Fijian bark-cloth is a textile made by women from the beaten inner-bark (bast) of the paper-mulberry plant (*Broussonetia papyrifera*).¹ It is called *tapa* by most Westerners, *masi* in Standard Fijian, and *mahi* in the language of Vatulele, and it was the traditional specialist artform of the island.² Apart from its previously-universal functional utility as cloth and clothing (long supplanted by Western cloth except in the case of ritual dress), *masi* has occupied an important place in Fijian society as an 'official valuable' produced by certain designated areas/groups of people, including Vatulele/Vatuleleans. It has always been a carrier of arguably the most diverse range of meanings of any Fijian artifact, relating to cosmology and religion, group-identification, gender relationships, assigned status, and wealth. It has been a principal item of ritual exchange as well as a commodity in non-ritual trade between groups. Their own use of it, in particular in ritual, and the trading of it with other Fijians, continues today.

As a tiny island 13 kilometres long and varying from under 2 to about 5 kilometres wide, Vatulele's small size, distance from markets, lack of a water supply, rocky terrain, and limited other natural resources have impeded numerous money-making ventures attempted over the past century. Therefore, when a demand for souvenirs emerged as a result of the rapid development of tourism in Fiji in the 1950s, particularly along the so-called 'Coral Coast' of Vitilevu 32 kilometres due north of Vatulele, the islanders quickly capitalised on their existing speciality, becoming the first and still one of Fiji's two main producers of tourist-directed bark-cloth.

Today, every facet of life on the island is mediated by the manufacture, use, and sale of bark-cloth. However, the tourism industry has proven fickle, and Fiji's

¹ For a brief description of the method of manufacture, different types and uses of cloth, see Appendix 4.

² Except in reference to tourist-*tapa*, the word *tapa* is not used here. For a discussion of this selectivity, see Ewins (1982: 5) and Thomas (1995: 131).



Plate 1. The implication of *masi* in configuring identity. Lomanikaya 1993

This is a photograph of a *vacadra*, a ritual process in which absentee parents present their children to their clans, to substantiate their identity, entitlements and obligations. Fijians therefore consider it a duty, not merely for the clan but also for the children. The two young people in the centre are Louisa and William Nanovo, children of Ratu (Captain) Avakuki Nanovo (right). Having retired after 25 years in the British army, all spent overseas, he and his wife (far left) brought their children, then aged 16 and 19 respectively, back to Fiji to present them to both sides. This photograph is of their formal welcome. Ratu Avakuki's father was a member of Nalimolevu clan, who married into and moved to Lomanikaya. His nobility therefore relates to both Lomanikaya and Ekubu, and to all places connected to them politically and by kinship (in old Fiji, the same thing). Thus apart from their inherent signs, all of the *masi* and mats carried further layers of symbolism relating to those connections. The family can be seen to be sitting on a *kumi*, most spiritually significant of bark-cloths, which came from Bouwaqa. Under that can be seen the woollen fringes of a *vakabati* mat, also reserved for rites of passage. It came from Vanua Balavu, an island in Northern Lau with which Vatulele has strong kinship links. Under that was a large floormat from Kadavu, traditional supplier of mats to Vatulele, due also to its strong kinship links. The second most significant cloth, a *taunamu*, formed a backdrop — it came from Ekubu, made by a woman of the paramount's immediate family. They are both dressed in Vatulele-design *masi*, William wears the red-dyed sash of a chief, his sister and parents red *masi* garlands. A sequence of interrelated rituals were performed, including drinking *yaqona* (kava), the presentation of whale-teeth (*tabua*) and ritual goods (notably *masi*), much fine oratory, and a huge feast featuring an ox and large pig.

dependence on it has been one of the external phenomena which have caused increasing economic difficulties, combining with the social and cultural stress of other internal and globalising pressures. One response to these strains has been a project of ethnic revitalisation, evidenced by an efflorescence of ritual on the island and more widely throughout Fiji, with a concomitant increase in demand for ritual bark-cloth. A significant proportion of sales is therefore to the indigenous rather than the tourist market, and it is this diversified industry that has had the flexibility to withstand fluctuations in tourist and indigenous demand.

The thesis concludes that isolation and timing have been critical in Vatulele's ability to sustain the culturally-embedded significance of its art, and to develop a successful tourist commodity. However, the problems of indigenous nationalism in a multi-ethnic country, increasing challenges to traditional norms, and the many costs associated with ritual, raise questions about how much *masi* -production and ritual can continue to grow to buffer increasing stress levels, and whether, if they become unequal to the task, either will diminish or change form radically.

Assumptions and puzzles:

It was the 'monoculture' nature of the island, reminiscent of some specialist villages in Japan, which drew me to visit Vatulele on my first fieldwork trip. I had decided to focus particularly (though not exclusively) on bark-cloth in my research for two reasons. First, my personal expertise: I am a printmaker and hand-papermaker, and bark-cloth is technically a form of paper (Ling and Ling 1963; Hunter 1978; Ewins 1987), while *masi* is the only stencil-printed bark-cloth in the Pacific (Kooijman 1972: 368). Secondly, I had accepted the assumption made in preliminary reading I had done (e.g. Arkinstall 1966; Christensen 1968; Kooijman 1972; Troxler 1977) that the motifs of *masi* figuration could be expected to carry specific references and meanings, and that cataloguing their names and forms, and relating these to other cultural traits, might provide a basis for understanding. It became clear that *masi* actually transmits meaning in far more abstract, enigmatic and subtle ways, and is far more integral to complex social mechanisms.

This thesis attempts to answer four questions that emerged very early in the fieldwork:

1. Why, among all of the traditional arts still practised, some, such as bark-cloth and mats, appeared to be thriving in a number of 'key centres,' while others, such as pots, fans, even some still-useful types of baskets, seemed to be struggling to

survive in the few places where they are still made?³

2 . Why, if tourism commercialisation had ‘saved’ bark-cloth production (as believed by many in Fiji, including Fijians, particularly officials), were Vatuleans so insistent that, despite the importance of their production of tourist-*tapa* for Vitilevu ‘handicraft’ shops, more of their bark-cloth production was destined for other Fijians? Also, what of the vigour observable for matweaving, since so few mats are ever purchased by tourists?⁴

3 . What was this traditional system of exchange called *viġā* (SF *veis ā*), through which Vatuleans explained their indigenous trade was conducted? The term *veis ā* is notably absent in the literature on Fiji and Fijian exchange.⁵

4 . Finally, what accounted for the reported increase in the indigenous market for *masi*, and was this related to the steady increase in ritual activity throughout the Fijian community, and quite marked in Vatulele, observable over the extended period of fieldwork?⁶ Makers explained that the types of *masi* most frequently commissioned are those which play an important role in rituals, particularly weddings and funerals. There thus appeared to be a clear connection between the

³ This assertion is based on fieldwork throughout the Group, observing not only *masi*-production, but also other artforms such as mat-weaving, slit-gong carving, and paddle-and-anvil pottery (Ewins 1980; 1982a; 1982b; 1986; 1987a; 1987b; 1995b; Ewins, et al. 1987). Research, but to date no publication, has also been done on basket- and fan-weaving.

⁴ It is noteworthy that one of the first publications in the mass-tourism era to focus on Pacific artifacts as commodities, McBean’s (1964) small ‘illustrated guide for buyers,’ did not make such assertions. With regard to bark-cloth, he perceptively asserted ‘in many territories it is still an integral part of the life of the people, and large quantities of *tapa*, some of superfine quality, are being produced, partly for sale to Europeans but largely for everyday use by the islanders themselves’ (1964: 3, my emphasis). It is of course possible, in light of his intended tourist readership, that he was merely trying to emphasise ‘authenticity.’ But his remark coincides with what Vatuleans say, and remains unusual in a literature which has tended to privilege market production.

⁵ *Veis ā* is listed only incidentally in Capell’s dictionary as a function of the word *s ā*, which means ‘a pair, or couple’ (1973:178). Following descriptions of *veis ā* emerging on two visits to Vatulele and one in Gau, I published a note of it (Ewins 1982b: iv). Teckle (1983) then gave an account of her participation in such an exchange. The system is elaborated in detail in Chapter Eight.

⁶ ‘Ritual’ is used in the sociological sense, implying the expression through specific symbols of a public or shared meaning, typically in traditional societies associated with rites of passage (Abercrombie *et al.* 1994: 360). Throughout this thesis ‘ritual’ is used in preference to ‘ceremony’ or ‘ceremonial,’ which, though frequently used as synonyms for ‘ritual,’ are also often used (certainly in Fiji) rather loosely for the ‘formal’ behaviour which pervades much inter-personal, and virtually all inter-group, interaction in Fiji, even that of a merely ‘customary’ or ‘socially appropriate’ nature.

two efflorescences, and the obvious importance of *masi* in ritual suggested a coincidence of its social functions and those of ritual.

Theoretical context:

The thesis seeks possible answers to the above questions first in the literature on tourism (which in the area of art too often turns out to provide little more than just-so accounts), in the sparse literature relating to cultural efflorescence, and most fruitfully, in the small but significant emergent body of writing exploring the web of association between art and identity, art and ritual, and ritual and identity. The approach adopted is eclectic and cross-disciplinary. It can be located within the broad rubric of cultural studies, combining elements from art theory, history, anthropology and sociology, and bearing affinities with recent postmodern readings of symbolic interactionism and socio-semiotics.⁷

Durkheim's influence will be evident in much that follows, but with an inclination toward the German historical tradition exemplified by Weber (though not the teleological historicism of which Popper was so critical). The approach is thus 'relationist' in Mannheim's ((1928)1952) terms — stipulating that knowledge of specific place, historical context and exigency is necessary to any proper understanding of the thought, social and cultural behaviour of individuals and groups. The approach to meaning in art is pragmatic, with philosophical debts especially to Dewey ((1934)1958), but also to Peirce (1955) and Rorty (1989; and Hall 1994). From such a perspective art is viewed as a sign system which is polysemic and dependent on context (Eco 1973; 1979; Riggins 1994b; Gottdiener 1995). In relation to symbolism and myth, there are debts to Radcliffe-Brown ((1952)1979), but also and more directly to Barthes (1967; (1957)1972). The

⁷ The literature of all of these is too large to provide a comprehensive list of references here, though many will be referred to later in the text of the thesis. A summary of the strengths, weaknesses and current strategies of symbolic interactionist sociologies is provided by Plummer (1995), and an authoritative discussion and postmodern agenda is provided by Denzin (1992). A good summary of postmodern social theory is provided by Smart (1995). The connection between symbolic interactionism and postmodernism has been drawn by both Plummer and Denzin, who point out (as do many others) that both tropes have more than once been 'counted out' but have uncooperatively refused to die (e.g. Fine 1993). Presumably this is because each provides explanations of much that cannot adequately be dealt with by other theoretical approaches, particularly in the areas of both art and identity construction, the foci of this thesis. Finally, Gottdiener's (1995) work on postmodern socio-semiotics and material culture has been very influential in my thinking, (as have some of the papers in Riggins 1994b), particularly in highlighting and overcoming many of the inadequacies of earlier semiotic approaches, symbolic interactionism, and postmodern theory/culture studies in dealing with the social life of material culture generally.

approach to ritual draws heavily on Victor Turner ((1969)1977; 1982, etc.), but the overarching concept of ritual and non-ritual communication is borrowed from Bloch (1977b).

The postmodern recognition of the role of imagery — conceptual, acted out and physically created — in human interaction is important to the reading proposed here. Lash (1988) defines postmodernism as a ‘regime of [figural] signification,’ using terminology from the semiotic reading of art which has become increasingly prominent in postmodern accounts (and latterly, in symbolic interactionist accounts also).

Clifford (1988: 10) maintains that ‘ethnographic texts are orchestrations of multivocal exchanges ... the subjectivities [of which] — whether of “natives” or visiting participant observers — are constructed domains of truth, serious fictions.’ That subjectivity is implicit in much writing in anthropology and art theory, which have long recognised the autobiographical nature of the account and the inevitable subjectivity of authorial conclusions, but the sociological and historical traditions have favoured ‘impersonal’ writing. This thesis employs both conventions: where impersonality is the more appropriate, such as direct engagement with sociological theory, that is used, but where what is being described is directly autobiographical, and presented in the first person singular.

The terms ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ are used consistently as the most neutral comparative terms available to encompass a range of ideal types. For example, Centre/Periphery theories meet serious difficulties when moving from the economic/technological to the social/cultural spheres. ‘Centres’ have been deemed so mainly in terms of universalist assumptions of the superiority of Western economic and socio-cultural systems (only ever measured in terms of their own values), which historically have possessed the technological and economic might to impose on others. On the other hand, ‘peripheries’ are hardly peripheral to those inhabiting them, and they have good reason to resist any putatively ‘better’ social or cultural orders (in this I clearly differ strongly from views expressed by, for example, Gellner 1992).

Socio-centric views are similarly betrayed in the division of countries and/or societies into ‘First World,’ or ‘Developed Countries,’ with countries such as Fiji relegated to the status of ‘Third World’ (or in still-‘tribal’ societies like Vatulale’s, ‘Fourth World’) and ‘Less Developed Countries’ or LDCs. All of these implicitly disempower the ‘alternates’ as dependent or inferior. Also, although many non-Western countries have officially emerged from colonisation over recent years, the

colonial legacy was one of imposed values and widespread social and cultural disarray. Their vulnerability to external economic entanglement and technological dependence is usually undiminished, and in some cases considerably increased, by their resource-depletion and educational/cultural unpreparedness. Capacities and strategies for coping varied widely, and many moved rapidly into the next phase of cultural and economic domination.

'Postcolonialism,' like most other tropes bearing a 'post-' prefix, is therefore literally inaccurate, though insofar as any of them acknowledge and attempt to address the condition they are supposed to have succeeded, they may be analytically useful. Some commentators appear to have not abandoned, but merely 'upgraded' the determinism of now-confounded theories of 'modernisation' for the equally linear teleology of a globalisation predicted to engulf all. But the evidence that will be presented here supports those commentators who represent globalisation as a paradoxical social process, not only homogenising but simultaneously differentiating (Friedman 1990; 1994; Dirlik 1994; Bradley 1996).

In many non-Western societies such as Vatulele's, traditional cultural devices such as art, and the social processes in which these are embedded, are mobilised in defence of their particularity in the face of globalising and other external pressures. Art in these societies is not the isolated, esoteric entity it has come to be in Western society today, where art is generally external to the social and political domains, concerned with reflection, documentation, comment, and critique. But in Vatulele as in many such societies, art is an active agent in the most central social and political processes of identity definition and power relations.

What the perceived external and internal threats to identity are, how *masi* has traditionally functioned to support identity, and how it is being mobilised today, are the themes of this thesis.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork has been carried out over sixteen years and eight visits to the island. I did not start my fieldwork with a theory about indigenous or tourist art and then choose Vatulele to test it. Malinowski warned that 'Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker' (1961:9). To which Turner added the further caution that 'we can only do fruitful research if we first ask the right questions' (1993: 97). I therefore tried first to accumulate as much information as possible, to understand more of the culture and identify some pertinent questions, and it was a

long time before I felt able to suggest major issues or develop hypotheses to elucidate them. As the questions listed above presented themselves, I returned for further observation and questioning, and finally have attempted to apply existing theories in order to solve the puzzles.

My fieldwork has been based on participant observation, supported by archival research and some interviews with officials and businessmen. As well as being the traditional method of field anthropologists, participant observation has been most natural for both my hosts and me. I tape-recorded interviews where individuals were agreeable, and had much detail to impart. But much more information emerged during informal after-dinner conversations, during long walks between villages, or on forays collecting *masi*-making materials or firewood.⁸

This qualitative approach was clearly appropriate to my central concern with the meaning assigned to, and social role of, *masi* within the society. However, quantitative methods proved largely inapplicable even in such matters as production and marketing. Production is individual and unregulated, uses and avenues for marketing are diverse, and records are never kept, even for sales into the Western market, except in the case of the Co-operatives in each village and one of the two private shops in Ekubu. They are not kept at all for the (reportedly much larger) indigenous market.⁹ In a village context, where people are totally unfamiliar with, and therefore suspicious of, forms and documents, any sort of printed questionnaire would simply not work.

To provide myself with at least indicative data, on my final field-work trip I used a modified survey technique (interviews using a specific set of questions) to ask a random sample of women exactly how many pieces of bark-cloth they had made and/or sold over a 6-month period, how marketing occurred, and how the market and social obligations interacted for them. At the same time I also obtained some information about kinship relationships. Even though I am now well-known in the villages concerned, conducting this survey required considerable tact and

⁸ Weyland (1993: 15) makes some pertinent observations on this matter. To have a tape-recorder always running at the crucial moment during such occasions would have been impossible, even if it were not so artificial and intrusive, so I relied on jotting down important comments as soon as possible. Also, during interviews (and the one survey undertaken), people often declined to be tape-recorded, though during my note-taking as they talked, they might pause to check whether I had 'got that?' Nevertheless, I do have many hours of taped conversations, some of which I cite here.

⁹ Even 'official' sales through registered Co-operatives are unreliable, since those keeping them have little or no training in book-keeping.

assurances of absolute confidentiality (survey results: Appendix 5).

Fieldwork has been mostly in the contiguous villages of Ekubu and Taunovo (which contain about three-quarters of the island's population). Therefore, although I have visited the other two villages on the island (Bouwaqa only once, Lomanikaya several times), when I speak of Vatulele I am usually generalising from the experience of Ekubu/Taunovo.¹⁰

Thesis outline

As mentioned above, in writing this thesis I have attempted to move from the collection of data to a theorisation, rather than the reverse. Warnings of the perils I would encounter were sounded long ago:

If theorising is easy when facts are treated arbitrarily, a theory which would really grow out of the facts themselves and express their true significance presents the greatest difficulties to the enquirer. The data themselves are vast but chaotic, and at every point incomplete. They fall into two main divisions. On the one hand, there is the historical record of the [societies]; upon the other there is the immense field of contemporary anthropology (Hobhouse *et al.* (1915) 1965: 1).

I have attempted to integrate, rather than separate, the two 'divisions' of this 'vast chaos' in relation to Vatulelean art and its social role.

Gell (1985: 278-80) has distinguished between absolute external representations (or maps) and relative internal images, what he refers to as non-indexical and indexical knowledge respectively. While the purpose of participant observation is to attempt to understand the images a group has of itself and by which it defines itself, and the means by which it does so — its indexical knowledge in Gell's terms — a fieldworker also has to attempt to locate this in relation to the external vantage-point resulting from his/her Otherness and academic discipline. The process is one of alternation between the two forms of understanding. This thesis is structured accordingly, first of all presenting the theoretical perspective from which the 'image' of Vatuleleans' art and its relation to their identity will be scrutinised, then presenting the detail of that image (alternating still with external analysis and

¹⁰ Where it is clearly not valid to do this, I have noted this in the text (for instance, Bouwaqa produces little cloth for the commercial market, indigenous or otherwise, so the entire section concerning marketing cannot be taken to refer to that village, whereas Lomanikaya for a number of years enjoyed the highest level of entrepreneurial marketing patronage on the island, which is also noted).

comment), and finally attempting to reconcile these in a conclusion.

Commercialisation for the tourist market looms so large in explanations of the ‘survival’ of indigenous arts that the literature of tourism was for a long time *de facto* the main forum for the academic discussion of contemporary indigenous art. Only in the past decade have emergent cross-disciplinary cultural studies started to seek other explanations. Therefore, in **Chapter One** the major propositions advanced in the literature concerning the relationship between tourism and indigenous culture are examined. The conclusion reached is that while tourist commodification of their art is clearly important to Vatuleleans today, the disjunction between the recent difficulties of Fiji’s tourist industry and Vatulele’s burgeoning bark-cloth industry make it clear that explanations must also be sought in the role the cloth continues to play within the maker group and wider Fijian society.

Chapter Two considers indigenous art as a carrier of meaning, using a socio-semiotic approach.¹¹ It starts with a definition of concepts such as ‘culture,’ ‘art,’ and ‘indigenous art,’ and locates *masi* within this scheme. It argues that Western distinctions between art and craft are inappropriate to a discussion of indigenous art, and rejects terms such as ‘primitive art’ and ‘handicraft’ as demeaning. It is shown that the social function of art resides particularly in processes of identity construction, maintenance, and renewal. The several identity-related theories which are examined all concur that such cultural devices are mobilised particularly at times of rapid social change and stress, when the group perceives its identity to be under threat. Thus increases in the production or practice of culturally-embedded indigenous arts within communities subject to great external pressure (as is occurring in the case of Vatulele’s *masi*) may be read as counter-reactions, reaffirming indigenous identity, rather than as by-products of increased commodity production.

This thread is continued in **Chapter Three**, first by adopting Barthes’s thesis that the sign-functions of art over time may become mythified, subsumed into a larger sense of identity — in the case of bark-cloth, of ‘Fijianness.’ It is also argued that the sign-functions and myths of ‘tourist-*tapa*’ have diverged from those of the culturally-embedded *masi* from which the tourist artform developed, and that each continues to evolve and function independently of the other.

¹¹ This term is borrowed directly from Gottdiener (1995), and indirectly from Thibault (1991). It is elaborated in Chapter 2.

Next, there is discussion of the manner in which a society's myths are concentrated and given tangible form in ritual. Art, however, is not represented as myth and ritual are shown to be largely coextensive in terms of their social roles of identity construction and affirmation, through which societies seek to maintain or regain power over aspects of their lives which they feel to be challenged or threatened. Contrary to earlier anthropological views of ritual as conservative, it is discussed as an instrument for the negotiation of change, dynamically and selectively integrating traditions with the process of change.

Chapter Four discusses the historical forces which have shaped Vatulelean identity, both locally and within the wider Fijian context. The diversity of the immigrant groups making up the island's population, coupled with their insularity, are argued to have shaped Vatuleleans' group identity, and to have caused them to stress kinship, social obligation and ritual, as devices for maintaining social solidarity. It will be shown how Vatuleleans' first sustained contact with 'modernising' forces during WW2 generated urgent aspirations for money and a place in the wider Fijian community. In the 1960s, Britain's announced intention to leave Fiji caused great racial tension and Fijian insecurity about their capacity to control the destiny of their country and themselves. This resulted, during the decades before and after Independence, in a project of ethnic revitalisation and assertiveness which culminated in the Military Coup.

The next four chapters examine the specific manner in which *masi* operates in Fijian, and specifically Vatulelean, society.

Chapter Five examines Vatulele's application of a ritual template to a wide range of rituals, most importantly rites of passage (birth, marriage, death and today, a range of lesser life-transitions). This template is shown to operate through the exchange of sanctioned, gendered goods. Both the goods exchanged, and the exchange partners, are defined in terms of a symmetry between male and female elements, and an important part of the role of ritual is to sustain that relationship.

Chapter Six describes the manner in which goods are conceptualised in Fijian society, and the social contract which controls their production and distribution within networks of kinship and political association. The nature of artifacts, their identification with particular groups, and their capacity to survive Western-imposed technological change, are all discussed. The conclusion is that it is not the artifacts' functional utility, but their social utility, principally a function of their assigned meaning, which has ensured their survival.

The potency of *masi* as a sign has been asserted throughout the preceding chapters, and in **Chapter Seven**, the ascription and inscription of its signification are examined. Its historical importance and roles, and its relationship to other significant ritual artforms, are examined. Then it is argued that Fijian art transmits meaning syntagmatically rather than paradigmatically, that is, as a function of context and spatial relationships rather than of imagined or inscribed similarities or representations. Even in the matter of the figuration of the cloth, meaning is not transmitted in any representational sense, but through assigned sign-function, conveyed by the interrelationship of its formal elements colour, overall design, and motifs.

In **Chapter Eight**, the manner in which Vatulele has been able to expand its traditional artform into a cottage industry is depicted as a conjunction of historical accident and astute entrepreneurship on the part of Vatuleleans. The historical existence of non-ritual exchange, and the high social value of their particular sanctioned production, put Vatuleleans in a good position to respond to external demand. Events such as the conscription of their men in the war effort in World War Two, and the establishment of Fiji's first major tourist resort directly opposite Vatulele, are advanced as explanations of why they wished to, and how they were able to, commercialise their *masi*-production. The emergence of middlemen and other marketing strategies, and an analysis of the relativity of the tourist and indigenous market sectors, are also dealt with. The ethnic revival which burgeoned, first in the shadow of, and later in the full reality of Independence, is argued to have increased levels of indigenous demand. The conclusions are informed by reference to the survey conducted among the women of Ekubu and Taunovo in 1995.

Chapter Nine summarises the argument, and relates it back to the theoretical context of the thesis. It discusses the current relationship of Vatuleleans to their *masi* and rituals, and examines the longterm potential of these for managing change.

Chapter One

THE TOURISM-COMMERCIALISATION ACCOUNT OF INDIGENOUS ART

The commercialisation for tourism of the art of contemporary non-Western societies is a well-recognised phenomenon, and Vatulele has been involved in such commercialisation of its *masi* for half a century. However, evidence will be presented in this thesis that in the same period the symbolic role of *masi* has been of increasing importance, both within the maker community and in wider Fijian society, and this use has stimulated more of the growth of the industry than has the development and marketing of tourist-*tapa*. It has been the academic literature relating to tourism. As stated in the Introduction, at least in considering the souvenir market, the emergent literature on tourism has considered indigenous art more than has the remainder of the academic social science literature up to the last decade. This chapter will therefore scan the tourism literature, to see how (or if) it deals with the meaning and social role of tourist arts, relative to those of indigenous arts within parent communities before and after the growth of tourism, and might thus assist in understanding the Vatulele case.

As Fiji's principal source of export dollars, the tourism industry's vital importance is obvious, and its scale means that 'tourist arts' are so visible that it has been easy for many to imagine tourism as the new patron of indigenous arts, supplanting what was expected would be dwindling indigenous patronage, and thus saving the arts from extinction. So powerful is the industry worldwide, that such views are not unique to Fiji, but occur in the accounts of tourism development in many non-Western countries now having to cope with tourism (see Harrison 1992a). They are framed in the context of cost/benefit analyses that are generally far less concerned with social and cultural factors than with economics. Even in that aspect they have tended to minimise the economic dependency on foreign capital which tourism generally brings small countries (a case argued to apply to Fiji: Finney & Watson 1977; Britton 1983; 1987; Britton & Clarke 1987; Harrison 1992a).

Accordingly, it becomes clear that accounts of the putative 'transition' from indigenous art to 'tourist art' generally carry little or no analysis of whether the resulting art carries meanings for the maker societies which are similar or unrelated to the meanings carried by the original culturally embedded art, or explanations of the social and cultural reverberations any changes might be expected to cause within

the parent societies. There have been references in numerous works on tourism to the fact that art has a connection with identity (e.g. Graburn 1967; 1976; Nason 1984; Cohen 1993a; 1995; Moulin 1996; Gough 1997; Napier 1997; Saunders 1997). However, few of these have tried to tease out exactly what this connection is, or the manner in which art actually operated/operates as a mechanism of social identity construction, adjustment and maintenance within parent societies, or its relationship to other mechanisms which may exist.¹ Only recently have such issues been addressed in writing on tourist art, such as several of the writers in Phillips & Steiner's recent collection (e.g. Berlo 1999; Kasfir 1999; Niessen 1999; Silverman 1999).

Over twenty years ago Mings (1978: 343) criticised the writing on tourism as oscillating between the extreme myths of godsend and evil, which have proven to be persistent refuges from balanced analysis. For the student of indigenous art, a continuing problem is the general preoccupation with the industry itself and its patrons, while both non-Western residents of tourist destinations and their products are often treated as simply part of the exotic *milieu*.²

While Smith (1990a) and de Kadt (1979) have been credited with 'founding the tradition' of looking at the 'other' (Selwyn 1996a: 4), they made little reference to material culture. However, Graburn's *Ethnic and Tourist Arts* (1976a), which preceded the first edition of Smith's book by a year, showed that a study of the manner in which tourism affected indigenous arts actually introduced many of the relevant issues regarding the social and cultural impacts of tourism on non-Western societies generally. It has remained for over twenty years the most authoritative and influential single work on the subject of indigenous art and tourism. Not until this year has a worthy successor to it appeared, in Phillips and Steiner's *Unpacking culture: art and commodity in colonial and postcolonial worlds* (1999), for which Graburn wrote an Epilogue (Graburn 1999).

¹ MacCannell produced one of the first papers to discuss issues of identity construction in response to tourism (1984), an issue he returned to in *Empty Meeting Grounds* (1992), and discussed in two major recent collections of other editors (Boissevain, 1996a; Selwyn, 1996b). None, however, has focused on the strategic use of indigenous art in that identity construction process.

² There have of course been commendable exceptions from an early date, some focusing consistently on local impacts, but they tend to emphasise the general deficiency. As positive examples, the focus of virtually all of Boissevain's writing on tourism since the 1970s has had an 'insider' focus (e.g. Boissevain & Inglot 1979; Boissevain 1980; 1984; 1988; 1996b), and Erik Cohen has also paid substantial attention to cultural interaction and the 'Other' (1982; 1989; 1993b).

Graburn saw identity as such a major issue that he devoted 20% of his Introduction to it, and though space permitted him only brief comment on the issues, three of the points he flagged have been influential to this analysis of the Vatulele case:

- 1 . that material objects function as 'signs of recognition' for the group both internally and externally, and can be adopted as national symbols for a multi-ethnic society (both of which are discussed here in terms of art's mythic dimension);
- 2 . that societies display a 'need to retrench, or at least to emphasise their native customs and values' under the 'threat of external political and economic forces,' which can amount to ethnic resistance and/or ethnic revival; and
- 3 . that the arts, like the rest of a group's culture, are syncretic, and may selectively adopt 'the materials, symbols and regalia of other groups.'

The socio-semiotic approach adopted in this thesis also follows the lead given by Jules-Rosette's (1984) semiotic analysis of the relationship between African tourist arts and embedded arts. It also pursues her point that indigenous art plays a critical role in the mediation of 'conflicts that accompany social change of which the tourists are, in part, the cause' (Jules-Rosette 1984: viii).

More recently, Boissevain (1996b), Selwyn (1996b) and Douglas (1996) have made important observations about the influence of tourism on local identity definition (and *vice versa*), though with little specific reference to material culture. Of direct relevance to this thesis, however, Boissevain has detailed the current efflorescence of ritual in Europe and elsewhere (Boissevain & Inglot 1979; Boissevain 1984; 1992a). He has related this to its capacities for identity maintenance, and has explored how it helps residents cope with tourism.

The souvenir market as 'replacement patron'

The sale of Vatulele *masi* to tourists is part of a long tradition. The rich clutter of museum holdings testifies to the fascination the exotic artifacts of Others always held for travellers, and Fijians showed an immediate eagerness to trade:

Captain Hudson [and his party] ...stopped at the small village of Vatia [Rewa] to purchase some earthenware; this is a village of potters. They were at once surrounded by several hundreds of the inhabitants, all pressing their wares on them, of which they bought several specimens (Wilkes 1845: 126).

Already by the time of Fiji's Cession to Britain in 1874, a large number of ships were regularly calling into Fiji with passengers keen to obtain souvenirs, as one of them noted of a stopover in Kadavu in that year :

Some native craft (canoes with outriggers) dotted the surface of the bay, the occupants of which, girls and men, with their hair profusely adorned with gaily-coloured flowers, came aboard with baskets of coëoa-nuts (sic), oranges, and pine-apples for sale; others had Fijian clubs and curios of all sorts, while model canoes were eagerly purchased by the Australian-bound passengers of the City of Sydney (Stonehewer-Cooper 1880:18).

The trade in souvenirs was plainly already well established, betraying Fijians' thorough familiarity with barter, and was to quickly become more formalised as tourism developed further. It has been pointed out that while initial contact between Westerners and islanders was open-minded and non-interventionist, subsequent contact involved an 'asymmetrical entanglement' (Thomas 1989), resulting in the alienation of artifacts, deconstruction of their indigenous significance, and its reconstruction in terms of European consciousness.³ Local artists started producing objects to satisfy these 'external' customers, sometimes simply increasing normal production, but usually over time coming to produce 'purpose-made' objects which possessed, even caricatured, those features found to be most sought-after. These often synthesised different styles, sometimes even incorporated non-indigenous features (Graburn 1976a: 163-4, 259).

Such production targeting a non-indigenous market has been widely viewed as corruption or displacement of indigenous art, but in some contexts it can be read as a conservative strategy. Seeing the ongoing alienation of their cultural artifacts by Westerners clearly unaware of their meaning and social value, the development of tourist art could provide a simulacrum while keeping significant art within the indigenous domain. It would not have taken too many payments of coloured beads for their valued objects, for intelligent islanders to learn to reverse the strategy.

Given the regular manufacture and marketing of such specifically tourist-targeted objects, distinct from selling items already in use, it is fair to describe tourists as new patrons. However, it is a large step to assume that the consumption of 'tourist-trophy' artifacts automatically supplants indigenous patronage, since it entails altered roles, forms and values (discussed in Chapter Three). The commonness of such assumptions may arise from almost all Westerners, and today most city-based indigenous administrators, having far greater contact with tourist-trophies than with culturally-embedded indigenous art. It is also undeniable that the indigenous utility

³ Many of the seamen, missionaries, and colonial administrators were not merely buying mementos, but asserting their power by alienating the objects, and then using them in the construction of their own (male) identities. This accounts for the preponderance of weapons collected, and the paucity of female goods in many museum collections (Ewins 1997).

of some objects is now limited (such as Fijian ceramic water-vessels and cooking-pots), and their continued production does largely depend on tourist patronage. All of this can lead to simplistic generalisations. Nor does the attention paid by recent writers (e.g. Lury 1997; Rojek & Urry 1997: 1) to the fact that 'cultures and objects themselves travel' break from this tradition, as it is still focused on the 'object externalised.'

The aesthetic, auratic and iconic aspects⁴ of indigenous arts are all viewed as saleable commodities in the development strategies of tourism-based economies such as Fiji's, and whether or not the arts continue to have a culturally-embedded role may be of less interest to promoters (including governments) and middlemen than their exoticism (Rossel 1988). Crouch (1994: 93) proposes that for postmodern tourists 'the allure of authenticity ... coexists with a desire for the non-authentic.' He is suggesting that despite claims that Westerners have today embraced a hyperreality in which 'only signs without referents, empty, senseless, absurd and elliptical signs, absorb us,' it seems probable that most tourist purchasers of airport art would like to believe that the simulacrum they have bought has an ongoing original.

Nonetheless, many tourists may not wish to own that original, may paradoxically be happier with their simulacrum. Like all such sanctioned suspensions of normal behaviour, the 'ritual of reversal' aspect of tourism (Graburn 1983b; Boissevain 1989), in which normal power/authority relationships are suspended or reversed, has to occur within parameters. For example, tourists often engage in levels of familiarity with locals that far exceed the bounds of relationships they would normally develop with strangers or service personnel in their own communities. This is permissible precisely because the relationships are ephemeral, anticipating little or no deep or lasting engagement with the Other.

Something rather like this may be operating in the purchase of tourist arts. They are sufficiently place-specific to serve as permanent 'markers' of the experience (cf. Russell 1983: 25), and sufficiently exotic to present an appearance of authenticity. But though tourists may boast of the authenticity of their trophies, few really believe that they have plucked a treasure from the midst of its life within the

⁴ All of these terms relate to qualities perceived to reside in the object and be projected by it. As used here, 'aesthetic' means bearing visual appeal and appearing well-designed and made, 'auratic' relates to the aura an object bears (which might include its mystery, exoticism etc), while iconic implies that the object epitomises those qualities, or others such as time, place, and maker-identity.

indigenous culture. In the rules of this 'game of touristic make-believe' (Cohen 1989: 31-2), truly culturally-embedded art might demand too much engagement with the Other. What it signifies is not understood and is therefore discomfiting — how many works of fiction have centred around some terrifying hidden power of a tribal artifact collected by an eccentric forebear? Gaining understanding would require more time and/or effort than they are willing or able to expend. With today's Western self-consciousness about the exploitation of Others, there may also be a sense of burdensome responsibility when alienating a piece of genuine culture, a burden absent when both sides understand that what is changing hands is a symbol of that culture rather than the real thing.

Cohen (1988; 1989) also feels that there are distinct limits to how much authenticity many tourists really want, and Klieger (1990: 39) suggests that in some cases tourists prefer to reaffirm their preconceived images of primitive or unusual cultures rather than confront real issues and change. The modifications and concessions indigenous artists make when producing for tourist customers are sometimes misguided, but apart from the wish to protect embedded art as suggested above, they are generally attempting to respond to the demonstrated or imagined preferences of the tourists. They relate to the tourists' rather than makers' aesthetic preferences, and to pragmatic concerns such as 'Will it fit in my luggage?' or 'How can I use it when I get it home?'

Even those Littrell et al (1994) call 'ethnic, arts and people oriented tourists,' showed these concerns when surveyed. Claiming great interest in ethnic, heirloom and folk arts, none listed indigenous criteria among their grounds for purchase, though they did require a clear association with the indigenous culture, to maintain their perception of themselves as 'aficionados.' The devices used to assure themselves of 'authenticity' (buying direct from craftspeople, from 'recognised' outlets — which may be judged by such vague criteria as the 'rusticity' of the setting — and relying on 'knowledgeable' sales personnel) do not reveal more than a token commitment to objects' association with indigenous culture, and none to trying to evaluate indigenous meanings, values, or even utility.

All of the above underscores the shift of focus away from the indigenous role of art, which becomes extrapolated in much of the tourism literature to an assumption that culturally-embedded indigenous art everywhere is for the most part doomed to

survive only as 'airport art.'⁵ This rehearses presumptions of the ultimate demise of indigenous cultures which have persisted in Western consciousness since the 19th century, concepts of unchanging, inflexible cultures which must inevitably perish as they are overwhelmed by Western culture. Thomas comments that such views have 'tended to be sustained both by endorsers and critics of colonialism' (albeit for different reasons), whereas, he points out, 'if much certainly has been lost, the resilience and vigour of indigenous and postcolonial cultures is simply too conspicuous for the 'fatal impact' view to be sustained' (1995: 178). The degree to which pre-Western concepts and systems configure those cultures, however, in such areas as the continuing significance and viability of traditional arts, depends



Fig.1. Pre-1941 tourist at curio-stall

The cruise-liner is at No.1 Wharf, next to the Suva Market. On sale were shells, coral and model canoes. *Masi* was sold inside the market (Usher 1941: 8-9)

on how effective the cultural survival strategies of the group are, and like the strategies themselves, that varies greatly.

Into the 1950s, most short-term visitors to Fiji were either guests of residents, business-people, or ocean-cruise passengers on one- or two-day port stopovers, who stayed in urban centres and normally had little contact with Fijians other than those selling souvenirs and garden produce in the market. Tourist impact on even urban Fijians was therefore minimal.⁶

Masi at that time was sold almost exclusively in a couple of stalls in the produce

⁵ This term appears to have been coined by Graburn (1967). It usefully distinguishes objects produced specifically for tourists from that art which still functions within the society but may also be sold if the opportunity presents itself. This distinction is elaborated in Chapter Three.

⁶ This section amalgamates my own observation of change through over five decades, and data from other sources, in particular Scott (1970) and Britton (1983).

market in Suva (and to a lesser extent, that in Lautoka), by Chinese middlemen whose Fijian wives had access to kinship networks of production, while the stallholders themselves networked with Chinese shopkeepers in outlying areas through Chinese owners of inter-island trading vessels (see Chapter Eight).

The types of *masi* sold were predominantly traditional in form and figuration — while they may well have been produced specifically to earn money, these seldom courted tourist tastes, if only because the makers never saw tourists and had no idea what those tastes might be. Perhaps partly for this reason, while local Europeans occasionally bought individual pieces of *masi*, the interest of cruise-ship tourists usually focused on utilitarian baskets, model canoes, carved coconut ‘heads’ and seashells. Finally, the language of commerce with these Chinese stallholders was Fijian, few speaking more than a few words of English.

Most market *masi*, therefore, particularly the large ceremonial cloths, was bought by urban Fijians, presumably needing it for ceremonies and for various reasons unable to obtain it from traditional sources. By the time the research upon which this thesis is based commenced in 1980, however, many tourists were ensconced for days or weeks, ‘village visits’ and performances of dances and ‘pseudo-rituals’ had become commonplace. Recognising the marketability of both their ‘ethnic authenticity’ and their natural charm, the tourism industry employed so many Fijians so quickly that levels of contact between them and tourists from all over the world increased enormously. It was not difficult to believe that all of these changes must irrevocably deform indigenous culture.⁷

Also, the Chinese *masi*-sellers had disappeared from Suva market, and along with them the large ritual cloths. There was, however, a plethora of doily-sized pieces being sold in souvenir shops, apparently inferior in quality and clearly far from traditional in form or figuration. It was easy to read this as cultural destruction, and

⁷ One response was to lay responsibility on the owners of that culture. A commentator on Fiji tourism stated that ‘many authorities have rightly pointed out that the responsibility for culture preservation rests solely on the host society’ (Prasad 1987: 10). This is rather like saying that the responsibility for crime prevention rests solely with victims, a simplistic view at best. Prasad disparaged Fijian fire-walking ‘for the entertainment of tourists,’ comparing it with Indian firewalking which he claimed is ‘deeply embedded in ... religious conviction and remains highly personalized.’ Implying that the Fijian ritual lacked such conviction, he went on to reject the possibility that a tourist ‘product’ could co-exist with a culturally embedded form. He ignored the fact that there was little or no pressure on Indians to commodify their rituals, tourism operators having very early made the marketing decision to place indigenous Fijians and their culture on centre stage, using Indians exclusively in back-stage service roles which undoubtedly exploited them industrially similarly to Fijians (Samy 1977), but not culturally.

to imagine that the indigenous market had been supplanted by a tourist market that was both inevitable and destructive. It became apparent in the course of this research, however, that this was illusory, that the indigenous market had withdrawn into its more traditional trade channels and was actually more than holding its own.

Tourism as destroyer of indigenous culture

The critical attitude to tourism described above is certainly not uncommon. Tourism has been characterised variously as the enemy of authenticity and culture (Turner & Ash 1975: 197), culturally polluting (Prasad 1987: 10), psychically exploiting (Britton & Clarke 1987: 175), and commodifying of culture (Boniface & Fowler 1993: 2). Concomitant with the assumption of indigenous helplessness is the perception of tourism as the overwhelming and irresistible destroyer.

While overtly critical of Western tourism, the power accorded it in these conceptualisations, and the immutability and helplessness of indigenous culture, actually extends the 19th century concepts mentioned above. These were transported in modified form, as Harrison (1992b: 9-10) points out, into first modernisation theory (and the associated neoclassical economics), then dependency theory, and even, most recently, environmentalism. In the same vein, Marxist centre-periphery models locate non-Western countries at the periphery, seen as inevitably economically subordinate to Western 'core' blocs. Frank (1969) and Shils (1975: 3-16) have extended this conceptualisation to a hegemony of values at the centre increasingly dominating peripheral groups.⁸ Centre-periphery explanations of tourism were adopted early in the tourism literature, clearly enunciated by Turner & Ash (1975). Still in 1996, Selwyn was describing tourism as 'a system which articulates relationships of politico-economic and cultural dependence of (predominantly tourist-receiving) peripheries upon (predominantly tourist-sending) centres' (1996: 12).

Harrison maintains that as well as being teleological (assuming the inevitability of a transition from one preconceived state to another), all of these theoretical approaches are West-centric. All have paid little attention to the 'subordinate' sociocultural structures and values of those perceived to be on the periphery, which have been regarded by modernisationists as impediments to progress, and as dependent and powerless by world system theorists.

⁸ While Harrison does not specify it, World-Systems analysis, though critical of developmental theories, has been based on similar assumptions of centre-periphery (Wallerstein 1991: 267-8).

It is a truism that Western culture has been both actively and passively invasive in Third World countries in the colonial past, and has continued to be so in the postcolonial, or more accurately neocolonial, period. Nowhere is this more obvious than in tourism, in such things as its arrogation of often scarce resources and infrastructure (water, roads etc), and the physical establishment of resorts and golf-courses (e.g. Arakawa 1991; Kanke 1991; Noda 1991).⁹

Subtle 'passive' invasion may affect residents' confidence in their identity more than active imperialism. Cultural displacement can occur simply by exposing indigenous people to alternative behaviours, technologies, and commodities which may prove irresistible — what has been called 'Coca-Colonisation.' Admiration and/or envy undermine resistance. The wealth and freedom of movement tourists display by flying to their hosts' countries, paying high hotel tariffs and eating exotic food, while locals could never dream of returning the visit, is irresistible evidence of the power of the foreign culture. 'So many of us see tourists' behaviour and life-styles as models for our own advancement toward modernity' writes one Pacific islander/commentator, 'we grow to like and eventually need the products of our own exploitation' (Helu-Thaman 1993: 109-10). In extreme stages such as Friedman depicts the Congolese as having reached, 'the practice of identity [may become] truly the accumulation of otherness' (1994: 113).

Such a loss of self-esteem and desire to adopt the values of visitors 'may be sufficiently extreme to threaten the deep-seated traditions of the community' (Holloway 1989: 179). A geographer wrote of the stress and loss of self-esteem that contrasts of this type caused among a group of PNG people who described themselves self-contemptuously as 'rubbish men' when widening contact had confronted them with their own comparative poverty (Lea 1973: 73). The mere presence of wealthy, pleasure-bent tourists invites such comparisons constantly.

Even environmentalists may be accused of neglect of indigenous concerns, since even the 'ecologically sound' or 'sustainable' tourism they propose tends to focus on the natural environment and overlook or discount existing human occupants. The attractive locations which can be 'sensitively developed,' however, are virtually always either populated or owned by indigenous people distinct from the would-be developers, and the claimed lesser impact of eco-tourism in such cases does not alter the disempowerment implicit in imposing Western values on those locals. A cynical indigenous response is understandable: "Sustainable

⁹ An extraordinary litany of the damage such physical invasiveness has brought about in Bali was recently recounted by Leser (1997).

development” ... seems ... to have a lot more to do with maintaining economic growth and conserving natural resources primarily for the enjoyment and development of metropolitan or developed societies — issues related to the protection of the “global commons” (Helu-Thaman 1993: 110).

MacCannell accepted as a ‘non-controversial assumption’ the proposition that cultures have been ‘radically displaced and forever altered by the movements of peoples’ (1992: 3). What is controversial is loading tourism with responsibility for all of the problems generated by the encounter of the West with less technologically developed societies — in its present-day invasive form, tourism is a product of the post-1965 jet age, whereas cultural collision had been occurring for over a century in Fiji, and much longer elsewhere.

Thus Smith ((1977)1990b: 6-10) pointed to other forces of ‘modernity’ — television, roads, modern vehicles and Western market culture generally — as sharing responsibility for the ill-effects of culture change. But as Graburn observed, ‘tourism and travel have replaced colonialism as a prime source of intercultural contact’ (1976b: 26). To recognise that it does not act alone is not to dismiss or minimise its role — certainly in Vatulele today, the constant *tapa* production for the tourist market, and the presence on the island of the luxury Resort, between them impinge on most aspects of the lives of everyone in the two villages of Ekubu and Taunovo, and to some degree in the other two villages.

The picture of change *per se* is also frequently distorted. Some observers still persist in the fiction that what preceded Western contact was a serene, untroubled, and somehow more ‘authentic’ past, and MacCannell (1976, 1992) suggests that the desire to create or recreate such lost pasts is a principal tourist motivation (see also Dominguez 1987; MacCannell 1992: 4). McEvelley (1992: 93) calls this ‘a desire to freeze the world, and to prevent all change in it — ultimately a desire to maintain the emic point of view for ever.’¹⁰ He muses that ‘this attitude assumes something like the Hegelian idea that each culture has a nature or essence,’ exemplified by Sartre’s characterisation of ‘compliant colonials’ — a conquered

¹⁰ An *emic* viewpoint, as McEvelley defines it, is ‘a culturally inherited world view, ... [in its ideal form] that of a cultural group which has no knowledge whatever of other cultural groups and believes that its own styles of cognition are all that exist’ (1992:90). The opposite position is an *etic* view, which ‘transcends the level of the emic by a cognitive meta-step ... [and sees each cultural approach] as just one among many’ (1992: 90-1). McEvelley cautions against the danger of complacent acceptance of scientific objectivity as imparting *etic* transcendence. It may be, he suggests, no more than yet another emic approach, projected outwards un-self-critically (1992: 91).

culture which adopts the ways of the conqueror — as ‘essentially lost beings, who have sold their souls’ (Sartre 1986; cited in McEvelley 1992: 92).

Tourists often share modernisation theory’s failure to understand the mutability of cultures — though their response is inverted. Rather than viewing ‘immutable traditions’ as impediments which should be eliminated in the name of progress, these tourists value contact with traditional indigenous cultures, but see that contact as inevitably destructive. Both positions conceptually disempower indigenous people, regarding them as transfixed or inert victims. Failure to recognise the historical and dynamic nature of indigenous culture leads to the assumption that the nature of impact will also be constant, even assumed by some who accept that Western tourists and tourism policies are culturally mutable (e.g. Pi-Sunyer (1977)1990: 188). Convictions about the ahistorical nature of non-literate cultures have proven very persistent. There is also a bitter-sweet savour to feeling that one is perhaps among the last to observe a vanishing culture — far more titillating than acknowledging that one is seeing only a moment in a process of constant change!

In fact, for Vatulaleans (and probably many other groups), Western culture is tributary to the mainstream of their culture, not the other way around. As a tributary, it undoubtedly contributes to and modifies, may even now be essential to the ‘flow’ of that culture — but it does not configure it. For them to constantly conceive their identity as a dominated, exploited or perpetually dependent periphery could only lead to either festering resentment or despair — and Vatulaleans, indeed Fijians generally, exhibit little of either. They take robust pride in the layers of identity they perceive themselves as having. ‘We take from you only what fits our way of thinking, and that strengthens our traditions’ is frequently stated. Even if this is perhaps over-optimistic, Shils’s notion of cultural centre and periphery is clearly inoperable if it does not work in both directions, and it has been replaced in contemporary theory by a concept of plurality. But even here fuzzy thinking can persist: ‘Within the pluralist framework ... identity is taken as the referential sign of a fixed set of customs, practices and meanings, an enduring heritage, a readily identifiable sociological category, a set of shared traits and/or experiences’ (Scott 1995: 5, my emphasis).

A difficulty shared by both advocates and critics of tourism is that this ‘set of customs, practices and meanings’ is by no means fixed, even though they are part of the common experience of, and do provide an enduring heritage for, the host group. What is defined as lost tradition is more commonly a lessening of contrast, of otherness, as a result of cultural familiarity in both directions, and of the syncretic integration of readily-recognised Western cultural elements. The result is

often disappointing to tourists in pursuit of an 'authentic otherness,' who are so imbued with their imaginary exotic image that any intrusion of the recognisable or familiar appears to invalidate the authenticity of what they are seeing.¹¹

The 'curate's egg' view of tourism¹²

Smith (1988: 15-16) pointed out that, notwithstanding neglect of their wishes and the erosion of certain cultural values and practices, local populations in small remote communities may well enjoy the benefits of tourist infrastructure and the income tourism generates, and welcome tourism as a positive force. There are certainly such views in Vatulele, particularly among higher-level hotel workers with interesting jobs and better incomes (see Chapter Four). But Smith admitted that their participation may be based on their inability to imagine, let alone measure or evaluate, the great problems tourism may bring to their small communities and fragile environments. It will become clear that this is also true for Vatulele.

She highlights a difficulty overlooked by some writers, which is the impossibility for the 'hosts' of weighing economic factors against social and/or cultural factors in any objective manner. How can any balance be struck between obtaining a cash income which may be available in no other way than selling airport art (e.g. Connelly-Kirch 1982) or working for the Other in menial roles, or the personal and/or social stress caused by invasion of privacy (e.g. Smith 1990b: 10) and the depersonalisation associated with being gazed at as an attraction? The range of views in Vatulele detailed in Chapter Four, about the presence on their island of the Resort, epitomise these dilemmas for indigenous peoples. Asked whether they see it as positive or negative, most think long before giving an equivocal answer.

In this context, Smith's assertion that 'the tourist trade does not have to be culturally damaging' (1990b: 9) is problematic. Though clearly aware that 'cultural damage' is a difficult concept, she does not attempt to resolve that difficulty,

¹¹ In a hotel lobby in Fiji in 1993 I overheard a young Australian woman asking a tour organiser (a Fijian woman who came from and still lived in a nearby village) how she could meet some 'genuine Fijians.' She was clearly disgruntled by the cool response of the tour organiser, and wandered off with no inkling of her own lack of awareness, her insensitivity, or her lost opportunity to engage with and learn something from an intelligent and articulate Fijian.

¹² The aphorism cited, 'good in parts, like the curate's egg,' derives from a *Punch* cartoon, in which a timid curate assures his bishop of the (evidently bad) egg before him at breakfast that 'Parts of it are excellent!' (Evans 1990: 296).

producing in evidence only ways in which the impact of tourism may be reduced or mitigated, something quite different from refuting the existence of damage.¹³

The desires engendered in cash-poor societies such as Fiji's by global marketing and the example of material-wealthy Others can only be satisfied with access to cash, and 'handicraft' manufacture is often an attractive option. Healy (1994: 141, 148) listed the advantages such cottage industries offer local people. All can be seen to operate in Vatulele, and as will be discussed later, play a major part in countering the urban drift so evident in islands without recourse to such cottage industries:

- 1 . workers can obtain cash income while remaining in the rural setting;
- 2 . people can fit work around other commitments (family, ceremonial, etc);
- 3 . lack of infrastructure costs;
- 4 . a cash return for women, children, the handicapped and the elderly;
- 5 . scope for product development;
- 6 . sustainable use of local materials;
- 7 . educating the public (i.e. Others) about local (indigenous) culture.

A corollary suggested in the literature is that the case is strong for pro-actively developing and modernising such 'handicrafts' as the course with least undesirable consequences (e.g. Parnwell 1993). Government decision-makers frequently regard this as the bottom line. Yet Parnwell suggests that in such a scenario an impoverishment of traditional cultural life and belief systems occurs. The difficulty is that modernisation by definition involves external agendas for change, which generally bear little or no relation to indigenous values or systems of meaning.

¹³ Is cultural change always damage? If so, any evolution of artistic concepts and practices would have to be seen as destructive, an extreme view. Or is it only externally-generated or -motivated change that is damage? History shows, as Graburn (1976b: 27) observed and Smith agreed, that 'groups may wish to enhance their prestige in their own or others' eyes by taking on the materials, symbols and regalia of other groups' (see, for example, the description of *la sape* status-object-displays in the Congo, by Friedman 1994: 105-6). To consider voluntary actions of this sort to be damage would be to deny people the right to self-determination. Which leaves, perhaps, cultural change which is externally-imposed against the wishes of the people themselves. But it is never possible to view a society as a unitary entity, and as Smith observes, even imposed changes of this sort may be, or may come to be welcomed by at least a sector of the indigenous community, who see material or other advantage to themselves and/or their families/societies in the new state of affairs. 'Cultural damage,' then, would seem so difficult to define clearly that it, like 'destruction,' falls into the category of slogans, with little descriptive or analytical value.

Front-region/Back-region and ‘economic dualism’

McKean ((1977)1990) described a process of indigenous choice and control through what he termed an ‘economic dualism’ in which the Balinese ‘found ways to increase their cash flow without becoming “capitalists”.’ This is essentially an elaboration of Goffmann’s (1959) proposition that people develop a front region in which they function publicly, while reserving a back region in which highly valued activities occur according to their own, rather than externally-generated agendas.

McKean’s proposition was that the Balinese of his study maintained, concurrently with some involvement in the capitalist economy, a viable non-capitalist cultural system, operating essentially via traditional (i.e. kinship and social/political alliance) channels. This is similar to my observations regarding the relationship of tourist and indigenous arts in Vatulele. However, his ‘economic dualism’ is an ideal type stressing separation of the two worlds, emphasised as ‘essentially autonomous and non-interfering’ ((1977)1990: 121). In Vatulele the two systems are neither opposed nor autonomous—they intersect constantly, and inevitably impinge significantly on and complement one another within a single totality.

McKean to a degree overlaps several other writers on material culture (Lathrap 1976; Maduro 1976; Kooijman 1977: 158-64; Graburn 1983b: 2-8; Schneebaum 1991: 28) who have asserted the capacity of communities to quarantine aspects of their culture from participation in, or commodification by tourists. The argument is generally: ‘although the commoditised culture which is produced for tourists is debased, that which is reserved for “domestic consumption” remains of high quality.’ Observers have tended either to attribute this merely to tenuous persistence or foreign intervention (e.g. Bascom 1976), or to decline to offer any explanation. With the possible partial exception of Maduro’s (1976) concerning India, there has hitherto been little suggestion that indigenous consumption might even reach a balance with tourist consumption, let alone dominate, as is the case in Vatulele. Nor has the literature hitherto contained the proposal that increasing levels of indigenous use and production of art are an indicator of social stress, though this directly correlates with Boissevain’s accounts of ritual escalation (1992; 1996a).

Kooijman’s account of *masi*-production on Moce island was the first publication to detail and discuss discrete but concurrent indigenous-purpose/tourist-commodity artifacture in Fiji. In his discussion of the relationship between *masi* made for local use and tourist-*tapa*, he concluded that at that date the standards applied to indigenous-purpose *masi* were still also applied to tourist-*tapa*, though like others,

he expressed concern regarding the perils increased tourist-*tapa* production may have for quality overall (1977: 162-4).

Based on the acknowledgement by craftspeople throughout Fiji that they take less care over tourist-trophy art than over their own, and personal experience of Western artists making 'potboiler art' for the marketplace, I too have elsewhere identified increased tourist-production as a threat to quality (Ewins 1980: 51-2)}. My proposition was that it is not possible to avoid the lowered standards and corner-cutting work practices from the commercial domain spreading to other art-making. These assumptions were severely shaken when I saw six pieces of Vatulele cloth, collected by anthropologist Cyril Belshaw about 1960, and now in the Anthropology Museum at the University of British Columbia.¹⁴ All are as technically shoddy as the worst tourist-*tapa* made in Vatulele today, and the makers were already introducing Western-style representative figuration they presumably imagined would appeal to Western customers. Measuring these examples against present norms appears to confound predictions of deterioration.

Is this a case of 'practice makes perfect' with greatly increased production? That is probably part of the explanation, but the increasing pride Vatuleleans take in their widespread identification as one of Fiji's two premier *masi*-producers (along with Moce Island) possibly plays its part also. When Nescha Teckle asked the women of Vatulele what aspect of their lives they would like recorded in her PhD thesis (1984), they responded 'write about our work,' most prominent in which is their production of *masi*. Such pride generates professional standards. Other possible aspects of the operation of aesthetics will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Associated with this is the issue of whether Vatuleleans see their tourist-*tapa* as a vehicle for transmitting some information about their culture to tourists, as Friedman has asserted is the case in Japan with the Ainu of Hokkaido (Friedman 1994: 109-12). While Vatuleleans clearly feel proud that tourists are buying 'their' product, they show little evidence that they see tourism and/or tourist-*tapa* as tools for the 'conscious reconstruction of identity' as Friedman suggests is the case with

¹⁴ In fact five long narrow pieces (Cat. Nos C1253-C1258) are listed as donated by Belshaw, plus one considerably damaged wider piece (C1335) whose limited catalogue information makes a provenance of pre-1930 possible, though it may merely have become detached from the Belshaw collection and then separately labelled. Though not provenanced, the motifs and layout of all six pieces are unmistakably Vatulelean, and Belshaw was in the 1960s working in Nadrogā/Navosā province, to which Vatulele belongs and for which it is the principle *masi*-making district. In 1997 I contacted Belshaw to ask whether he remembers when and where he obtained the *masi*, but he does not.

the Ainu in respect of their traditions, values and objects. There appear to be three issues:

- 1 . Vatulelean reconstruction of identity is an ongoing process of responding to internal and external needs, not an attempt to retrieve a severely compromised identity as is the case with the Ainu. Thus, as was proposed above and will be elaborated in Chapter Two, what Vatuleleans are creating for tourists is not a replica of a lost artform, nor exactly a sample of a living artform, but rather a simulacrum which references a living artform.
- 2 . Friedman concedes that the Ainu project may be one of creation (or at best re-creation) of a traditional culture with the specific aim of providing a product (albeit unique, and replicating aspects of a past culture) for tourism. In Chapter Two it will be argued that what is signified in such instances is not the traditions of the host society, but merely the original artforms and practices which were manifestations of those. The facsimilation of objects cannot revive the belief systems that gave rise to them — setting up a crucifix factory is unlikely to ever produce a Christian revival. It is obviously possible that this ‘culture-for-others’ as Friedman calls it can be invested with new imaginings/connotations, and that these may well be unique to the Ainu, but that is something different from what is occurring in Vatulele.
- 3 . What is occurring in Vatulele is also unlike the contrary picture Friedman (1994: 111-12) paints of the Hawaiian ethnic revival movement, which ‘defines itself in strong opposition to [the tourism] industry.’ In Fiji, economically critically important though it has become, tourism has not to date been able to establish the hegemony over indigenous culture that it has long exercised in Hawaii, nor the ‘joint venture’ status it has in Hokkaido. Continuity in indigenous culture and relative security of identity has so far permitted indigenous values and practices to coexist with tourist commercialisation, rather than either submitting to it or rejecting it.

Vatulele women concede that they make tourist-*tapa* with less care than *masi* intended for other Fijians, which approaches the quality of that made for domestic use. While they have consistently said that production has always been mainly for indigenous use, that is difficult if not impossible for even them to quantify. Teckle (1984: 440-45), describing a flourishing tourist-directed trade during the 1960s and 1970s, presented figures for tourism-related sales but none for indigenous sales or *veisā* exchanges — though she did describe the nature and form of the latter.

Whichever sector accounted for more of the production, the influence of tourist patronage from the tourist boom Fiji has experienced since the 1960s is today

impossible to disentangle from the indigenous patronage of the post-Independence cultural revitalisation boom, so any deleterious effects of tourist-*tapa* production would be buffered. Therefore, any assumptions or predictions about the inevitability of influence in either direction are unsafe, and after over forty years of such concurrent production it is difficult to argue that this is a transitional phase. There is more potential in concentrating on the socio-cultural roles *masi* plays.

Boissevain describes how, while people may require the financial benefit of tourist participation in their formal celebrations, they arrange insider-only events which they can celebrate amongst themselves, hidden from the tourist gaze:

back-stage rites of intensification are increasingly important for maintaining solidarity in communities that are ... overrun by outsiders. I would suggest that the scale of these back-stage celebrations will continue to grow as the relative importance of cultural tourism increases (1996b: 17, my emphasis).

His remarks appear to resonate with the concurrent production, and the efflorescences of both *masi* and ritual noted here, both of which may be seen as instruments used to mitigate the impact of external forces they perceive as culturally destructive, and to reassert indigenous values and identity. In Vatulele, unlike some other parts of Fiji, there is no 'front-region' ritual. The Vatulele Island Resort does not attempt the 'constructed authenticity' of the pseudo-traditional club-dances, kava ceremonies and fire-walking that are a common feature of resorts on mainland Vitilevu. The closest they come is using hotel staff to present some staged theatre with a 'generic island' flavour, but this does not impinge on Vatulelean identity in any significant way.

Tourism as the saviour of indigenous culture

McKean paraphrased Geertz in proposing a 'cultural involution' whereby tourism can sometimes stimulate and invigorate some aspects of the hosts' culture ((1977)1990: 121-2). It does this, he proposed, by providing a purpose for its maintenance as a saleable commodity, something tourists wish to see, experience and 'buy a piece of.' The evidence from Vatulele does lend qualified support for this view, since tourism first capitalised on an existing manufacturing base, then by providing a cash outlet significantly stimulated production, which finally placed the island well to respond to emergent increases in indigenous demand. However, it was infrastructure that was stimulated, not culture. McKean also suggested that there could be an improvement in quality of the product, and as reported above, the Vatulele case appears to support this.

McKean stopped far short of asserting that commercialisation alone has saved artforms from extinction, but that view has been expressed by some highly respected commentators on tourism (e.g. Graburn 1976b: 32; Mieckzkowski 1990: 297-8; Cohen 1993a: 21). The argument is broadly that tourism can lead

not only to tourists and locals alike widening their horizons but also to a regeneration in awareness and pride in their culture and traditions among the population. But for the advent of tourism many of these traditions would undoubtedly have died out (Holloway 1989: 179, my emphasis).

The first sentence may well be true, but the second expresses an insupportable certainty. Similarly, Graburn asserted that without such an external clientele 'many of the Fourth World arts and crafts would undeniably have vanished long ago' (1976b: 32). As stated, the Vatulele case does show that tourism can reinforce the infrastructure for indigenous cultural activity, where that activity is strong and tourist demand does not conflict with local requirements. But no-one can offer documented cases where tourism has saved specific traditions or practices from oblivion, if only because until these have completely ceased functioning, it is impossible to be certain that they ever will.

Such a view totally privileges exogenous forces over endogenous ones, again perpetuating the 'helpless periphery' concepts of dependency theory. It also permits a re-imagining of tourism as a force for cultural conservation rather than as the latest (and economically, numerically and geographically the greatest) manifestation of colonisation. The image is dubious. Even in cases such as that of the Ainu, what is occurring is the strategic construction of a new culture, building on what is left of the old. It is an admirable triumph of the human spirit to turn an oppressive and exploitative situation to some advantage, but not a testimony to the conservationist capacities of tourism.

In cases as diverse as dance and firewalking, but in particular indigenous art, the 'tourism as saviour' mythology has become very strong, and is heard repeatedly in Fiji, particularly from tourism industry representatives and pro-tourism government officials (who generally concur on such matters).¹⁵ Typical in both its earnest sincerity and its utter confusion was a lecture by the Fijian former general manager of Fiji Visitors Bureau (Gucake 1993), which began by asserting that 'Tourism has contributed enormously to keeping Fijian tradition and culture alive and sustainable,' then exemplified this with the 'many hotels and resorts [which]

¹⁵ On concerted action to promote tourism as cultural saviour in Africa, see Harrison (1992a: 158).

perform, display or demonstrate an item of Fijian tradition and culture a few times a week to meet the need from their clients,' and extolling the virtue of the fact that 'because they are being paid, management are able to demand authenticity, standard, length ... and quality of performance.'

Clearly, everything from tribal customs to local cuisine can be of utility to tourism, and thus a source of income, but what Gucake established more than anything was that 'he that pays the piper calls the tune.' He went on to caution that 'some ['handicraft'] items are too big and too heavy to carry on a plane or too large to be packed in suitcases. These are important points that need to be seriously considered by handicraft/souvenir sellers.' And according to makers in Vatulele, they are points constantly stressed to them also by Fiji-Indian storekeepers, who attempt to gauge tourist taste and have 'their' makers cater to it. These two components of Gucake's lecture, production control by the employer and the employer's ownership of the product, reasonably encapsulate Marx's two relations of production ((1887) 1971: Ch. 7) — alright in terms of commodity marketing, but what of the social significance of the process and product to the indigenous producers? Even Gucake found it impossible to avoid punctuating his hymn of praise with a lament for 'a tendency to lose authenticity,' the 'high demand made on islands for hotel development,' the 'drawing of Fijians away from their traditional roles [in] villages,' and 'the selling of substandard handicrafts.'

It is the sketchy understanding on the part of most Westerners (and even, quite evidently, of some Fijians in administrative and media roles) of the socio-cultural function of indigenous art and ritual, particularly in times of rapid and dramatic change, which permits the view of the tourist market as a 'saviour,' of indigenous culture. But as suggested above, that which is being produced for tourists is generally a simulacrum, not 'saved culture,' and it is difficult to see how it might 'save' the original, except by the cash it generates being used to underwrite the culturally-embedded art and ritual. As Giddens (1999) remarks of heritage tourism, the 'repackaged' experience offered 'is severed from the lifeblood of tradition, which is its connection with the experience of everyday life.' Tourism may not be the single-handed destroyer of culture it has often been branded, but it is an inept saviour.

In search of a postmodern account of indigenous and tourist arts

It is perhaps surprising that, despite the central role artists, architects and writers have played in the development of a postmodern critique over the past two decades, there has not been any major work of postmodern commentary on 'ethnic and

tourist arts' to update Graburn's and the small number of other works. Perhaps, after all, the most important contribution of Graburn and his co-authors was postmodern in spirit. This was their attempt to view, in terms wider than purely economic, the function of indigenous art in the ongoing process of small and usually economically weak societies attempting to negotiate an acceptable position for themselves under the inexorable pressures of globalising (or as they called them, modernising) forces, including but not limited to tourism.¹⁶

The devices they used, such as producing classifiable lists of typologies and models and diagrams, today appear limiting. When exceptions to models occur, there is a danger of either eliding differences or acknowledging so many exceptions and combinations that all that is actually confirmed is how diverse, and geographically and historically specific, culture is.¹⁷ While the attempt to generalise from the specific is a normal preliminary to theorisation, it is not the same as this sort of search for cultural universals, which have proven extremely elusive.¹⁸

Probably the first thoroughly postmodern commentary on tourism was that of Urry (1990), who sought to define a 'new cultural paradigm' that emphasised the regional, the semiotic and the relativistic in tourism accounts. He highlighted the expansion of the tourist consumer class, and thus the necessity for an engagement with popular culture in any academic enquiry. However, while these issues have considerable bearing on any consideration of non-Western culture (including art),

¹⁶ Typical of such an economic focus, in the same year as Graburn's collection was published Greenwood wrote of the town of Fueterrabia that 'the major impact of tourism on local people over the past twenty-five years can be summarised in one word: jobs' (cited in de Kadt 1979: 34).

¹⁷ For example, Graburn produced a list of 7 possible directions of change, then imposed further caveats: 'Not all contemporary arts of the Fourth World fit the above scheme neatly [and] many art forms fit more than one category at the same time' (Graburn 1976b: 5-8). Such 'ideal-type' models are of doubtful value when lists become large and exceptions as numerous as exemplars.

¹⁸ Smelser (1996) has pointed out that many social scientists may well still argue that the search for cultural universals is an essential objective of their discipline, as constructed in the image of the physical sciences. At least one indigenous African scholar argues in favour of the existence of cultural universals, on the grounds that recognition of such universals would prevent Africans' exclusion from 'mainstream' culture (Wiredu 1990). But many today believe the quest to be forlorn. Lyotard (1988) has argued that it is no longer possible to 'speak in the name of an "unquestioned" universality,' indeed has argued that 'the modern project (of realising universality) has not been abandoned or forgotten, but destroyed, "liquidated"' (Lyotard 1992: 36). Even Edmund Leach, certainly no postmodernist, observed that the search for cultural universals has probably yielded only a rather short list of universals of an abstract structural nature, relating to man's 'genetic endowment' (1984: 111). A response to Wiredu might therefore be that while many features are shared in different combinations among cultures, few are universal to all.

Urry's focus, like that of the early MacCannell and most other predecessors, was on the tourist, and on tourism as the postmodern archetype it has become, rather than on local society. His sole comments on the subject of indigenous culture were in his (certainly incisive) observations regarding world fairs such as Brisbane's Expo 88, at which many countries presented their 'repackaged traditions' as 'simulacra' which permitted the visitor 'to be a flâneur, [to] stroll between ... signs of different cultures' (1990: 152-3). It would be difficult to find a more pithy definition to apply to the nature of, and tourist responses to, the reconstituted indigenous products which comprise 'airport art.' It still begs the question, however, of how societies continue to use their indigenous arts for their own ongoing needs.

One of MacCannell's many important observations was that tourism is experience sold as commodity (1976: 23-8). Postmodern consumers are under pressure to purchase:

There is a pressure to spend: on the *social level*, the pressure of symbolic rivalry, for the needs of self-construction through acquisition ... of distinction and difference, of the search for social approval through lifestyle and symbolic membership (Bauman 1992: 50, my emphasis).

Because of a perceived economic potential, the benefits of 'visitation' are commonly represented by governments, tourist organisers and many academics as being reciprocally advantageous, but in reality the 'guests' usually have little at stake beyond money, while the 'hosts' must place a great deal on the table — sometimes, as Smith ruefully admits, a great deal more than they realise — as they are dealt into a game they seldom solicit but have no option of refusing. Cultural capital, it appears, obeys Marxist principles much as economic capital does: it cannot be created *de novo*, and is only accumulated as the result of an unequal transaction.

The tourist 'handicraft' industry in Fiji

Fijians, on the evidence, have always preferred to commodify their artifacts rather than other aspects of their culture. Despite the role of artifacts in maintaining their identity, these already had a well-established mutability of role which permitted their 'detachment' in a way not available to rituals or other identity mechanisms. Like other islanders, Fijians quite early developed strategies for providing tourists with trinkets they were prepared to pay good money for, while conserving their indigenous art for themselves, a tradition to which Vatulele's tourist-*tapa* is heir.

This 'trinketisation' (to borrow Valene Smith's term) was noted in relation to the visit of one of the regular passenger liners in 1912: 'The arrival of the mail-steamer is a great event in Suva, and all along the pier vendors were squatting, displaying such articles as might attract travellers — pure white coral, shells, baskets, necklaces' (King 1920:10). By that time some tourist infrastructure had developed in Suva — one writer noted having 'exhausted the attractions of the curio shops' (Grimshaw 1906: 30).

Apart from selling agricultural produce and fish, selling artifacts represented the only commercial activity in which Fijians engaged to any extent for many years, and for many Fijian villagers those remain their principal commercial avenues. The most thorough survey to date of Fijian tourist 'handicraft' marketing is still that undertaken by Britton twenty years ago, as part of a compendious survey of Fiji tourism, and his observations remain applicable:

[While] it would seem that for Fijians handicraft vending is 'women's work' ... [this is] a misleading explanation for the preponderance of Fijian women ... over half of [whom] undertook vending to supplement the inadequate wages of their husbands, and another 13 percent resorted to vending to overcome financial difficulties caused by various personal crises in lieu of unavailable social welfare services. In other words ... handicraft vending provides an avenue for earning a little income for many of those unable to participate fully in the limited capitalist sector of the Fiji economy. At the same time over 20 percent of vendors had specific cash targets indicating that vending is also a means for those living in rural villages to supplement their largely subsistence state with some cash income (Britton 1983: 130).

The marketing of tourist artifacts is, however, dependent on the success of tourism, though the converse may not be true. And the fortunes of Fiji's tourism industry have been mixed. The trigger for Fiji's tourism explosion was the post-WW2 increase in air traffic. Just as it had always been a convenient anchorage and watering stop between the US and Australia/New Zealand, so Fiji offered a convenient refuelling stop for aeroplanes flying the same route, utilising airports at Nadi and Nausori constructed by the US forces as military airfields in the early 1940s. The advent in the late 1950s of the large-bodied jet airliners caused a total change in the scale and nature of tourism in Fiji. Flight times reduced drastically, and with doubled passenger capacity non-discretionary travel by businessmen and civil servants could no longer fill seats, and aggressive tourism marketing began.

The effect of this airborne invasion was dramatic. In 1958 there were 12,000 disembarked tourists, earning the country \$F2.5m. By 1985 the figures had soared to 240,000 tourists, bringing in \$F165m, second only to sugar (figures: Britton 1983: 9,29; Britton & Clarke 1987: 27). Despite a setback following the Coup in 1987, by 1990 a record number of 280,000 tourists had been reached, with gross earnings of \$F329m (Callick 1992). Thus in 30 years tourist numbers had grown 7,500% and revenues 9,100%.

These events coincided with Britain's decision to quit the colony, which occurred in 1970 (see Chapter Four). Tourism was one of the neo-colonial forces that rushed into the resulting vacuum. In Fiji 'as in many other peripheral economies ... international tourism capital ... was based upon the interaction of foreign and local élites in the pursuit of their own interests and mutual benefit' (Britton 1983: 30-31). The national income tourism generated for the new nation, desperate as it was for economic bases, rapidly entrenched it in the politico-economic structure of Fiji. By the time locals started weighing up costs and benefits in the late 1970s, recognising that they were receiving only 'crumbs from the table,' Fiji was already a hostage. Even serious doubts about the amount of overseas 'leakage' from this sector, making 'foreign capital the main beneficiary of the industry,' and the fact that 'the distribution of tourist income aggravates already serious class and racial tensions in Fiji society (Samy 1977) could not be addressed in any meaningful way.¹⁹

The nature of the tourists changed too. Up until the 1950s there were two main (and polarised) groups: 'adventure tourists' — explorers, travellers, adventurers and sightseers — many of whom had a genuine interest in experiencing and obtaining mementos of Fijian culture, and cruise-liner day-stopover tourists who were generally less informed and discriminating, and bought trinkets. The majority of the new tourists were escape- and pleasure-seekers, and if anything their interest in indigenous souvenirs was even less distinguished than that of cruise-liner passengers. The Korolevu Beach Hotel was one of the first resort hotels built post-WW2 (Britton 1983: 28), located on the Coral Coast due north of Vatulele and located in the bay which was the Vatuleleans' traditional landing-place. As will be

¹⁹ Two officers from the Department of Planning, interviewed in July 1993, confirmed that the issue of leakage was still one of major concern to them, but while they outlined attempts to encourage local producers of appropriate goods, foods and services, they did not see these as able to counter the problem. They cited the tax concessions, investment allowances and import duties concessions being offered as 'incentives' to hotels (in the vast majority of cases, owned by overseas corporations) as being counterproductive since virtually all went offshore.

discussed in Chapter Eight, it played a role in the future of Vatulele, in particular in the tourist-commercialisation of its bark-cloth and development of tourist-*tapa*.

Over the past four decades, Fiji has been promoted as a sybaritic playground, a place to get away from it all and unwind — at the time of writing, the Official Fijian Tourism Site on the internet (<http://www.fijifvb.gov.fj/>) runs the slogan ‘The one truly relaxing tropical getaway.’ Marketing strategists long ago recognised that there were two great drawcards which had become ‘markers’ implanted in the consciousness of international tourists. The first, shared with tropical venues everywhere, is the classic ‘4S’ image of ‘sun, surf, sand and sex.’ The other is unique — the Fijian people themselves. The ‘smiling Fijian’ is Fiji’s most potent marketing tool, supporting the advertising slogan of ‘the way the world ought to be.’ But though most Fijians fulfil their numerous roles in the tourist industry with sincerity, it is doubtful whether ‘the world ought to be’ based on such unequal relationships as they have with their employers and guests.

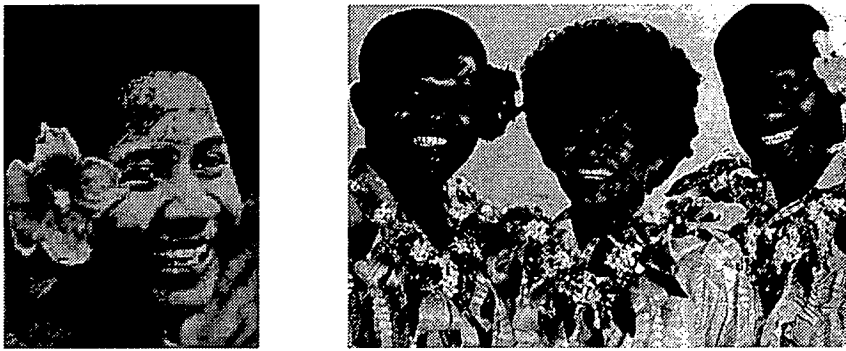


Fig. 2. The smiling Fijian. (a) Information sheet for the South Pacific Tourism Council (b) Flyer for Denarau Island Resort, Sheraton Fiji.

The image was dealt a body blow by the 1987 Coup. Escapist tourists saw in media images not smiling waiters or gentle women playing with children, but fierce-eyed men with moustaches and Armalite rifles, kidnapping their elected Prime Minister and beating and harassing their hapless Indian countrymen. It was able to be rationalised — some tourism writers had already explored jokes about Fiji having ‘too many Indians, not enough Chiefs,’ and this provided a simplistic explanation for the Coup that seemed to satisfy them. But the marker was tarnished.

It was damaged further by a major hurricane in 1990, producing television pictures of bedraggled tourists being evacuated from their ‘paradise’ islands. The government in 1992 commissioned a slick, professional F\$1m advertising campaign (Callick 1992), emphasising ethnic and cultural attractions, and adding some carefully limited adventure tourism for good measure.²⁰ But before this could

²⁰ ACM Advertising executive, personal communication 2/4/93

yield great results, in 1993 what may well have been the worst hurricane in recorded history hit western Fiji. Torrential rains washed out major bridges on either side of the International Airport, one at Ba and one at Sigatoka, isolating the tourism heartland of the Coral Coast. In June/July 1993, those in the tourism industry were expressing deep concern, with average hotel occupancy rates below 40%.²¹ As the industry struggled to recover, only the minority of businesses catering to the types of tourists who did continue to come — at one extreme the very wealthy, at the other blue-collar workers and backpackers — managed to do well (Bainimara 1993; Francis 1993; Livingstone 1993). But unlike the pre-WW2 polarised groups, it is said that neither of these spend much on indigenous art, buying respectively high-value items like jewellery, or ‘standard’ souvenir items like t-shirts (Naivalurua 1993). The tourist market for Fijian indigenous art has probably never looked less promising.

All of which might be expected to have had a disastrous effect on the bark-cloth industry of Vatulele. Yet in 1995, Vatuleleans claimed that they were selling as much *masi* as they had before the Coup, some even believed sales were increasing, and the chiefs of Ekubu-Taunovo and Lomanikaya evinced a high level of confidence. Clearly other forces are sustaining value and demand, the indigenous origins of which are clearly substantiated (see survey, Appendix 5), and this is probably instrumental in keeping prices for *tapa* in the ‘handicraft’ shops of Nadi and Suva steady while most other goods and services in tourism succumbed to the negativity of the market.

Summary:

This chapter has surveyed the academic literature relating to tourism in a search for explanations to some of the questions identified in the Introduction in relation to Vatulele’s *masi*. Of particular interest is the claim by Vatuleleans that their very visible Western market for *masi*, which is principally tourist-based, absorbs far less

²¹ Many people directly involved in tourism and tourist-art marketing were interviewed in the course of this research: Mr Justin Francis, Acting Permanent Secretary of Tourism; Mr Isimeli Bainimara, Manager of the Fiji Visitors’ Bureau; Mr Jagdishwar Singh, Chief Executive of the Fiji Hotels Association; Ms Kesaia Tuisawau, Principal Economic Planning Officer, Central Planning Office; Mr Isimeli Bolabola, General Secretary of the National Union of Hotel and Catering Employees; Mr Martin Livingstone, co-owner and manager of the Vatulele Resort Hotel and previous manager of Turtle Island Resort; Mr William Clark, former owner/manager of Korolevu Beach Hotel; Mr Barry Gardner, sometime manager of a number of resorts in Fiji including Toberua Resort; Ms Kiti Makasiale, Secretary of the Fiji Arts Council and the Ministry of Women and Culture; Adi Asenaca Gonelevu, Manager of the Fiji Government Handicrafts Centre; Ms Emele Naivalurua, co-owner of Wolf’s Handicrafts, Suva.

of their production than does their own domestic use combined with the still-growing market to other Fijians.

While there has been considerable attention paid to the cultural impact of tourism, it has been shown here that relatively little of this has focused on indigenous art. Exceptions such as Graburn (1976b) have shown clear awareness that art and identity are linked, but there has until very recently been little attempt to understand exactly how that relationship works other than as 'signs of recognition,' which this thesis will argue is only one, albeit an important, aspect of the meaning carried by art and mobilised in the negotiation of identity.

The extreme position that tourism is the arch-destroyer of indigenous culture has been shown to be both simplistic and somewhat patronising. Though pervasive and sometimes corrosive, its relative recency, this must be considered in the context of its coexistence with numerous other cultural, technological and economic forces for change. It is patronising insofar as it perpetuates now-largely-discredited views of indigenous people as a powerless periphery able to exercise little agency. Conversely, at the other extreme there has been an assumption in much of the literature that tourist art is directly developed from the culturally-embedded form, and that the patronage of tourism has indeed saved much indigenous art from extinction. This is due to a failure to analyse the meaning of tourist art in relation to that of culturally-embedded art, and it has been argued here that in cases such as Vatulele's *masi*, tourist art is a simulacrum produced specifically for the tourist market, bearing little if any of the significance for the maker group that the embedded form possesses. It has also been suggested that tourists are generally aware that what they are buying is a simulacrum, and are satisfied with, even prefer, that provided they feel that the referent form has a continuing role in the parent society.

The marketing of souvenirs to tourists is shown to have a long history in Fiji, and to have early led to the development of artifacts targeted directly at tourists. It is suggested that this may be viewed as an intentional strategy to provide an alternative commodity for tourism, both quarantining the embedded artform and facilitating the parallel development of two types of artifacture. Both of these effects are held to be operating in Vatulele, and have been documented for other societies (e.g. Bali, India).

Finally, the rapid post-WW2 development of tourism has been shown to have faltered in the wake of the 1987 Coup and several natural disasters. While it has been suggested (and will later be shown) that this provided the direct stimulus for

Vatulele's development of tourist-*tapa*, and probably indirectly enhanced their capacity to respond to increasing indigenous demand, the tourism downturn appears to have had little effect on the volume of production of *masi* or its market value (matters elaborated in Chapter Eight). The reasons must lie elsewhere than in tourism itself, and the obvious place to seek them is in the indigenous domain.

The chapters that follow, therefore, examine the role of indigenous art as well as its transformation into tourist art, and how ritual art and ritual function in negotiating identity. Chapters Two and Three seek an appropriate theoretical foundation. After exploring the marginalisation of material culture generally in the literature of the social sciences, the role of indigenous art in contemporary group processes of identity construction and maintenance is examined. MacCannell maintained that it is 'a basic tenet of Marx's analysis, perhaps its most controversial point: that the most important relationship in modern society is not between man and man (as in peasant society) but between man and his productions ... man in our modern society is related to others only through the things he makes' (1976: 21). Subsequent chapters marshal the historical and empirical evidence which articulates with the theoretical position established. Vatulele's increasing manufacture of *masi*, seen largely as supplying the rituals which are increasing in number and type throughout Fiji, is seen as part of the 'politicisation of cultural identity' (Cohen 1995: 4), strategies to contest external impositions (MacClancy 1997b) and configure and sustain a complex identity in times of social and cultural stress. Tourism-related commercialisation emerges as a relatively minor part of the picture for Vatulele.

Chapter Two

ART AND IDENTITY

Each man talks of the aims of art, and each in an alien tongue (Kipling (1890) 1960: 337).

Oceanic art was and is created in cultural milieux that do not share Western premises about what art is, how it is produced, or what its effects are ... [it] challenges a whole range of Western expectations concerning knowledge and social relationships as well as art (Thomas 1995: 9).

It has been stated previously that *masi* functions as a social instrument in a more overt and direct manner than does most contemporary Western art, and that it is in the realms of identity construction, maintenance and adjustment that it functions most particularly. This chapter will therefore examine the definition of art as a part of the object domain with an intentionally assigned meaning, and the relation of that meaning to social identity. As noted in Chapter One, the social role of indigenous art has consistently been given less attention than its economic role. This is related here to two things: the neglect of art in the social sciences generally, associated with Western philosophical separation of thought and praxis, and Western assumptions about the art of colonised peoples. Before embarking on the discussion, it is important to clarify how the key terms culture, art, and identity are being used:

Culture is conventionally distinguished from social structure as the ‘symbolic and learned aspects of human society’ (Marshall 1996: 104-5), poetically expressed by Geertz: ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun ... [and] I take culture to be those webs’ (1973: 5). Throughout this thesis it will be argued that the strands of art are inextricably interwoven with those of other carriers of meaning, rejecting the received wisdom which separates ‘material culture’ from ‘adaptive culture,’ and denies art a cognitive role.

Art in its broadest conceptualisation spans many domains, including the spatio-temporal transmission of meaning, as in music, dance and performance, and particularly in Pacific cultures it may be ‘problematic if we presume that art only inheres in objects’ (Thomas 1995: 29). However, it would be cumbersome to be constantly particularising, and given the focus of this thesis, the word ‘art’ should be read as referring to intentionally-produced objects such as *masi* and mats.

However, it is made abundantly clear that these operate in the widest possible context of meaning, in particular what is here termed the ‘multi-media performances’ of ritual.

A premise of socio-semiotics is that all objects are endowed with meanings, and function within society, indeed have social lives, according to those meanings. Shils (1975: 240) foreshadowed this: ‘the material interface [is located at the] center of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern the society [and the] activities, roles and persons, within the network of institutions.’ This central importance has meant that while many valued objects have accrued their meanings through accidents of function and/or history, others have had meaning intentionally inscribed to enhance their utility in the ‘network of institutions.’ Though what may be called ‘art’ is a vigorously debated semantic issue, this intentionality of inscription (if not the nature of it) is one of its more widely-agreed defining characteristics. Inscribed meanings relate variously to the materiality, narratives, beliefs, emotions, thoughts, and/or aspirations which together may be seen as comprising the identity of the individual or group doing the inscribing. In considering meaning, however, as Peirce (1955) maintained, effects must also be considered, and the manner in which Vatuleleans adjust intention to manage effect in the social meaning of *masi* is a major theme of this thesis.

Every individual Vatulelean artist is engaged in producing the group’s evolving but consensually-accepted identity signs. By contrast, most contemporary Western artists, whose work may reflect, critique, reject, or ignore the identity of the wider society, perceive themselves as autonomous agents producing markers of their *own* identity. But these are frequently so incoherent to others that theirs becomes a socially ‘inconsequential exercise ... [in which the artist] has no choice but to cover up his tracks and slip into elusiveness’ (Gablik 1991: 16).

Identity, defined most succinctly by Heidegger (1969: 11) as ‘belonging together,’ is dealt with here as a dynamic state of imagining, in which individuals and groups perceive themselves relative to others in terms of differences and commonalities, and constantly re-negotiate those relativities.

A spread of theoretical discourse bearing on identity will be examined in this chapter, including two formulated as action theories. There is wide agreement that social devices relevant to constructing, maintaining and adjusting identity are mobilised most at times of social stress, when the society perceives its identity to be under threat. One theory proposes a definition of the nature of socially affective art (vs non-affective art) and traces a history of periods of artistic efflorescence,

relating these to social stress, and evaluating their capacity for mitigating that stress. It lends support to the suggestion made in the Introduction that an increase in the production of culturally-embedded indigenous arts, such as Vatulele's *masi*, may be seen as an instrument for reaffirming group identity as a counter-reaction to perceived threats (some related to tourism). This can be seen to be quite separate from, though very possibly (even logically) concurrent with, tourism's commercialisation of indigenous art.

Indigenous art

Unfortunately, to date not even this seemingly straightforward term is uncontested, let alone how it might operate socially and culturally. British and European sociologists and anthropologists have for most of this century evaded discussion of the issue by marginalising all 'material culture' in the field of their focus. It has, however, been prominent in two areas of anthropological enquiry:

- 1 . the exchange of 'wealth' in non-Western societies, the social structures for which were recognised as being vital to the social fabric of the groups taking part;
- 2 . the taxonomy and classification of non-Western artifacts by museum anthropologists.

MacKenzie (1991: 23) has pointed out that goods exchanges and prestations have predominantly been represented in economic terms which do little to advance the understanding of how the objects themselves function. Objects have frequently even been stated to be unimportant in themselves, mere 'counters' with 'exchange value' (Sahlins 1972, esp. Ch 6). But the very 'exchange value' of these 'special objects' which societies choose to circulate is in fact 'social value,' based in large part on their signifying often prodigious amounts of meaning. Nor is this merely ascribed meaning, but is frequently painstakingly inscribed in both the form and figuration of the objects themselves. An understanding of goods circulation therefore requires a study of the manner in which meaning is embedded in and transmitted by them, in concert with emotions and aesthetic responses. These issues are central to the discussion in the following chapters.

The 'museological' approach perhaps bears even more responsibility for the marginalisation of material culture in anthropology, because of its tendency to detach objects from their original cultural context and recontextualise them either typologically, processually or aesthetically in terms of Western systems. Where this ignores the human systems in which the objects were created to function, it results in a 'fetishism of the object' (MacKenzie 1991: 23) quite different from that which may have obtained originally — indeed failure to seek meaning and a social role for

the objects in their originating societies fosters the view that they lacked these.

The neglect of the object in the social sciences relates to the Cartesian dualistic perception of knowledge (and thus theory) as being distinct from the material world generally, and the consignment of all human material productions to the realm of praxis, as opposed to language, which is posited as the only recognised vehicle for the expression of thought. Implying mutual exclusivity of thought and materiality, seeing culture as 'a product of the human imagination which exists only in the mind rather than as a material interface between man and the world of nature' (Leach 1984: 40) and thereby relegating objects (including art) to mere instrumentality, has been a widely-adopted approach in the social sciences (particularly British and European) for over a century (see elaboration of these arguments in Ryan 1981; Bernstein 1992; May 1993: 3-19).¹

Mukerji maintains that it is precisely because objects do *not* function exactly like verbal or written language, that their transmission of meaning is more than only 'visual communication' though nonetheless 'as central as language' (1994: 159). It is this extra-linguistic capacity which allows 'things' to fashion human bonds and facilitate life in ways that are interesting. It has been pointed out that art, along with play and ritual, has the capacity for making socially important activities 'special,' memorable and pleasurable (Dissanayake 1988) in ways not available through communication alone. Lash (1988) has summarised the postmodern expression of this as two ways of knowing, 'sensation'² and 'interpretation.'

A restoration of balance has been the project of a number of studies over the past decade or so (e.g. Appadurai 1986b; Pfaffenberger 1988; Thomas 1991; Prown 1993; Mukerji 1994). They elaborate how objects operate in ways specific to particular groups or societies, which at particular times employ them as components of their own 'relational and always incomplete' identities (Lash 1990: 89; Hall 1992). Thus 'human-made objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased or used them ... [and] by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to

¹ Ryan (1981: 8-9) related this back to John Stuart Mill's influential advocacy, in his *System of Logic* ((1843)1970), of the methodology of the physical sciences to legitimate the fledgling social sciences. Smelser (1996: 280-82) has drawn similar conclusions to Ryan about both the reasons for, and the shortcomings of, natural science methods in the social sciences. Their use allows little scope for the practice and products of art to be viewed as important components of man's intellectual life, since they for these defy quantification and proof at every turn.

² What Gottdiener terms 'pragmatic understanding' (1995: 25-6).

which these individuals belonged' (Prown 1993: 1). But once that meaning has been assigned, and roles established for objects in social transactions, they become powerful in their own right — 'social actors' (Appadurai 1986a), 'agencies or quasi-agencies' (Riggins 1994a).

Maquet (1993) points out that there are many ways in which objects operate in perception: as instruments (a knife is a cutting tool), symbols (knives are phallic, aggressive, frightening), indicators (gangs use knives, thus knife-wearing indicates gang membership), through to referent (the physical object: knife). Through these significations objects play an instrumental role in both memory and conceptualisation. People remember 'how to engage with objects so that such and such an event might occur. ... There are objects that are made specially in order that they might help us remember. They do this by their form and location as well as by the text they might bear ... [establishing] a link with the past which helps sustain identity' (Middleton & Edwards 1990: 47-8). Artforms such as *masi* do this, but by affirming identity they provide the confidence to negotiate change and approach the future as well.

'It's striking, but is it art?' (Kipling (1890) 1960: 337)

This question has long bedevilled art-theoretical considerations of objects and actions, in what McEvilley has described as 'an essentially religious type quest for unchanging verities' (1992: 167) — a self-contradictory attempt to conflate the 'irrational' domain (which modernism deprived of autonomy, but without which any consideration of art is futile) with the nomothetic³ rationality modernism espoused. The inability of art theorists, philosophers and anthropologists to reach any agreement about the nature of Western cultures has made all but impossible a non-partisan understanding of non-Western art, resulting in what Clifford (1988: 195) calls 'the incoherence of the modern Rorschach of "the primitive".'

Though difficult to define, 'art' (particularly as 'fine art') has come to occupy an elevated status relative to the remainder of man-made objects, and was conceded even by high modernists to have a significant social role, certainly as a marker of power and status, but also as reflection of and commentary on society. To secure that status from possible erosion, part of the modernist project of differentiation was to hierarchise the arts and place 'craft' below 'fine' arts (with painting and

³ Nomothetic approaches are those which seek 'law-like statements about social life' (Marshall 1996: 233), as compared with ideographic approaches which highlight the unique, historical particularity of social phenomena.

sculpture foremost), and also to place trivialising adjectival caveats on the art of groups outside the cultural élites, such as ‘folk art’ or ‘popular’ art. The excluded groups, as Bourdieu pointed out ((1979)1992: 114-5), are generally poor not only in ‘officially’ sanctioned cultural capital but also in social and political capital, and have had no power to reject such categorisations.

Colonisers’ certainty of ‘racial’ superiority and agenda of domination generally excluded the productions of colonised peoples, however sophisticated in their own terms, from the prestigious category of art. When some undeniable masterpieces of Africa, Oceania and the Americas were finally accorded this status (Einstein 1915), they remained shackled to the imagined socio-cultural inferiority of their makers by calling them ‘primitive’ art. Women’s artifacts, suffering the extra burden of gender discrimination which invariably compounded colonialist racism (Knapman 1986: 170; Weiner 1989), were very seldom accorded even ‘primitive art’ status, instead being pushed to the bottom of this artificial ‘language of domination’ (Graburn 1976b: 4) under perhaps the most trivialising epithet of all, ‘handicraft.’ This has long been applied in Fiji to all female and most male artifacture — particularly that offered for sale to tourists, but even including transcendent examples of traditional and ritual art.⁴

The lack of comparable words for ‘art’ in many cultures (including Fijian) has often been produced in defence of such devaluation — overlooking the fact that the ancient Greeks, whose products served as models for ‘high art’ for the rest of the Western world over two millennia, also had no precise word for art (Danto 1988). Yet their ‘non-art’ underpinned Western art until, at the turn of the 20th Century, ‘primitive art’ (from African cultures which also lacked a word for ‘art’) provided the stimulus for some of the most profound paradigm-shifts in Western art.

The ongoing impact of such thinking on even those most supportive of non-Western arts is significant. A recent work focussing on the social role of Asian-Pacific women’s arts was called *The Necessity of Craft* (Kaino 1995). Editor Kaino explains her paraphrasing of *The Necessity of Art* (Fischer 1963) as a wish to ‘comment on the tendency to exclude “craft” from the category of “art” ... [failing] to take into account ... the complex layers of social and ritual meanings

⁴ Ironically, along with many other colonial structures disadvantageous to Fijians, this denigrating term and its associated attitudes have been perpetuated by post-Independence Fijian-dominated governments. The official body charged with fostering, promoting and marketing traditional Fijian art is called the Government Handicraft Centre, and all official publications use the same term whenever referring to indigenous arts.

which attach to women's craft production' (1995: viii-ix). Yet even referring to indigenous art as 'craft' unintentionally mires it in the modernist 'art/craft' debates that the authors recognise as being so vexatious in Western culture, and are even more irrelevant to any discussion of Pacific art.⁵

Rather than distorting the nature and intentions of Fijian artifacture in terms of Western-defined hierarchical categories, this thesis adopts the postmodern policy of de-differentiation of categories (Lash 1988; 1990: 11-15).⁶ Thus rather than debating 'art' vs. 'primitive art' vs. 'craft' vs. 'handicraft,' the terms 'art,' 'artifacts' and 'artifecture' are used to describe all of the productions which Fijians have intentionally imbued with meaning and involved in their social mechanisms.⁷ By that definition, these terms must also be detached from notions of praxis versus theory — they are in terms of their intention, manufacture and use critically important devices for transforming thought and belief into tangible form.

To employ de-differentiation as an analytical strategy to avoid inapplicable modernist boundaries does not justify a blanket application of postmodern theory to non-Western cultures such as Fiji's. The very pluralism of postmodernism, and its rejection of overarching narratives, both dictate sifting its structural propositions from its site-specific descriptions of Western culture — if there is anything which has emerged clearly out of the study of culture it is its contingency. If the critical, sceptical, ironic view postmodern theory takes of Western modernism serves to validate a plurality of indigenous cultural practices and strategies, each with both differences from and commonalities with particular Western examples, it has great potential. But to uncritically re-invent other cultures yet again in terms of late-

⁵ 'The point is,' Philip Dark remarked, 'most Westerners have sought [to define] art in other parts of the world in terms of its manifestations found in their own culture' (1978: 33), a point Nicholas Thomas still felt it was necessary to not only make, but elaborate on at some length 17 years later, commencing with the statement 'The problem lies in the limited application of Western notions of the individual, production and property in Oceania' (1995: 116).

⁶ Lash discussed Artaud's understanding of Balinese dance as an example of cultural de-differentiation insofar as 'such theatre, in a sense reminiscent of pre-modern art, takes on important ritualistic functions' (1988: 321). A more obvious interpretation may be that Balinese dance was never differentiated in the first place, and that ritual functions were inherent in it, probably generative of it. This was clearly grist for the mill of Western theorists critiquing modernism, but it is interesting that they could only understand it in terms of that modernism.

⁷ Gell (1996) appears to come close to this position, arguing that anthropologists should adopt 'a broader notion of interpretability, encompassing the objectification of "complex intentionalities" in pragmatic and technical modes, as well as the project of communicating autonomous symbolic meaning' (1996: 37).

twentieth century Western postmodernity would be to turn postmodern theory itself into a grand theory, and breathe new life into old misunderstandings.

Art and meaning

The significance of 'the figural domain' in the transmission of meaning has been argued earlier in this chapter, and socio-semiotic analysis has been proposed for discerning where this meaning lies and how it is transmitted. Semiotics has been succinctly stated as comprising 'signifier, signified and referent, in which the *signifier* is often a word or statement, the *signified* is a concept or a thought and the *referent* an object in the real world to which both signifier and signified connect' (Lash 1988: 319, my italics).⁸ Objects can function not merely as referents, but also as signifiers for other objects, for signified concepts (as described by Maquet in the citation above), or even for other signifiers, as Peirce pointed out and Eco and Baudrillard elaborated. But though he shared Baudrillard's view of an emergent postmodern hyperreality, Eco rejected the proposition that signifiers can be totally detached from their signifieds (and by extension their referents).⁹ Sperber agreed: 'freed from the signified, [a] signifier is ... [reduced to] a dubious metaphor whose only merit is to avoid the problem of the nature of symbolism, not to resolve it' (1975: 52).

Gottdiener criticises both symbolic interactionism and postmodern cultural analysis for continuing to 'privilege the mental over the material' and like many other commentators on art, he is also critical of (Saussurean) structural semiotics for its lack of attention to the social. What is required, he holds, is a synthetic study, which he refers to as 'social semiotics,' dealing with 'communication through Symbolic Interaction, and ... signification through the expressive symbols of

⁸ Lash's shorthand is an adaptation of the Saussurean scheme which at its simplest level stated that *signified* + *signifier* = *sign*, with the concept of *referent* incorporated in the *signified*. Derrida (1976) and Bakhtin (1981) based a critique of the Saussurean system on the polysemic, mutable relationship between signifier(s) and signified(s) (Gottdiener 1995: 19-22). This qualification does not, however, invalidate the terms *signifier*, *signification*, *signified*, *sign* and *referent*, which all retain currency in semiotic debate.

⁹ Gottdiener (1995: 23) comments: 'Baudrillard, Barthes, Derrida and other deconstructionists accept Peirce's concept of ultimate regress — i.e., meaning arising from the endless play of signifiers — because signs are defined by other signs. But none accept ... that, in the end, we [must] confront the "absolute object" ... Eco, however, disagrees with the deconstructionist conception of meaning as the free play of signifiers. He suggests that ... meaning must always ... be linked to signifieds.'

material culture' (1995: 55).¹⁰

There is, however, considerable spirited opposition to the application of semiotics to art, even to the proposition that art is about meaning, as asserted here. Sperber (1975), for instance, argued against the semiotic analysis of 'symbols' (by which term he conflates what are here distinguished as 'signs' and 'myths'), rejecting assumptions that symbols have meanings in much the same way words do, and distinguishing the conceptual representations of symbols from the transmission of 'encyclopaedic' knowledge. Both objections are actually consistent with the reservations and stipulations in this thesis, but what the problems demand is a broadened concept of meaning, not the abandonment of semiotic analysis.

MacClancy (1997a: 3) on the other hand criticises structuralists such as Lévi-Strauss for their over-confident interpretations of the complex cultural messages of indigenous items, and tendency to 'exaggerate local consensus about the meanings and roles of the objects and to over-emphasise the boundedness of particular cultures, as though they were wholes unto themselves.' Such problems relate to underestimating the multi-vocality and ambiguity of art, however, and in no way deny that art bears complex meanings, or that it is valid to attempt to understand those meanings. MacClancy recognises 'cross-cultural contexts where peoples fight with art, where they negotiate and dispute the meanings it can bear' (1997a: 2). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the domain of indigenous art is all contested ground, but should still command our best efforts to understand it, rather than retreating to the relative safety of taxonomy or reportage alone, or worst of all, the general neglect of previous decades.

Praxis and meaning

Despite the divisions, it is clear that there has been a widespread and fundamental shift in cultural analysis from the modernist position defined so confidently by Leach (1984: 40). While, as Gottdiener says, praxis continues to be underrated, it

¹⁰ In clarifying the distinction between communication and signification, Gottdiener provides an answer to MacKenzie's complaint that (structural) semiotics, in its pursuit of meaning, tended to overlook 'the actual human behaviour through which the object and its signification are constructed' (MacKenzie 1991: 24). Turner had similar misgivings, and proposed a new system he called 'comparative symbology' (1982: Ch.1). Turner's and MacKenzie's rejection of the terms 'semiotics' and 'semiology' seem to be based on particular semantic parameters which Gottdiener shows can be re-set to overcome the difficulties without inventing a new discipline. There is also dubious logic to Barley's suggestion, having just criticised the exclusive use of either semiotics or the social, that they are somehow inimical, that one must choose either/or as a strategy (Barley 1983; cited in MacKenzie 1991).

is at least now less often viewed as opposed to thought. Mukerji (1994: 161) gives substantial credit for this paradigm shift, not to the French postmodernists, but to Kuhn. But Kuhn too was pre-empted by Dewey, who opposed the credo of thought versus practice precisely when others were most vigorously expounding it (e.g. Dewey (1934)1958).

Boyne (1988: 527) suggested that 'the postmodern sensibility involves a shift of emphasis from epistemology to ontology ... understood as a shift from knowledge to experience, from theory to practice, from mind to body.' Actually, in each instance the shift has not been from one to the other, but from one to both. If the postmodern debate has reminded us of anything, it has been to value inclusiveness and eschew exclusivity.

The recognition in cultural analysis of the significance of practice and of signification means that there is now the potential, at last, to not only recognise but attempt to analyse the important role of material culture in non-Western cultures, provided it is understood that this role may well be different either in principle or in degree from the role material culture plays in contemporary Western culture. All artifacture has sign-functions, and as Eco pointed out, the level and nature of that sign-function depends on three things:

1. Context;
2. Intentionality on the part of the initiators; and
3. Acceptance and recognition on the part of those receiving or responding to, the intended signification.¹¹

It may be concluded from the above that expanded from its linguistic origins, the limitations of which caused its fall from grace in theoretical debate about objects, semiotics provides a most useful tool for understanding how societies encode and transmit meaning through their artifacts and rituals. It is therefore used in this thesis, but as with postmodernism, used with caution as a method of enquiry in order to arrive at understanding, not as a system of belief.

¹¹ Eco holds that a *sign* is 'always an element of an expression plane conventionally correlated to one (or several) elements of a content plane ... in a transitory relation' (1979: 48-9). It is this relation that is its sign-function, and the transitoriness permits the sign to have more than one sign-function, either simultaneously or at different times, by entering different relations of content to form a new sign. The 'content' of art is multivalent, permitting a range of meanings to be agreed between initiator and respondents, or between makers and users of ritual art.

Denotation and connotation

Douglas (1994: 17) insists that semiotics must disengage from the 'authority of linguistics which too much dominates the analysis of the meaning of objects,' and Gottdiener (1995: 20, 66-7) also criticises this 'linguistic fallacy' that 'objective' cultural systems function as languages.¹² He suggests that much postmodern cultural analysis is guilty of this, due to its failure to distinguish adequately between denotation and connotation. Denotation he defines as 'first-order' signification where 'objects can become signs of their own function,' — a fur coat signifying warmth, for example, and the wearing of it thus signifying that the person feels cold. But connotations are the socially-inscribed significations which progressively accrue to an object — in the case of the fur coat, such things as the wearer's social status, wealth, fashionability, or ecological insensitivity. It is through connotations that direct communication of intentional messages occurs, and it is this level, he argues, that is unduly privileged by poststructuralists such as Baudrillard, whereas in fact meaning is transmitted through both first-order significations *and* direct communication.¹³

The degree and nature of signification carried by the material productions of a society is of course contingent on time and place. Objects of great cultural importance in one place at one time may not have any particular importance elsewhere, or even within the same society at a different time or place. This relates to the relevance such signification has to current local agendas — its particular social and cultural utility — and connotations accrue accordingly.

The 'two axes' of meaning transmission

If the semiotic framework is imagined as levels, denotation and connotation might be thought of as the first level. Gottdiener's contention that while language extensively employs the 'specific communication' of connotation, art depends more heavily on denotation to transmit meaning, supports Thomas's (1995) remarks about Pacific art. At the second level, form and content operate integrally with

¹² For similar reasons to Gottdiener's, Sebeok has also been at pains to locate semiotics as not a facet of, but in a 'superordinate position over' linguistics (1994: 107).

¹³ Sartori defines denotation as 'the class of things to which the word applies,' and connotation as 'the collection of properties which determine the things to which a word applies' (1970: 1041, my emphasis) — in other words, its specifics. Barthes defined the relationship similarly: 'Systems of signification are multi-levelled structures that contain denotative signs and, in addition, the particular cultural codes that ascribe social values to them, or the connotative ideologies of culture' (cited in Gottdiener 1995: 26).

context to produce sign function. The ‘third level’ of meaning transmission, its ‘detailed mechanics,’ were schematised by de Saussure ((1916)1974) as two axes of meaning, *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* (Gottdiener 1995: 6-7; Adams 1996: 134-41; Leach (1970)1989: 48-9). Meaning is a product of relationships on both axes, in syntagmatic relationships relying on simultaneous juxtaposition (hence present time), such as words in sentences or structural elements in art, while in paradigmatic relationships it relies on the recognition of similarity (or analogy) and difference to something pre-existing in time and space.¹⁴

Importantly, Jakobson applied these principles of context and referentiality to objects as well as words, as did Barthes in turn, as discussed in Chapter Three. In art as in language, meaning is transmitted on both axes. In *masi*, the syntagmatic axis (the current contextual and spatial relationship of the visual elements) is much more important than the paradigmatic axis (concerning the similarities or differences of those elements relative to one another or to other forms or concepts), which is much more important in representational Western art.¹⁵

¹⁴ Adams (1996: 138) states that ‘syntagm’ derives from the Greek *syntagma*, meaning ‘that which is put together in order.’ Barthes ((1964)1993: 212) gave the following illustration of a syntagmatic relationship: ‘to wear a sweater and a leather jacket is to create, between these two garments, a temporary but signifying association, analogous to the one uniting the words of a sentence’ (also see table in Barthes 1967: 63). In this example, the relation between the two garments as both being clothing would be paradigmatic — sharing the domain but distinguishable by their differences.

Preferring triads to the dualisms of de Saussure, Peirce ((1931)1966) proposed the terms *index* (which ‘hinges upon contiguity’), *icon* (which accesses likeness), and *symbol* (broadly comparable to ‘myth’ to be discussed in Chapter Three). The first two are broadly comparable with de Saussure’s oppositional pair of syntagm and paradigm, which Jakobson (1960) re-styled ‘metonym’ and ‘metaphor’ respectively. All of which makes for overwhelmingly obscurantist jargon. All that matters is to understand the difference between, on one hand, meaning being transmitted by presently related elements (e.g. words in a sentence, sound-sequences in music, visual elements arranged to make an image), referred to throughout this thesis as ‘syntagmatic,’ and on the other hand meaning transmitted by associations, referred to as ‘paradigmatic,’ of likeness or difference, between the word, sound or visual element and some existing object or concept.

¹⁵ Western representational art depends heavily on literal similarity — meaning is transmitted paradigmatically or, in Peircean terms, iconically. Categorising and exclusive hierarchising of art such as characterised modernist theory also depended on paradigmatic perceptions of similarity and difference. As Western art moved into abstraction, meaning was increasingly transmitted through the syntagmatic relationship of its elements. Clifford (1988: 192) dismissed any imagined similarity between tribal and ‘modern’ art as an optical illusion based on the fact that neither ‘features the pictorial illusionism or sculptural naturalism that came to dominate Western European art after the Renaissance.’ However, it is arguable that the shift in weight from one axis of meaning to the other in Western art was in significant measure due to Western artists

Art and aesthetics

There is an aesthetic dimension of art, myth and ritual which is untranslatable in semantic terms. This was first formalised in anthropological discourse by Lévi-Strauss in his discussion of the concept of *mana* (loosely, 'spiritual power') as a 'floating signifier' unable to be easily fitted into a semantic scheme (Lévi-Strauss 1950: il-l; cited in Schwimmer 1990: 7-8, 13).

Bourdieu maintained that it is not possible to adequately comprehend art without possessing an appropriate and specific knowledge of 'aesthetic context.' Without this, he points out, a work may appear to have a totally contrary significance to that which would be perceived with the appropriate contextual knowledge. As he summed up: 'The aesthetic disposition ... is ... inseparable from specifically artistic competence' ((1979)1992: 50). This competence he defines as 'cultural capital.' Elaborating on this point, Douglas (1973: 11) stressed that

even the human physiology which we all share ... does not afford symbols which we can all understand. ... Each system develops autonomously according to its own rules ... [and] cultural environments ... [and] social structures add ... further ... variation. The more closely we inspect the conditions of human interaction, the more unrewarding if not ridiculous the quest for natural symbols appears.

There are certain human neurophysiological responses to things like colour, which are biologically inherent (though how they are exploited or responded to aesthetically will certainly be culturally filtered). For instance juxtaposing bright complementary colours stimulates optical responses which cause agitation or excitement, explored and played upon in 1970s Op Art. Some associations also appear very common, such as red with blood, and thus excitement and danger. But as shown here in Chapter Seven, even such almost 'instinctive' associations may be culturally re-inscribed.

Other than limited biological responses, the notion that there is some overarching aesthetic quality recognisable to all societies, once widely promoted in exhibitions of tribal art, has been thoroughly discredited (see Douglas 1994). McEvilley (1992: 35-9) labelled the pursuit of such Kantian universals an exercise in exorcism,

recognising that meaning was being transmitted syntagmatically in the tribal art of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, and shifting toward that approach. Today, perhaps a little ironically, a reverse influence is evident in much of the art being produced by recently-colonised non-Western artists, who often move toward transmitting meaning in a far more literal, representational and paradigmatic way than they did traditionally.

destroying the significance of diverse indigenous arts in their own cultures by re-contextualising them into an imagined mainstream along with Western art. Such exorcism lives on in at least some of the avowed postmodern enthusiasm for other cultures, including ethnic tourism. At one extreme, this is what Anderson has dubbed 'primitive chic' (1990: 192-5), quarrying components of the Other culture in an appropriative identity-construction project. At the other extreme, however, there may be a genuine desire to de-centre and de-privilege Western cultural values, reducing them to equal status among many sets of values.

To assert that art has meaning does not automatically imply that it can be translated into verbal language. Schwimmer cites instances where it was impossible to elicit from informants any specific 'meaning' for paintings or the accoutrements and/or performances of ritual. He suggests that this was because the informants were 'not inclined to reduce [these] to discourse. In this respect, they were like artists everywhere' (1990: 9).¹⁶ He points out that Barthes argued (1970: 12) that the ideal artistic product is a galaxy of signifiers permitting an indefinite number of readings. It is this plurality of signifiers and meanings that allow Schwimmer, notwithstanding the separation of semantics and aesthetics, to maintain that art is still susceptible to semiotic analysis (1990: 13), despite the fact that it may resist linguistic analysis.

Finally, McEvilly warns of the temporality of aesthetics: 'Within ... the same community at another time, completely different standards may obtain, equally real at their moment, and real in precisely the same way: ... they offer their group a field for self-reflection and self-definition, a mirror in which to glimpse the meaning of its changes and developments, as well as its ... foundational assumptions' (1992: 67).

Textiles as social objects transmitting meaning

An obvious denotation of bark-cloth relates to its functions of protection (physical and of modesty), and early Western observers seldom looked beyond this. However, its origins and manufacture can be detected in a range of other

¹⁶ Even in this era when theorisation of and about art is widespread, one of the comments consistently heard from practising artists in many countries is that to talk too much (some would say, at all) about a work of art is to diminish, even destroy it. The refusal to translate art into words has of course given ammunition to positivists who wish to reject art as a vehicle of meaning and credit language alone with the ability to carry and transmit meaning. However, specific communication such as that attempted by 19th century academy painters is a burden few works of art can carry with credit.

denotations carried by bark-cloth in many cultures. Bark-cloth is made from trees; trees are one of the most commonly-occurring spiritual symbols, relating to the earth and to origins, fertility, growth, and dispersal as in kinship. That connection leads to women, who are also associated with earth and fertility, and are in most societies the makers; bark-cloth is worn close to and takes the form of the body, for which it may assume surrogacy; the trees concerned are with few exceptions members of the fig family which are hardy, prolific and vigorous, all desirable qualities.¹⁷

Obviously there is no way of testing such a hypothesised chain of connections, but what is beyond question are the facts that, as I have elsewhere documented (Ewins 1987a), bark-cloth possessed great spiritual significance most if not all of the diverse cultures in which it occurred, and this has been very persistent over time. Bark-cloth was almost certainly made in every continent at an early stage of technological development. In the historical period it has still been made extensively in North and South America, Africa, and to some extent in Asia, from whence it came to Fiji and other parts of the Pacific. The spirituality has been rehearsed either directly, through the ritual use of bark-cloth itself, or indirectly, by the transfer of surrogate potency to manufactured fabrics of all sorts, used in ritual in most human societies, their importance including but far exceeding their role as garments. So whatever the referents were, they must have been both basic and exceptionally significant to human beings across many cultures.

For two decades a significant body of literature has been emerging, dealing with the very important social roles of textiles (e.g. Weiner 1977; 1992; Teilhet 1983; Reddy 1986; Strathern 1988; Gittinger 1989; Weiner & Schneider 1989; MacKenzie 1991; Barber 1994; Kaeppler 1995; Teilhet-Fisk 1995; Hauser-Schäublin 1996). Most of these writers have focussed on the fact that textiles are predominantly made and/or controlled by women, as mentioned above. The detailed scrutiny of this generality in Pacific cultures has highlighted the perils of an exclusive focus on male activity, and of assumptions that female artifacts represented 'only the feminine in a male-dominated world' or that 'only men are the carriers of significant cultural knowledge' (MacKenzie 1991: 21-2). The cautions are relevant for Fiji, as will become clear in Chapter Six in particular.

Mackenzie's elaborations of the relationship between gender and artifacts are

¹⁷ This has several levels of significance. Succulent bark is defined (at least in Fiji) as denoting 'femaleness' in trees, thin dry bark 'maleness,' while in many cultures vigorous plants in general denote fertility and the tree is a common metaphor for lineage.

particularly useful. She maintains that while ‘the web of meanings woven into the *bilum* [string-bags of Papua New Guinea] leads into women’s lives and women’s bodies,’ it is critical to consider the role of this object in ‘the context of female and male interaction ... [in the] relations between the women who produce it and the men who consume it’ (1991: 22). Each of her observations, from the female biological and cosmological identity embodied in the object to its social and cultural role in configuring male/female relations and identities, is relevant to Fijian *masi* (though of course the particulars are different).

Two considerations are important in understanding these functions of *masi*:

1 . Fijian art is made and functions within relatively tight parameters of form, content and sign-function which are determined by the social group. The cult of the *avant-garde*, of novelty and stylistic individuality, which pervades contemporary Western art is not so much rejected as simply not considered, since the maker’s achievement is judged rather by how well the product performs the functions designated for it by the group. Today some individual Fijian artists become known for particular areas of expertise, and assert a personal claim to their own productions, but in Vatulele this remains minimal.

Change in forms and motifs does occur, sometimes quite rapidly, and it is often attributed to one woman who first thought of the new form or motif, but its adoption into the genre depends on its acceptance by the maker group as a whole.¹⁸ Change in meaning occurs slowly, and again appears always to be subject to group determination. Thus issues of the privilege of the individual artist in defining or legislating meaning (Greenberg 1961) are not applicable, and conversely the concept of the ‘death of the author’ which detaches that privilege from the artist (Wolff 1993:117-36; Barthes (1977)1987:142-8) is also irrelevant, insofar as the artist as hero was never born in this society. Graburn (1976: 21-3) has discussed the encouragement of individualism and naming of artists for commercial purposes, pointing out that the pre-eminence of individualism is not a human universal, but a relatively recent phenomenon (discussed also in McCrone 1994: 45), in this case militating against the role of the art as expression of the group. It exemplifies the danger of thoughtlessly accepting Western norms as universally applicable.

¹⁸ Kooijman also noted how unusual any such personalisation of figuration is in Moce Island (1977: 160). One exceptionally good *masi*-maker (Informant T), claiming to be the only woman on Vatulele to use a certain design form in her large wedding-screens (*taunamu* — see Appendix 4), admitted to feeling proud that everyone always knew they were her *taunamu*, a point Graburn made in regard to small societies and recognised authorship (1976b: 21-3)). But the norm of modesty in such matters still prevailed — she was anxious that her expression of pride remain confidential in order that others would not think her ‘big-headed.’

2. *Masi* is implicit in many aspects of the identity not merely of the female makers but also of men. As will be elaborated later, separation, complementarity, and reversal are all embodied in its sign-function and that of the ritual and ceremonial in which it operates. The same multivalence exists for other female, and for male, artifacts. The approach of writers like MacKenzie (1991) and Appadurai (1986b) thus appears sound: to examine the object 'as if it had a social life integrated with other social relations,' and seek to consider it 'in relation to the technological, social, economic, political, ideological and historical systems of which it is a part' (MacKenzie 1991: 25). Those systems are the components of identity that Vatulelans and other Fijians wish to sustain. How the particular signs embedded in *masi* encode and transmit meaning to achieve that end, will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Identity, the individual, and the group

One might be forgiven for feeling that the word 'identity' is thoroughly over-used these days. Not merely do minority groups (religious, political, gender, sexual preference, ethnic and so on and on) jockey for equal billing for their allegedly or demonstrably neglected identities in the 'identity wars' being waged world-wide (Williamson 1996), but countries, governments, corporations, institutions and instrumentalities also lay claim to particular identities. White (1992) has accordingly noted that not only individuals but groups, places and objects can all have identities — characteristics they are perceived to possess and which as Holzner & Robertson (1980: 11) say 'put order into the social world in terms of dialectics of apposition and opposition with, on the one hand, affinities and identities, and on the other, dissimilarities and boundaries.'

The literature of the social sciences concerned with issues of identity has proliferated over recent years, even before post-modern theory (particularly that of Foucault) embraced it as an issue of central importance to a world increasingly privileging subjectivity, individual choice, and the acquisition of personal experience in preference to objects.¹⁹

¹⁹ Among the many explanations offered for the current obsession with identity are: its importance in terms of modernisation/postmodernisation/globalisation (Marx 1979; Giddens 1991; Friedman 1994; Featherstone 1995; Waters 1995; Bradley 1996; Luke 1996); its part in *fin de siècle* anxiety and pessimism (Mestrovic 1991; Pahl 1995); its centrality to nationalism (Gellner 1983; Smith 1983; 1995; Anderson 1991; Miyoshi 1995; Greenfeld 1996; Nairn 1997); its association with multiculturalism and with the re-definition of ethnicity (Nason 1984; Linnekin & Poyer 1990a; Pomponio 1992; Early 1993; Hereniko 1994; Craft 1995; Tobin 1995); the tourism explosion's challenge to identity (Goffman 1959; MacCannell 1984; Nason 1984; Boissevain 1988; Lanfant *et*

Nowhere more than in Pacific societies has the definition of boundaries been traditionally more important, and nowhere has more attention been given to constructing formal means of bridging them and establishing affinities. It will become apparent that Fiji's detailed kinship relationships and complex networks of ritual prestations are all constructed specifically for both definition and bridging. Hall (1992) and White (1992: 13) have both stressed that identities are always seeking to establish comparability, by accurately locating 'others.' Indeed, identity can only be defined by reference to one or more 'others,' in establishing with which group one belongs, and what relationship to other groups that entails. As Zohar & Marshall (1994: 152) insist, 'each of us is *both* self *and* other.'

The amorphous reality referred to as identity is constituted of perceptions of self and others, the affective realm of emotions, and the content of roles. It is maintained through congruencies (those who are like me/us) in situations where marks of difference are de-emphasised or absent, and through contrasts exemplified by the maintenance of boundaries in both thought and action (Tonkinson 1985: 156).

An understanding of the nexus between identity and the Other (both in terms of connections and boundaries) is important to an understanding of the current emphasis on identity in both the West, where that identity is felt to be threatened by the constantly shifting sands of postmodernity, and in the non-Western world, where identity is felt to be threatened by globalising forces. For both, as Holton (1998: 135) points out, 'the revival of nationalism and ethnicity [may be seen], in part at least, as resistance to a global world where boundaries are permeable and all is in flux.'

Since the group provides norms and reduces uncertainties, group membership permits the 'flow experience' proposed by Csikszentmihalyi: totally committed, spontaneous behaviour which imparts a sense of control and helps to build positive self-concepts (Csikszentmihalyi 1974; cited in Turner 1982b: 56-8). Despite the enormous changes confronting them, the social support networks of the Fijians, which also define their identity, are arguably as strong today as they have always been: their extended families, clans, superclans, socio-geographical aggregations, socio-political confederations, and ultimately their ethnicity.

Linnekin, Poyer et al (1990), early exponents of the current revival of interest in Lamarck, advanced a 'Lamarckian' model of cultural identity construction in Pacific cultures, with environmental imprinting and social relationships at least as

important as heredity [expressed as kinship]. They contrasted this with the heredity-based ('Mendelian') model they posited as the Western theoretical norm. Several essayists in that volume, and other commentators (e.g. Bonnemaïson 1985; Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995; Fox 1997b) show that rather than existing in opposition to one another, the two conceptions usually coexist in Pacific identity constructs, the relationship between them contingent. The 'Lamarckian' schema did, however, focus the increasing understanding of the role of 'place' in Pacific identity construction, frequently referring to origin-places and journeys as well as to current locations. The Vatullean case will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Linnekin & Poyer (1990b: 9) also suggested as a 'fundamental Oceanic premise' that 'people can voluntarily shift their social identities.' This statement is in keeping with the laudable contemporary acknowledgement of the agency of actors, and may be true of some islanders, particularly urbanised groups. However, many Pacific societies still show little willingness to countenance individuals re-defining assigned roles and status, and such shifts might entail considerable personal costs even if they were possible. In Vatulële, at least for those remaining on the island (and thus firmly within the traditional group domain) such shifts are no easy matter in light of group expectations.²⁰ Nayacakalou was quite unambiguous about Fijians' commitment to predetermined social identities thirty years ago, and what he describes could still be considered true for Vatulële:

A person has no choice about his (*sic*) membership of a group. This is determined ... by birth. As a member of such a group he has a certain group role; his pattern of behaviour towards this group and towards other groups is determined by his membership of it. Such membership also determines his range of choice as to where he may live, and the nature and extent of his rights, duties and obligations as a member of the society (1978: 134).

It is particularly easy to be considered to be acting 'above one's station' in Vatulële — and that covers virtually any behaviour not considered to fall within local norms for one's status group. The epithets *vosalevu* (boaster) and *viavialevu* (show-off, vain or arrogant person) are frequently heard — a disincentive to what is

²⁰ Some of the sorts of costs are outlined in studies of the *galala* or 'free' Fijian farmers (Frazer 1973; Brookfield 1988). To encourage enterprise farming, they were exempted from the Native Regulation obligation to remain within their villages, and took up farm-land outside. In practical terms this often resulted in the cutting or extreme attenuation of social and kinship ties, a great cost to people who have since birth defined their identities in terms of place, kinship, and assigned status.

considered excessive individualism in all fields, including initiative and entrepreneurship, as will be noted elsewhere in this thesis. Homans's view of social approval as a powerful individual motivation (Buckley 1967: 107) is certainly applicable in a consideration of the reasons behind group conformity within such a society.

Nor is the group able to shift its identity at will. Within the indigenous society as a whole, each group exists within a matrix of relationships with other groups based on kinship and traditional exchange/trade and political/military alliances, and its status and good standing in the total community depend on the fulfilment of its obligations and exercise of its prerogatives. Success in matters external to those traditions can of course influence the group's standing. But its identity will remain strongly mediated by traditional expectation — often to the annoyance and frustration of politicians and other indigenous leaders seeking to hasten change (see Rory Ewins 1998).

Tolman has criticised the long-running 'nomothetic/ideographic' (general versus particular) debates which psychology and sociology have generated as reproducing the scientific division of labour and rendering the relationship of the individual and the social group (and by extrapolation, of individual identity and group identity) so resistant to analysis. 'What we encounter over and over again ... is the hidden anthropology of the abstract-isolated individual ... the unconscious theoretical expression of the actual separation of the private and societal processes in the reality of bourgeois society (Tolman 1994: 45). But the error, as he points out, 'is to take [Western] bourgeois reality ... as *the* reality' (1994: 50).

Certainly the categories are far less clear-cut in (at least rural) Fijian society, which could at no level be regarded as approximating a Western bourgeois form. In Vatulele and other non-urban groups in Fiji, it is most improbable that anyone would conceive of him- or herself as an isolated individual unconnected with any group, or indeed that the group would permit them to do so, even if they should wish to. Even urban Fijians normally make (sometimes heroic) efforts to retain their identification with their originating group.²¹ It has been pointed out earlier that

²¹ A case in point is the *vācadra* illustrated in Plate 1 (f.p. 2). The young adults concerned, aged 19 and 16, had been born overseas and had never before seen Fiji. But their mother (a high-born woman from Lau, east of Vitilevu) said that she had not felt that she and her husband had properly fulfilled their responsibility, until now when they were able to present their children according to custom, in this case to both families since neither had seen, or established any social relationship with, the children. Their return to Fiji (the first for 25 years) was undertaken for that express purpose, at the end of which they returned to Britain (visit also reported by Rakoko 1993).

art-production is a group-embedded activity not able to be conceptualised in the same terms as the highly individual statements which characterise most contemporary Western art. The same can in fact be said for all aspects of social and cultural identity. The rather narrow traditional definition from psychology of identity as 'individual as "self"' has to be considerably expanded — 'I-ness is on an ever-shifting continuum with we-ness' (Zohar & Marshall 1994: 152).

Social identity theory has attempted to reconcile the dualism. It proposes social identity as:

self-conception as a group member ... [with] a collection of self-images which vary in terms of the length of their establishment, complexity and richness of content. The important emphasis is that these self-images can be construed as falling along a continuum, with individuating characteristics at the personal extreme and social categorical characteristics at the social extreme. ... When social identity is salient, one acts *as a group member*, whereas when personal identity is salient, one does not (Abrams & Hogg 1990: 2-4).

The boundaries in this conceptualisation lie not between the individual and the group, but rather between individuals within the group, and/or between groups.

Reflexivity in the individual case implies consciousness of self; in the collective case consciousness of social boundaries and collective actors. ... Tests of [these] social boundaries, and tests of loyalty within social boundaries, are in a sense collective parallels to the developmental schemata of self and personhood in the individual (Holzner & Robertson 1980: 10, my emphasis).

The tradition from Simmel and Weber is that only an individual can be a social actor, but the story told in this thesis will make it apparent that even today Vatuleans act in concert toward group ends so consistently that it is as though the group were the social actor. Quain observed that Fijians are 'a people obsessed with comparative status' (1948: 434), which suggests self-interest. But traditionally even that self-interest has generally been coincidental with the interest of the group, since it is excellence in performing actions consistent with and supporting group values/norms that is rewarded with the esteem of the group, and thus becomes 'a stimulus as well as a reward' (Homans 1961: 149).²²

²² Like many other writers, he was using the term 'status' loosely, meaning respect and/or esteem.

Rational choice theory attempts to reconcile these issues of rational individual determinations and collective action (Hechter 1987). Like Homans, it suggests that actors will choose that which produces the highest personal 'utility,' and social life is the aggregate of individual outcomes, each of which affects the others. Misztal (1996: 78) suggests the incorporation of game theory, where 'each actor considers what others are likely to do and then makes the best choice to attain her (*sic*) end, given the probable behaviour of others.' Vatuleleans certainly watch one another carefully in all social encounters, and adjust their own behaviour in response to that of others, and most of their institutions are organised as competitive games, as will be seen in the description of ritual in Chapter Five.

However, there is a problem with considering self-interest to be the only relationship of the individual with the group, since many of the values brought to bear in making such decisions are a direct product of group norms, and in societies like Vatulele's membership of the group is so important to the sense of self that overwhelmingly outcomes are sought which sustain and reinforce the group. Thus in today's world, with a multiplicity of choices available to them, social identity for the group and the individual is a constant process of re-negotiating the relationship between group norms and rational choice.

Elster acknowledged that norms 'provide sources of motivation that are irreducible to rationality' and that 'to know how [self-interest and normative commitment] interact we must analyze particular cases' (1989; cited in Misztal 1996: 80). As will be discussed shortly, the reinforcement of membership of a community of kindred spirits and the personal validation and 'valuing' this imparts is one such source of motivation, and another is the fact that others in the group upon whom, in a small community, one inevitably must rely, may generally be trusted to behave predictably in accordance with group norms. In such communities, therefore, norms are 'internalized so as to become part of the conscience or self-ideal of the individuals' (Williams 1968: 206), which 'helps to align ... subjective feelings with the objective places [they] occupy in the social and cultural world. Identity thus ... "sutures" the subject into the structure' (Hall 1992: 276).

Nancy maintains that when there is such a high concurrence between individual and group identities as occurs in close-knit communities like Vatulele's, the group can appear to have a singular 'common being' or 'communion' (Nancy 1991; cited in Morris 1996: 232-8). Zohar & Marshall concur: 'Communities too, like individuals, have a sense of identity or "group consciousness" that each recognises as its own ... a recognizable pattern for structuring some or all elements of social reality' (1994: 152). Notwithstanding that, social groups do consist of individuals,

and each individual always has two potentially conflicting (and thus potentially disruptive) identities, individual and group, and if a breakdown of 'communion' were to occur — a more particular threat in times of great social and political change locally, nationally and internationally — it could result in the anomistic circumstance Nancy describes as 'the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community.'

These issues are not played out in a passive environment — groups are very assertive in preserving their integrity. 'Negative sanctions [may be] administered by the group in response to the subject's voluntary or involuntary failure to conform to group expectations' (Kaplan 1996a:14), as described above in the adverse responses to perceived vanity or self-absorption. Alternately, the group can utilise all of the bonding mechanisms available to it — geographical, linguistic, religious/moral, social/structural, cultural/traditional, symbolic and ritual — to diminish, mitigate, above all to regain control of, such potential disruptions to its identity. Both types of response are evident in Vatulele. The first tends to occur informally, on a person-to-person basis, while the latter occurs both informally and formally, involving individuals and/or the whole group through emphasis on elements of shared identity, such as ethnicity, religion, kinship, history, and locality. It is these that are manifested in the group's art, myth and ritual, drawing individuals back into the fold.

Identity and stress

External threat, today as earlier, tends to unite group members in defence of community and culture (Smith 1984: 300).

What most of the explanations for the resurgent focus on identity have in common is stress: that which occurs when the social and cultural systems by which human beings define themselves are threatened or deformed, generally by too-rapid and/or externally-imposed change either to the context in which those systems operate, or to the makeup, beliefs and/or behaviour of members of the socio-cultural groups. As Mercer (1991: 43) asserts, 'Identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.'

Stress and the manner in which adjustment to it operates has traditionally been a focus of attention primarily for psychologists (e.g. Goldberger & Breznitz 1982; Kaplan 1996b), but sociologists and anthropologists have also been addressing it for many years now (Lea 1973; Eder 1977; Burke 1991, 1996; Thoits 1991; Taylor

& Aspinwall 1996). The various accounts of these analysts are in broad agreement about responses to stress, typically articulated as follows:

Two general coping strategies have been distinguished: problem-solving coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-solving ... attempts to alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping involves efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events ... and involves seeking social support (Taylor & Aspinwall 1996: 86-7).

When the sources of stress are things like global economic pressure or neocolonial exploitation, or at a more prosaic level the inappropriate behaviour of tourists in one's village, alleviation can sometimes be very difficult to achieve in any practical sense. Thus it is not surprising that Fijians are using variants of 'emotion-focused coping' and seeking social support from the groups where they 'belong together.' As Kaplan says: 'Memberships in social support networks constitute intrinsically valued circumstances and represent collective adaptive and coping resources that are available for the achievement of other valued states' (1996b: 13-14). That support comes at an individual level from the warmth of personal extended families, and from the group highlighting and reaffirming beliefs and practices which are considered central to self-definition, reassuring themselves of the validity of their identities and strengthening those as 'stress buffers' (Thoits 1991: 101).

Anthony Wallace suggested that revitalisation movements arise at times of 'increased individual stress, which ... eventually [becomes] a collective perception that the way of life of one's society has become "distorted" and is no longer emotionally acceptable' (Wallace 1961:143-56; cited by Kavolis 1972: 15). While this pattern certainly occurs for Fijians, especially and increasingly for urbanites (Griffin & Monsell-Davis 1986), it is arguable that because of the exceptionally strong group-identification that still exists (certainly for rural and island-dwelling Fijians), the process also works at least partially in reverse — to personalise the general rather than to generalise the personal. Thus changes in the way the group functions (as a result of external and internal pressures) cause many Fijians to experience individual distress precisely because their individual sense of self is so bound up with their group's identity, and their assigned status within the group is so dominant in their life-expectation. Threats to the group are thus felt personally.

Chapter Four will examine in some detail the events and social conditions which have led to the levels of social stress many Vatulleans (and other Fijians) feel today, perceiving their ethnic identity and their traditional social and cultural systems to be under threat. While there have been such stresses since colonisation,

they have been exacerbated since Independence in 1970. Fijians have with some cause felt themselves losing ground to Others and being relegated to second-class status both within and outside their country, and as Kaplan (1996a: 12) points out, people are 'more likely to experience distressful self-feelings by virtue of their recognition of occupying a disvalued status.'

The information age

Though their socio-cultural institutions are even today often referred to as 'pre-modern' or 'transitional,' Fijians have been part of the modern world at least since colonisation, when major policy decisions concerning their societies and cultures began to be formulated according to Western values and belief systems. An Independence ratified in a rapidly globalising world left them no refuge in 'pre-modernity,' or time to effect 'transitions' even if they had wanted to, and as discussed here, they have attempted to frame their responses to change in terms of their own traditions and value systems. These are inevitably in a constant and ever-more-rapid state of reconstruction, and while Fijians are increasingly aware of available alternatives, those also are changing so fast, that to effect a 'transition' to or from such protean entities is difficult to envisage, let alone manage.²³ As the evening news daily reminds us, to simply remain on an even keel is proving beyond the best efforts of many societies worldwide.

Waters has described globalisation in terms of people's awareness, in this case that 'the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements ... are receding' (1995: 3). His words recall the following description of aspects of postmodernity, which might as easily have been written by a contemporary Vatullean describing his or her complex identity perceptions today, and the problems that this complexity frequently poses for them:

Increasingly we emerge as the possessors of many voices. Each self contains a multiplicity of others, singing different melodies, different verses, and with different rhythms. Nor do these voices necessarily harmonize. At times they join together, at times they fail to listen to one another, and at times they create a jarring discord' (Gergen 1991: 83).

In present-day Fiji, thanks to the information technology revolution, those metaphorical 'many voices' are actual. Rory Ewins (1998: 233-4) draws attention to the diverse ethnically and linguistically separated AM and FM radio stations

²³ The principal OED definition of transition is 'the action or process of passing or passage from one condition, action or (occas.) place, to another (Brown 1993: 3370).

which play constantly in homes and workplaces in every village or suburb in Fiji. These both reflect and contribute to the domains of Otherness which challenge group identities, bringing home with great force to even remote island-dwelling Fijians the diversity of voices and social, cultural and political agendas present in their own country, and the impact of these on them personally. Even the Fijian broadcasts are unavoidably in Standard Fijian, a second language to a majority of Fijians (including Vatuléans), and this fact and the national discussion topics simultaneously heighten their sense of their own distinctive identity and highlight the threat of its absorption into the greater 'Fijian' ethos.

Colour television has now been added to the barrage in Vatuléle (in 1995 still watched communally, since there was only a single set, but four years on, this is very likely not still the case). While Vatuléans' own 'Otherness' is highlighted more sharply than ever, they are immersed in global culture with an immediacy never experienced in the small grey photographs and dry texts of their schoolbooks. A noticeable change over the years of my fieldwork is that today when I present the paramount with my obligatory offering of *yaqona* (*kava*) on the evening of my arrival, while it is being pounded and before we drink, the men are already keen to discuss with me recent issues and events — things like Tienanmin one year, the Rabaul volcanic eruption another, and in 1995 Australian republicanism. They are no less informed, and frequently evince more concern, about such issues than would any group of Australian men.

As their cultural particularity is highlighted, it is simultaneously eroded by these media — in a manner similar to and just as powerful as the action of ritual as posited in subsequent chapters, boundaries are made obvious, but the attraction of transgressing them made almost irresistible. 'Children viewing television in Fiji are not merely passively absorbing English language vocabulary, they are being subtly socialised into cultural patterns ... [by] programmes manifesting American or British [or Australian or New Zealand] cultural values' (Waq 1995, citing USP lecturer Heather Lotherington-Woloszyn).

Becker (1999) has observed a rise in bulimia and other eating disorders among young urban Fijian women, and has attributed this to television images. Their low self-esteem, lacking what they perceive as a valued identity, is reflected in their seeking to emulate the totally atypical but apparently validated physical attributes of the tv stars inhabiting what they perceive to be a more desirable reality in the Western programmes they see. Occupying equal or better billing with local myths around which identity has always been fashioned are new universal mythical

heroes, from the late Princess of Wales to hardly more fictional 'superheroes.'²⁴

Global/Local

Undoubtedly the array of optional world-views and behavioural norms with which they are confronted presents difficulties in deciding how they wish to define their own identity. As Meleisea (1980) so poetically put it, they 'want the forest, yet fear the spirits.'²⁵ The spirits in the Western forest are indeed worthy of fear. The exogenous forces which so strongly influence Fijian lives today are not only more irresistible, they are more remote and faceless than ever before. There is no questioning the power of globalising forces, which by their pervasiveness undoubtedly have a standardising effect: the global economic system with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank dictating national policies; multinational corporations moving their manufacturing bases and economic headquarters like chesspieces, in endless pursuit of the cheapest labour and 'best deal' available; an overwhelming marketing machine selling irresistible images of Levi jeans, Macdonald fast-food and Coca/Pepsi Cola; and world bodies such as the United Nations imposing the majority agenda on the rest.

- When the economy of southeast Asia collapses, Fiji's currency is dragged down with it no less than Australia's, but with tiny foreign reserves to buffer the impact.
- When an international airline made a purely economic decision to overfly Fiji rather than stopping in Nadi, so delicately balanced was the tourist market that a number of small businesses failed.
- When the international price of sugar drops, so does the standard of living of Fiji's cane-farmers, and with the European Union's advantageous Lome

²⁴ A 1995 survey of the major viewing areas of Suva, Lautoka and Nausori found that the *overall* favourite programme for all age groups was 'Lois and Clark: the new adventures of Superman' (Waq 1995). But televised local rugby football is a predictable favourite, with each district passionately supporting their local 'warriors of the oval.' Videotapes of Fiji's championship win over South Africa in the March 1997 Hong Kong Rugby Sevens, and their 1998 Commonwealth Games Silver Medal in the Rugby Sevens, will be doing the rounds of village VCRs until they are worn out. Rugby Sevens has for Fijians reintegrated the ancient link between 'war' and religion, as a recent newspaper article noted: 'Hong Kong has become a religious crusade [as] illustrated by the biblical motto they have adopted: Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me' (Anon 1999).

²⁵ This ongoing relationship of domination was the premise of Dependency Theory, summarising which Richards wrote: 'There are very few colonies nowadays — most countries have become independent since 1945. But this doesn't mean that poorer, less advanced nations aren't exploited by, and dependent on, richer countries. Economists such as Paul Baran and Samir Amin have argued that the world economy is organised in a way that ties poorer countries to the economies of richer ones, and makes it impossible for them to break out of this relationship' (Richards 1987).

Convention on sugar pricing due to end in February 2000, the entire national economy stands in jeopardy (Hildebrand 1999).

- If Australia, with its massive resources, has constant difficulty policing international fishing in its waters, or drug entry along its unpatrolled coasts, Fiji has almost no hope, with its huge area of ocean and myriad tiny island.
- Decisions about the scale and nature of television to be broadcast in Fiji were made by the (international) companies concerned, largely on economic grounds rather than with any thought for the cultural impacts that are already being felt less than five years on.

Apparently against all odds, however, the world at the end of the twentieth century has proved to be one in which not only such centripetal (homogenising and unifying) forces are operating, but also centrifugal (fragmenting and separating) ones (Dirlik 1994; Friedman 1994; Bradley 1996). People everywhere, however willing they may be to see themselves as world citizens, have shown a remarkable determination not to become faceless without putting up a fight. The determination with which the inhabitants of the tiny island of Vatulele cling to their identity markers and rituals exemplifies how far down the order this 'wish to be special' goes.

Individualism and anomie

Fijians are now required to make conscious choices (Anderson 1990: 112), but most choices offered relate to the individual, not the group. The postmodern world appears to be hardly concerned with communities, indeed it 'can almost be defined by its images of lost community' (Morris 1996: 234). But, as discussed at length above, for most Vatuleleans the separation of his/her individual identity from that of their group is still largely viewed with anxiety.

It is inevitable that for some, particularly the young who are attempting to define an identity for themselves, the choices they make will privilege self over group. For the group as a whole, therein lies the greatest source of social stress, for every individualistic choice which diverges from norms may have anomic consequences.²⁶ The resultant behaviour ranges from merely being 'cheeky' to elders (which being contrary to village norms is still considered reprehensible), to actually criminal behaviour including theft and assault, which goes so far beyond

²⁶ 'Anomic' is used here in both the Durkheimian sense of a breakdown of norms without a consequent establishment of 'moral individualism,' and the Mertonian sense of deviant behaviour resulting from frustrated desires to achieve goals that are represented as 'success.'

acceptable behaviour that villagers generally appear nonplussed about how to deal with it.

The elected *turaganikoro* (village headman) of Ekubu expressed shame at the unkempt state of the village these days, but explained 'the older men have their family gardens to tend, and if I tell the young men to do anything they want to fight me. Only if I pay them will they clean up the village, but I have no funds for that.' Another elder of the same village was near to tears as he described finding his *tavioka* patch raided, and half the food he had grown to maintain his family for the next three months taken, by a group of *cauravou* (young bachelors). They had been fishing for *bêche de mer* for money for an island-wide cash drive, were hungry, and raided his garden for food for a beach 'barbecue.' When he remonstrated with them, they retorted that they were getting money for the community, so the community could feed them. The burden, however, fell not on the community but on this unfortunate individual whose wife's *masi*-making, presumably, would have to stretch to supporting the family until another crop could be grown. Yet another man bewailed the fact that during his absence in Suva for a week his kitchen had been broken into and his family's few meagre possessions stolen — some fishing tackle and cooking/eating utensils.

In 1980 none of these things would have been conceivable; today, while still not commonplace, they are increasing. The response of the group as a whole is to increase its attempts to re-integrate the recalcitrants, and it does this by both public disapproval and sanctions, and an emphasis on community solidarity and pride in their Vatullean identity and social institutions.

Cultural efflorescence, identity and social cohesion

As noted in the Introduction, contrary to modernisationist assumptions of the inevitable demise of traditional social and cultural structures, there has been an efflorescence of some areas of indigenous culture in Fiji over the past twenty years. Though he does not state it in terms of cause and effect, Castells (1998: 338) does see the 'blooming of cultural [and] social movements' (in Vatulule expressed through increases in bark-cloth manufacture and ritual/ceremonial) as interrelated with the 'information technology revolution,' and 'the economic crisis of both capitalism and statism' as the three pre-eminent social forces as we approach the end of millennium. As stated above, from Vatulule's point of view information technology and capitalist economics may be viewed as sources of stress, and the cultural efflorescence as a response.

An interesting and rather elegant ‘cyclical identity theory,’ relating to the relationship of stress to identity has been proposed by Burke (1991; 1996), which can provide a plausible model of what is occurring in Vatulele. It possesses strong resonances with Parsons’s (1953) functional four-phase action theory,²⁷ and consciously incorporates aspects of continuity theory (Mandler 1982). Burke states that ‘social stress results from ... disruption of the identity process’ (1991: 836-7) which he depicts as a continuously self-adjusting ‘control system,’ using the analogy of a room thermostat which turns on heating or cooling when the temperature fluctuates too severely. Burke stops short of suggesting what the actual adjustment mechanisms might be, but the suggestion in this thesis that art and ritual fill this role fits the bill very well.

The inexorability of cyclical theories is problematic in a contingent world, and representing such adjustment to identity perception as solely a response to environmental input, with unchanging balance as the norm, is also a problematic functionalist assumption. Nonetheless, change in the external environment is clearly *one* cause of stress and stimulus for behavioural change, ultimately even to changes in the social group’s norms, as will be further explored in this thesis. The theory might be rendered more useful if stimulus and response are viewed as erratic, rather than as an almost machine-like cycle of ‘scanning and adjusting’ as his theory suggests. Nor should the ‘output’ of an individual or group be seen solely as reactions to ‘interruptions’ or ‘imbalances.’ Human curiosity makes us the most experimental of species, seeking change and adventure, and identity-adjusting mechanisms may also be triggered pro-actively and/or experimentally, responding to perceived opportunities as well as to problems.

Kavolis’s (1972) review of historical efflorescences in (mainly Western) art also has relevance for the current efflorescence in Fijian art. In the manner of his time and building on the work of Kroeber, Sorokin, and the camp of Parsonsian Grand Theorists picturing societies as being in dynamic equilibrium, he too developed a ‘phase-cycle’ theory which has much in common with Burke’s theory of twenty years later.²⁸ It is subject to the same reservations, but the congruences support the

²⁷ This theory posited adaptation of the social group to conditions established by the external environment, in terms of the system’s goals, emotional needs of individuals in the system, and the maintenance of stability (Parsons 1953). The theory is, however, ‘middle/late’ Parsons, in which actor-rationality was elaborated with psychological insights (Hamilton 1995: 162), a useful cross-disciplinary approach also present in Burke’s analysis.

²⁸ This should not be taken to imply anything more than a serendipitous connection. The reservations registered above are to some of the assumptions of functionalism, and the tidy models

contention that artistic and cultural efflorescence as reviewed by Kavolis is in fact an 'identity process' in Burke's terms, maintaining and/or (re)constructing group identity. Thus, though they approach the subject from a different angle from that adopted in this thesis, the conclusions coincide.

Kavolis started by drawing a connection between certain forms of stress and artistic activity: 'cultural creativity ... is a *response to alienation* ... [indeed] perhaps profound alienation combined with an intense feeling of belonging, may be the condition most conducive to creativity' (1972: 9, citing 1966 conference paper by Silvers). He located art as an agent of social adjustment:

The data suggest that an important causal agent in artistic efflorescences is a widely felt need for reintegration of the social system. [One] collective — though not necessarily conscious ... [response is] an increased demand for art and consequently ... a tendency to commit social resources to the processes of artistic creation (1972: 39).

The suggestion that art could assist in social reintegration recalls Tolstoy's assertion (cited in Firth 1951) that 'art is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feeling,' a role definition for art which anticipated Durkheim's identification of the capacity of ritual to contribute to social mechanical solidarity — connections that will be explored further in Chapters Three and Five.

Similarly to Burke's theory, Kavolis's theory also employed Parsons's four phases, and identified a connection between the level of stress and the degree of adjustment activity:

1. Disturbance of a condition of relative equilibrium — a phase of increasing stress, during which art flourishes
2. Intense goal-oriented action by the group or society directed at overcoming the discomfort generated by the disturbance — a phase of maximal social disruption, during which it is difficult for art
3. Re-integration after a period of old emotions and new behaviour patterns, or vice versa — a phase during which art again flourishes
4. A stage of tension reduction once a satisfactory condition is perceived (by the group members) to have been reached — a period of stability, during which art activity dies down to a 'simmer' (Kavolis 1972: 13).

which resulted from them. As Turner (1974a: 30-31) remarked: 'There is nothing wrong with ... models provided one is aware of the perils lurking behind their misuse. ... one can be excited by them; the implications, suggestions, and supporting values entwined with their literal use enable us to see a new subject matter in a new way.'

Rather than looking for cycles (with their implication of a return to the *status quo ante*), stages (1) and (3) might be viewed as 'liminal' periods in randomly-occurring sequences of cause and effect initiated by mounting stress.²⁹ In such periods there is the opportunity, not merely for art to flourish, but (in part through that art) for 'periodical reclassifications of [perceived] reality and man's relationship to society, nature and culture' (Turner 1980: 52) — the chance to reassert existing, or to establish new, identities. However, if disruption becomes severe, the options of liminality are lost in the confusion, with purposeful strategies difficult to mobilise. Conversely, the habits and routines of relatively static conditions do not dispose people to pro-active change.

This is resonant with some views of British historian and Poland expert Norman Davies (1997) that 'a *certain* degree of stress and tension [can] be productive,' while either too much or too little can be inhibiting. He was commenting on the virtual extinction of religion in Russia under very heavy social oppression, whereas under moderate bureaucratic USSR domination in Poland it flourished, only to decline in the present 'free' state. As a mechanism of social bonding and identity formation, religion can be likened to art in Kavolis's terms, and the relativity of its vigour and levels of social stress is similarly analogous. Davies, however, does not presuppose equilibrium or propose cycles, the elements which impose strictures on Burke's and Kavolis's insights.

Finally, Kavolis insisted (1972: 170-74) that for art to be necessary to, and able to function in, these social processes, the style must (a) be congruent with the 'fantasy dispositions' of, and (b) in a rapidly changing sociocultural environment, express the emergent value orientations of, the society. This is consistent with my view of traditional indigenous art as a vehicle for the reintegration of disrupted identity in situations of stress — reflection of the current state of society would not help reintegrate it, whereas art which incorporates previously perceived identity and/or

²⁹ The term 'liminal' is used here and elsewhere in the sense in which Turner (particularly 1982: 53-5) expanded it from Arnold van Gennep's original use of it in relation to *rites de passage* ((1908)1960). This posited three phases in such rites: Separation, Transition, and Re-aggregation (cf. also Lévi-Strauss (1962)1976: 30-33). It is in the transition phase, when ritual has suspended external reality but has yet to reassert it, that participants are in a *marginal* or *liminal* phase — they become 'ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all points of classification' (Turner 1974b: 232). It is a period of great uncertainty and peril but also of great opportunity. Parkin (1992: 23-4) expresses liminality in a different but lively way, suggesting that through ritual people set up "tangled states" — spatial and bodily states of confusion, admixture and complexity — which they then seek to disentangle ... and reimpose order on themselves and on the parts and places that make them up.'

current integrative strategies can do so.

Conclusion

The arguments and theories presented above all argue for the instrumental potential of art, operating through its embedded meanings, for defining and sustaining group identity, and show how social stress acts as a trigger for their mobilisation in counter-response. However, individual art objects, or even entire typologies of objects such as bark-cloth, would surely have limited power in isolation. It has been shown that art can transmit meaning both communicatively and by the stimulation of emotion, and in fact art's effectiveness in both of these domains is maximised by generalising its sign-functions into myth, becoming part of the array of group and ethnic myths by which the society defines its evolving identity and maintains its value systems. The manner in which this occurs, the fact that divergent myths may be generated by the same object or artform and lead independent lives, and how myths are able to be aggregated together and combined with other cultural devices to make up ritual, are the subject of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three

MYTH, RITUAL, AND POWER

This chapter first examines how the sign-functions of art can be generalised into myths. The important characteristics of myth are identified as its capacity to compress and incorporate many meanings (its polysemy), persisting even when the component signifieds and even the signifiers may have been lost or forgotten, and its capacity to grow, adapt and evolve (its mutability). *Masi* is argued to have become a myth of Fijianness, embodying religion, identity, and history, and this is contrasted with tourist-*tapa*, which uses some of the same formal components to construct a myth which relates to tourists' conceptions and experiences of Fiji and Fijians.

It is argued that art, myth and ritual cover much of the same psycho-social territory, sharing many functions and characteristics, all relating to gaining power over forces which cannot be controlled by either force or logic, from those of the cosmos and the spirit world, to temporal processes, where they mediate transition and facilitate changes in social structure and process, and thus connect past, present, and future. Rituals thus function as 'identity performances' to mediate social relationships and enhance solidarity. Their conservative processes help maintain defined hierarchies by reiterating the traditions on which they are based and rehearsing the status of participants. But the enthusiasm of commoners for engaging in ritual lies, it is suggested, in the sense individuals gain that they are taking some control over the events and forces in their lives, however hedged about by norms and circumstances those may be.

Subsequent chapters will establish the basis and particularity of Vatuléan identity, and elaborate the manner in which the people utilise the social instruments of art and ritual in managing it: the nature of their ritual and the social structures and norms it both reflects and configures; the artforms associated with it; the manner in which *masi* carries meaning; the social exchange value assigned to *masi* and how they have managed its commercialisation.

Art and myth

That individual works of art can be transformed into myths is a commonplace — no-one would deny that da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa' and 'Last Supper,' Michelangelo's

Sistine Ceiling, or the Altamira cave paintings, have all entered the realm of myth, immediately recognisable and evoking far more than the art itself. Not only individual works, but entire categories (in the examples cited, portrait painting, fresco, prehistoric rock art) can become mythified in this way, standing for things far beyond their actual materiality or primary function.

Campbell stated that 'mythology was historically the mother of the arts and yet, like so many mythological mothers, the daughter, equally, of her own birth' (1991: 42). Barthes asserted this mutuality less elliptically ((1957)1972: 103-25), proposing that signs and sign-systems which become particularly potent are able to enter a second level of signification, transcending and conflating their components into myths.¹ The multiplicity of their constituent signs ensures their polysemy. *Masi* works in this way, the different types of *masi* embedding signs which function separately and cumulatively, and finally *masi* itself becomes generalised as a myth of Fijianess.

No one class of objects achieves such transformation — it can range from the Stone of Scone to a piece of the 'True Cross' to Armstrong's lunar module. What is critical is, to borrow Lévi-Strauss's term, 'collective adoption' by the society. The crown of England may be no great work of art aesthetically, yet its signification still has more extensive ramifications than any English work of 'high art,' despite many of its connotations fading and/or losing potency today. 'Everything,' Barthes insisted, 'can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse by no means confined to modes of speech. It can consist of modes of writing or of representations ... [including] photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity ...' (1993: 94-5). The list could of course include not merely photography but all other forms of art — visual art, music, dance and performance. All contain a discourse, non-verbal but eloquent.

Barthes explained that in the process of mythification of a sign, it becomes attenuated, distanced from the more specific original meaning or signification it carried, and the history to which it owed its existence is likewise obscured. But like Eco (and unlike Baudrillard), he held that neither meaning nor history is lost — the myth requires both, though in an open, 'formless, unstable, nebulous condensation.' Though Barthes's schema was built on a Saussurean foundation, it

¹ It should be pointed out that this is contrary to the view of Lévi-Strauss ((1962)1976: 25-6), who held that 'the creative act which gives rise to myths is in fact exactly the reverse of that which gives rise to works of art.' He then presents views of the genesis and role of art which appear both idiosyncratic and dated. The Barthes model fits a far wider definition of art, and is adopted here.

probably has more conceptual affinity, at least in its temporal ramifications, with Peirce's tripartite semiotic system, where 'icons' are essentially representative signs (and therefore related to past experience), 'indexes' depend on contiguity (and thus relate to current experience), and 'symbols,' which represent only elliptically, require further actions to impute meaning, and thus provide links to the future (see Parmentier 1987: 107-8). 'Symbol' thus defined has many affinities with 'myth' as defined by Barthes, and as used throughout this thesis.

Mythification is in a sense 'mystification,' though this may render it not less but more potent. As Cohen put it (using 'symbol' in place of Barthes's 'myth'): 'through the "mystification" they create, symbols make it possible for the social order to survive the disruptive processes created within it by the inevitable areas of conflicting values and principles' (1974: 31). Thus in *masi* the 'shapeless associations' of many different connotations are now obscure, absorbed into the larger enterprise of mythification. Some possible originating referents will be discussed in Chapter Seven. The repetitions, dissociations, and fusions of ritual, discussed shortly, further extend this process of mystification.

As a familiar example, national flags become mythified in this manner, coming to stand for their countries' values, beliefs, and achievements (in short, their identity) which is why the burning of flags is so provocative that it is often declared illegal. In literate, historically self-conscious societies such as Britain and the USA, the history and connotations of such signs (the crosses in the British flag and the stars and stripes of the flag of the USA) are a matter of record, but their myth is strengthened and historic symbolism weakened by their personification as 'Union Jack' and 'Old Glory.' How the myth can overwhelm history, even component signs, is exemplified by the warmth of the current Australian debate about changing its flag, despite the questionable relevance to Australia's present national identity of the vestigial Union Jack.

In pre-literate societies, the originating histories and connotations of their myths are even more easily obscured through time and space.² *Masi* exemplifies this connotation loss, yet has still achieved mythic quality to an almost unique level among indigenous objects, epitomising Fijianness for both Fijians and Others. When modern Fijians use or wear *masi*, they are not mobilising it as a univalent

² As Sartori pointed out, it is the more abstract categories which travel best through time and space, when the level of denotation is high and the level of connotation is reduced (Sartori 1970: 1041). In other words, the broad generalised ideas are durable, the specific (temporally and spatially assigned) significations are not.

symbol, nor as a plethora of individual stories, both ‘logical’ responses: they are immersed in what Barthes (1993: 115) refers to as ‘the very presence’ of Fijian-ness.

Of great importance to some of the contentions of this thesis is Barthes’s insistence that while ‘the fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be *appropriated*,’ the mythified object cannot be appropriated — at least not by a different myth (1993: 105).³ To apply this to the ‘flag’ example, the figurations of both of the flags discussed above have been appropriated, often commodified, in countless different ways, applied to shopping-bags, bikinis, ‘personalised’ cars and vans, shopfronts. But these appropriations are drawing on, rather than attempting to detach them from, their moorings in ‘Britishness’ or ‘Americanness.’

Having said all of this, myths permit multiple readings — they are multi-vocal. A Democrat U.S. President would read a very different myth in the ‘Stars and Stripes’ than would the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan or an Iranian Ayatollah. In the same way, what the ‘Fijianness’ signified by *masi* actually is may be differently perceived by Others than by Fijians, and may be differently used. For example, the figuration of *masi* is regularly appropriated as a ‘Fiji’ marker by Fiji nationals generally (cf. Mead 1976: 297). The whole or selected components of *masi*’s multi-vocal signification may be accessed and conflated with other signs, seeking to gain by the synergy but also reinforcing its own mythology — to alienate or discard this would be to totally negate its authority as a sign, reducing it to mere formal elements.

Nor are myths, as Cassirer (1946: 82) suggested, the ‘offspring of emotion’ — emotion is the response to the symbol rather than its cause. Campbell maintained that neither the formation of nor reactions to myths is rational, nor even necessarily culturally learned (1991: 40–44). Content may involve direct references, or it may move beyond ‘a logic of references’ and become ‘a release from reference and rendition of immediate experience: a presentation of forms, images or ideas in such a way that they will communicate, not primarily a thought or even a feeling, but an impact’ (1991: 42, my emphasis). Changes in form may thus occur without diminishing the force of the myth, provided they sustain this impact at an adequate

³ Within the same mythic framework, however, the object may be ‘re-imagined’ and its myth re-cast. In her documentary about the ‘Cola Wars’ between Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola, Angelico (1998) explores how each company first generated, then continually re-casts, its myth in pursuit of particular markets, and having by this strategy achieved international mythic status for their products, that internationalism itself becomes part of the myths, the ‘snake eating its tail.’

level. This is critically important to an understanding of the manner in which present-day *masi* may look significantly different from its 19th century ancestor, but remain one of the most powerful myths of Fijian identity, and points up the irrelevance of criticisms of such changes as ‘corruption’ or ‘inauthenticity.’ Conversely, forms may persist, the connotations of which have been completely obscured or changed through time or disrupted by external agency (see Bhabha 1994: 43). This is of importance to the later discussion of motifs and meaning.

Finally, small parts of the myth can function as signs for the entirety of it. Thus to see either white-on-blue stars or red and white stripes in isolation can directly invoke the American myth, bypassing the actual U.S. flag.⁴ Fijians have long understood this, and after a ritual will often divide up a piece of presentation *masi* which was designed and figured as an entirety, sharing the pieces out among the recipient group. What they are sharing is the imparted myth — the integrity of the piece of cloth has served its purpose and need not be maintained.⁵ These pieces often turn up in museum collections, and curators sometimes mourn the ‘mutilation.’ Perhaps they should rather celebrate them as evidence of the human capacity for transferring profound meaning through fragments of objects — surely among the most succinct of symbols.

Airport art as non-indigenous myth

Tourist-trophy shops in Fiji, like the chain *Jack's Handicrafts* headquartered in Nadi, normally stock a fair array of *masi*, which ranges from moderate-sized pieces of cloth of traditional form and utility (which in an indigenous context could perform ritual roles), through to small pieces of bark-cloth made specifically for sale to tourists, taking account of suitcase size and aircraft weight-allowances, and ultimately Western apartment walls and coffee-tables. This tourist-*tapa* is not a culturally-embedded artform, though it clearly derives from such arts. It may or may not continue to bear a strong resemblance to traditional forms in its design and motifs, and/or bear totally non-traditional motifs which are aimed (whether

⁴ Durkheim ((1924)1965: 94) pointed this out, calling the myth the ‘religious force’ with which an object can be imbued, which is not lost even though the object may be subdivided.

⁵ In a similar manner, small totally unfigured pieces of the Southern Cross flag made and used by defiant miners at Australia’s Eureka Stockade in 1854 were cut out and carefully preserved by many people. Many of these pieces have been recovered from all over Australia and overseas, and re-attached to the remnants of the Eureka flag in Ballarat Art Gallery. It has become a potent Australian myth, but its history remains sufficiently prominent in that myth that it would be unlikely to be appropriated as the flag of a new Australian Republic.

accurately or not) at tourist tastes and interests.

The coexistence of products which are indigenously significant and those which are not is certainly not limited to Fiji — for example in Tonga huge, soft and subtly printed *ngatu* ritual cloths are made alongside small, bright, stiff (even varnished) pieces of tourist-*tapa* which contrast even more glaringly with the ritual objects than do the Fijian examples. Literally acres of ritual *ngatu* were presented at the King's Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1993, but it would have been unthinkable for the stiff, shiny little rectangles of tourist-*tapa* to have been presented. It, like other 'airport art,' projects outward to non-indigenes the myths of their own imagining, in contrast with the culturally-embedded cloth which directs its signs inward, defining identities and reaffirming connections between indigenous groups.

While Fijian purpose-made tourist-*tapa* uses many of the motifs and some of the designs of culturally-embedded *masi*, it is distant from the connotations and denotations which comprise the myth of *masi*. It is accessing the myth of Fijianness, but is overlaying it with other myths which relate specifically to the complex relationship between Fijians and tourists, and to the tourist experience of Fiji and Fijians. It has, in a manner deconstructionists would recognise, become less a 'detached signifier' than an attenuated one, as it signifies indigenous *masi* (itself a signifier) in much the way a Harley Davidson motorcycle painted with stars and stripes signifies the U.S. flag (also a signifier), but is at a considerable distance from the thirteen founding colonies and fifty states which are the flag's referent. The connotations the tourist-*tapa* accrues in the tourism environment (exotic Fiji, smiling Fijians, sun-surf-sand-filled holiday, and so on) further distance it from the original, just as the decorated Harley ridden at a 'Hog Convention' is distanced from the history and meaning of Old Glory and connotes leather gear, beards, beer, camaraderie and exhibitionism.

The tourist-*tapa* quite clearly *belongs* to Vatuleans, insofar as they make it; it accesses their *masi* myth and thereby (though weakly) their culture; and it is clear from their remarks that they do see it as an 'outreach tool' to remind tourists of them and generate emotional empathy. But Vatuleans have not mythified it, tourists and the tourism industry have, and it is they who 'own' the myth. It contributes primarily to the identity-construction of the tourists, only relatively peripherally to indigenous identity-processes. Thus alterations to the figuration tourist-*tapa* bears, the inclusion of invented images or words like 'Fiji 1997' and so on, do not automatically impinge on the originating myth, any more than if a company should use *masi* designs (or the name 'Fidji'?) on a bottle of perfume, in

order to access the 'exotic, primitive, exciting' component of that myth.⁶ It should be stressed here that this is not an attempt to invalidate tourist-*tapa* as an important aspect of Vatulelean life. It very clearly is. But by its nature and its incorporation of Others' agendas, it is generally excluded from the ritual domain of Vatulelean life and is effectively limited to the non-ritual, economic domain.

The use of identical materials or its reminiscent overall appearance should not disguise these fundamental differences. A tourist-trophy replica of Michelangelo's *David*, even if beautifully made and carved in Carrara marble, can never be more than a reference to the original, still-potent mythified sculpture (which also continues to lose and accrue connotations). The original *David* stands in Florence's Academia, seen by far fewer tourists than is its life-sized replica which 'stands-in' for it in the Piazza della Signoria where Michelangelo first placed the original. Many tourists have only seen the replica, so it is this that is called to mind by their little souvenir, distanced still further from the original work of art.

Neither the tourist-*tapa* table-mat nor the mini-David mantelpiece ornament pose any direct threat to the original artforms or their intentions or sign-functions (though the 'museumification' of the original *David* arguably does), and nor is any qualitative excellence or deficiency in them an indicator of the health or decadence of the originating form, since they are not in a direct line of descent from the original — each is a spin-off, tangential to and independent of the social life of the original. If the original loses any of its qualities, this should be regarded as a result of its own dynamic rather than that of its offspring. It is not material, nor scale, nor aesthetic quality which are critical in separating them, but rather intention (content) and context — in other words, sign-function. This also, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight, affects their relative social value in the Fijian system, and thus their assigned cash value.

The originating artform may remain vital within the community or it may be

⁶ Thomas has remarked that 'signs of contact and modernity are taboo in tourist art' (1995: 177). It is true that images of contemporary ('Westernised') Fiji (such as the beer-can labels which are imitated in some contemporary PNG art) are not sought by tourists in Fijian tourist-*tapa*. But they can display surprising preconceptions regarding indigenous art. One appears to be an expectation that Fijians should represent 'their world' in their art, hence an expectation of images of such things as hibiscus and/or frangipani flowers (both introduced to Fiji, but mythically 'tropical'), coconut trees, fans, thatched houses, and outrigger canoes. These do therefore appear in some tourist-*tapa*. In Vatulele, one woman produced a remarkably cleverly-cut stencil depicting a prawn, since tourists had asked why they didn't commemorate on their *masi* the red prawns for which the island is also famous. But while making a line of small tourist-*tapa* placemats featuring this prawn design, she showed no inclination to print it on her ritual or even house-decoration cloth.

abandoned; may retain a current and relevant sign-function and generalising mythic capacity, or become merely an inert historical curiosity; may adhere steadfastly to traditional methods of manufacture and expressive systems or incorporate new technologies and forms of expression — some of these even, as is the case in Vatulele *masi*, pioneered during the production of tourist-art.⁷ As a living art-form, culturally-embedded *masi* is certainly susceptible to such technical and/or formal influences, as well as to changes in meaning. Barthes points out that ‘there is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate’ (1993: 106). Being elaborated sign systems, if their evolution does not keep pace with that of the culture that generated them, they will quickly lose their relevance and cease to exist. As Whitehead put it:

The art of free society consists in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly, in fearlessness of revision ... those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows (cited in Middleton & Edwards 1990: 82).

Catering to what is in the postmodern era a rapidly growing industry with an apparently insatiable appetite for novelty and exoticity, tourist art may well be more secure than the originating artform in a context of rapid social change. In that case the tourist art may flourish while its parent declines, but it should still be understood as a separate phenomenon, not as evidence of, or causative of, that decline.

That culturally-embedded *masi* continues to prosper indicates a constant adjustment of its sign-function, so far keeping pace with self-images of Fijianness and *masi*’s evolving social role. Comparing contemporary *masi* with museum examples may permit this change to be plotted (to some extent this will be attempted here, in Chapter Seven), and thus shed some light on present pressures and values. But variably-informed aesthetic critiques (usually nostalgic and deprecating the contemporary product), tell us little about the social function or embedded meaning of the cloth either historically or today. Without these, all one is doing is applying Western aesthetic canons (which may or may not be relevant — again discussed in Chapter Seven) to materials, workmanship and form.

Much of the debate surrounding ‘airport art’ and its relationship to ‘traditional art’

⁷ Graburn (1999: 350) cites Alice Horner’s observation in the Cameroons of the manner in which promoters and collectors play roles ‘in both constructing meanings in the arts for themselves and in stimulating creativity among African artists.’

appears to be the result of such a focus on form rather than content and context (i.e. sign function), and a failure to understand that from one starting point more than one stream of evolution is possible. This is especially easy to overlook when the original form has ceased to function in, or be manufactured by or for, the originating society, and only the secondary product survives.

Graburn (1999: 344) warns that 'purebred/hybrid' distinctions are questionable, and perhaps he would extend this to the parallel development of 'embedded' and 'tourist' art. It appears clear that ongoing separate development does not always occur — where tourism is minimal the selling of some of their culturally-embedded artifacts meets demand, whereas in profoundly changed societies the embedded form may be rarely if ever made today. What is argued here is that where both categories co-exist, evolution may occur along different lines in each because of the different roles each has to play.

Since clearly both are indigenous products, generally made by the same makers, authenticity is not at issue, but intention, meaning and social role are. There are often cross-references between the two technologically, to some extent of form, and even Vatulele tourist-*tapa* is integral to modern Vatulelean identity insofar as it provides the money for every aspect of modern life. But tourist-*tapa* does not play the sort of role in identity negotiation suggested for Sepik art (Silverman 1999) or that of the Ainu (Friedman 1994: 109-12).

Napier observes that significant indigenous art can be sold in an airport lounge or tourist-trophy shop, and suggests that in this situation 'the only difference between a piece of national heritage and local airport art may be the consecration of the former' (1997: 166). The use of 'consecration' implies a sacred/profane opposition which does not exist in Fijian culture, and the neutral semiotic term 'sign-function' may be preferable. In Chapter Eight it will be elaborated how certain types of embedded *masi* can be sold in tourists shops (though the two most significant types of ritual cloth almost never are). But the *masi* does not thereby become tourist art as defined here, it is merely assigned a commercial role at that particular phase of its 'cultural biography' to use Kopytoff's term (1986). Hirschman (1996: 169) emphasises that this process does not strip those products of their embedded meanings, that they may lead 'multiple social lives simultaneously ... a curious type of *multiple personality syndrome* ... perceived as having very different social meanings ... among different cultural groups' (Fig.3).

As it enters the tourist-constructed 'exotic' myth, therefore, the embedded denotative and other connotative elements of such *masi* are still there, undiminished



Fig.3. 'Multiple personality' masi

I-oro of two designs — *kolikoli* (L) and *vābonu* (R). These cloths are still used within Fijian society, as ritual clothing, prestation goods and house decoration, but because of their relatively small size and attractive appearance are also often bought by tourists.

as far as the originators are concerned but irrelevant to the shopkeeper and unrecognised or re-imagined by the buyer. Appadurai (1986: 14-15) points out that such 'transactions across cultural boundaries' attenuate the maker-culture's 'standards and criteria' to such an extent that they 'seem virtually absent,' and 'a shallower set of shared standards of value' operate. The 'degree of value coherence may be highly variable from situation to situation, and from commodity to commodity,' he points out, and 'such regimes of value account for the constant transcendence of cultural boundaries by the flow of commodities, where culture is understood as a bounded and localized system of meanings.'

This sort of mutability, it will be argued, existed prior to Western contact and certainly prior to tourism.⁸ But where such meaning was never inscribed, as in tourist-*tapa*, the meanings are not there to be read in the ritual context. In Vatulele

⁸ The fact that selling such an object as a commodity does not diminish its inscribed meaning or identity-role was impressed on me in Apia, Samoa in 1980. On a visit to the local market (where most customers were locals) I bought a number of indigenous artifacts which were being sold between Samoans, including a fine-mat which I chose carefully for its whiteness, fineness of strands, even-ness and closeness of weave. As I walked back to the hotel bearing my prizes, I was intercepted at least six times by Samoans who, without a word to me, proprietorially examined the fine-mat closely, handling it, turning it this way and that, expressing their assessment of it to one another, finally nodding to me and walking away. They took no interest in the other objects, also of indigenous manufacture but not bearing the profound cultural inscription of the fine-mat. While my having bought it clearly did not worry them at all, they clearly felt that my possession of the object did not exclude them from ongoing ownership of the myth, and as such a continuing 'stake' in the object and license to inspect it.



Plate 2. Tourist-tapa

- (a) Place-mats, the ultimate simulacrum.
- (b) Tourist-tapa display in Werelevu for a visiting tourist boat. 1980.
- (c) The 'shell market,' selling sea-shells and tourist-tapa to Resort guests. 1995.
- (d) 'Eight by Four.' This new product is an imitation of the Lauan *solofua*, which, together with the smaller 'Six by Four,' has proved popular with tourists. More care is lavished on these than on most tourist-tapa, and they are often fine examples of their makers' skill. Their design is merely an elaboration of that used in smaller tourist-tapa, and they have no traditional social role, seldom appearing in ritual prestations. 1995.



rituals, I have seen tourist-*tapa* added to piles of prestation objects, but the demeanour of giver and other participants show that it is regarded differently from the large pieces of ritual cloth being presented — it is viewed like negotiable currency, not as a bearer of profound meaning.

Art and myth operating within ritual

The most socially affective role of *masi* is within ritual, which at the same time depends heavily on the sign-functions of its constituent myths, including *masi* — ‘the power of the rite is based in good part on the potency of its symbols’ (Kertzer 1988: 179). The social function of symbol and myth is, Radcliffe-Brown noted, ‘exactly parallel to that of ritual and ceremonial.’ That was, for the Andamanese,

to express certain ways of thinking and feeling about the society and its relation to the world of nature, and ... to maintain ... and pass them on to succeeding generations. The sentiments expressed are those essential to the existence of the society (1922: 405).

Each of ritual’s sign-bearing components — language, art, clothing, performance and music — is a powerful emotive and socially instrumental tool in its own right. But when these are aggregated together in ‘multi-media’ rituals, participated in *en masse* and combined with bodily involvement in repetitive and/or familiar actions, meaning is conveyed syntagmatically (Chapter Two) by the spatio-temporal juxtaposition of all of these elements. Rituals thus become exceptionally powerful cultural engines for influencing, even controlling, individuals and groups.⁹

Christian church rituals epitomise the multi-media aspect of ritual, with their combination of intonations and procedures, spatially organised ritual objects (altars, fonts, crucifixes), and vestments (clothing, headgear). The same elements are present in Vatulele rituals, with spatial organisation of participants and sequences of actions, formalised language, ritual garb and ritual objects. *Masi* functions as both vestments and ritual prestation objects, its purpose extended so that it is moved from the aesthetic/affective domain to the applied domain, ‘performative-for-some-goal and for-someone’ (Parkin 1992: 17). Ritual art objects have been defined by Langer (1957: 124) as ‘present[ing] the basic facts of human existence’ while the ritual of which they are part is the group’s ‘response to those supreme realities ... [their] *articulation* of feelings.’ As social goals change, the role of *masi* also changes, requiring adjustment of its form, signs, connotations and myths.

⁹ Both Tambiah (1985: 125) and Schwimmer (1990) stipulated the multi-media synergy of ritual. Importantly, Schwimmer extended it to include material objects as well as words, music and dance.

d'Aquili proposes that resolution of the problems presented within myth (in the form of juxtaposed opposites such as life-death, good-evil, and heaven-hell) is 'usually achieved [by] expressing the myth in the form of ceremonial ritual' (1993: 62). But why? Because, Turner suggests, though 'myths attempt to explain away ... logical contradictions ... puzzlement [could] remain ... in the analytic verbalising consciousness ... [so,] like all other animals, humanity attempts ... [mastery through] motor behaviour, in this case ritual' (1993: 90).

Lévi-Strauss privileged words over actions, and held that ritual was a basic form of communication — a *paralanguage* — while myth is the highest form of communication — *metalanguage* (1977: 66).¹⁰ There are difficulties at every level of such a conceptualisation: in opposing myth and ritual rather than seeing them as part of a network of association; in seeing myth in terms of words alone (in contrast to Barthes); and in regarding myth and ritual as languages, with the function of communicating information.

The reason was part of the rejection (discussed in Chapter Two) of the social significance of anything associated with the body: 'the theoretical weight ... place[d] on consciousness neglects the socially shaped somatic bases of action and structure, and results in an undersocialised view of the embodied agent ... the relationship between socialisation and agency needs analysing in terms of embodiment as much as in terms of the cognitive internalisation of norms and values' (Shilling 1997: 737). Turner, d'Aquili and more recently Parkin and Kertzer have pointed out that the physical action through which ritual transmits meaning gives it 'a distinctive potential for performative imagination that is not reducible to verbal associations' (Parkin 1992: 11-12). Then, 'since rituals are non-verbal, they have no contraries. They can therefore be used to produce harmony of wills and actions without recalcitrance' (Kertzer 1988: 13, quoting Confucian philosopher Chuang Tzu).

In fact rituals do use words more commonly than not, but those words are not primarily functioning to communicate data and facts in a coherent fashion — in fact ritual serves precisely to detach them from any obligation to do so. They are stylised, used repetitively, and associated with bodily movement (also stylised and repetitive) as well as with multiple other signifiers and myths, often including art, in order to make an impact and convince participants even despite logical contradictions, as Turner suggested above. This echoes Joseph Campbell's (1991:

¹⁰ Although he did not say so, there seems little doubt that he would have lumped non-verbal art with ritual rather than with myth. This too would be a reversal of the relationship proposed here.

40-44) assertions regarding myth's capacity to move beyond 'a logic of references' and become 'a release from reference and rendition of immediate experience.'

How this occurs may relate to the manner in which the repetitive aspect of ritual is able to produce an 'ineffable' but quite compelling conviction for the individual or group, in its extreme manifestation resulting in trance (d'Aquili & Laughlin 1979: 174-6; cited in Turner 1993: 88-9). Repetition is apparently able to not merely bridge logical contradictions, but to then reinforce the convictions participants acquire. Edelman has put forward a 'theory of neuronal group selection' to account for the fact that synaptic connections are strengthened by repeated use relative to 'competing' connections which 'lose out' and atrophy (Edelman 1992; Sylwester 1995), and the repetitious aspect of ritual will clearly be reinforcing in this way.¹¹

Ritual and social cohesion

At least since Durkheim wrote *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, the capacity of ritual for social bonding has been generally accepted. One image of ritual that he suggested ((1912)1965: 415-20) was that of plays recapitulating the past just as it was, whereby society 'renews the sentiment which it has of itself and its unity.' Unfortunately, it is this conservative image which has captivated most social theorists, who ignore Durkheim's other, more radical, perceptions of ritual's capacities (Baumann 1992). Though he too used Durkheim's term 'sentiment,'

¹¹ The passing reference to contemporary neurological theory here does not betray a biological determinist stance. But that cultural systems, being products of human thought, access and are contingent on aspects of neural physiology seems self-evident, and the manner in which that occurs is instructive to cultural analysis. As Gerald Edelman points out, cultural and biological factors are actually interdependent: 'The genetic code does not provide a specific wiring diagram [for neural networks] ... Rather, it imposes a set of *constraints* on the selection process [for these]' (1992: 83). Radcliffe-Brown long ago saw 'psycho-physical processes' at the root of the 'system of which ritual is a part (and art another)' (cited in Singer 1996: 35-6; Radcliffe-Brown (1932)1956: 6-7). Leach, however, would have no truck with a neural/cognitive approach, insisting that 'it cannot be too strongly emphasised that ritual, in the anthropologist's sense, is in no way whatsoever a genetic endowment of the species' (1966: 403).

Turner is more inclusive. He has said he is persuaded that this recent work in cerebral neurology permits, even demands, the integration of nature and culture in our explanations, rather than an adherence to Lévi-Straussian opposition of those categories (1993). Lévi-Strauss himself did perceive the unconscious as 'a possible underlying structure of myth, ritual, ceremonialism, and of the rites of individual and societal transformation' (cited in Crumrine & Macklin 1974: 179-80), but his approach was Freudian rather than physiological. For the purposes of this thesis, it is sufficient to note that such work is taking place, and that it provides support for the importance of myth and ritual to human cognition, and therefore the way in which humans order their cultural affairs. Marcus concludes: 'In truth, the Cartesian fallacy that mind and brain are dissociable has been a paralyzing intellectual legacy for all behavioral sciences' (Barfield 1997: 341).

Radcliffe-Brown mistrusted the emotions, and focused primarily on social structure, though like Durkheim, he understood that change is implicit in the 'regulation' of the group's 'sentiments' through ritual (1922: 233-4; (1952)1979: 157). Shils (1981: 31-2) viewed ritual as part of the 'guiding pattern' of tradition, something rather like Radcliffe-Brown's 'ritual idiom,' and Leach saw it as learned behaviour linked with the development of language, and designed to transmit cultural knowledge (Turner 1993: 80).

There is no argument that ritual sustains connections with the past, transporting through its myths the sentiments and histories which cognitively structure group identities. The issue is whether such reiteration is ritual's *only* function, and whether it is 'invariant,' as for example Rappaport (1979), and later Connerton (1989: 54), maintained. Connerton cites ritual's stylisation and repetition (1989: 58-60) as proving its conservativeness. But while these provide the generic structural template for ritual, variation and change are possible both in the form of the template itself and in what the ritual is actually achieving.

Goffman refers to 'processing encounters ... sorting and reproducing the social structure' (1983: 8, my emphasis), both between group members between the group and Others. Holzner and Robertson call these 'identifying performances,' for both identification and authentication of group identity, which test both social boundaries and loyalty within social boundaries, 'collective parallels to the developmental schemata of self and personhood in the individual' (1980: 10). Such 'performances' include art and myth, but rituals are certainly their most formal and elevated manifestation. 'Each individual person, and every group, can be conceived of as engaged in responding to such identification demands, and in the process constructing an identity' (Holzner & Robertson 1980: 15, my emphasis).

Such ideas acknowledge a mutability and an involvement of others outside the group, features absent from the views discussed above. Baumann (1992: 100, 113) identifies two ways in which Others are invariably implicated in ritual:¹²

1. While acknowledging that some ritual is specifically exclusive of non-group members, some does permit the involvement of Others — a point also noted by Boissevain (1984: 175; 1991: 95) and by Crystal (1989: 165-6) in relation to tourist

¹² Baumann (1992: 98) rejects the exclusivity implied by Leach's remark (1966) that 'we engage in rituals in order to transmit collective messages to ourselves,' as 'narrow and one-sided,' pointing out that Durkheim, on the contrary, was fully aware of the capacity of ritual to implicate and/or bring together people from diverse places and disparate social locations (Durkheim (1912)1965: 294 and n.2).

observation of, and participation in, ritual. In Fiji and many other societies, of course, Others have *always* been involved as a structural part of presentation/exchange rituals, as will be explored in Chapter Five.

2. Even when Others are not physically involved, they are 'invisible participants.' Part of the identity-negotiation function of ritual takes account of their presence — even intramural rehearsal of a group's histories and identities relates precisely to establishing boundaries and commonalities with Others (cf. Cohen 1995: 3). Also, extra-mural observance of traditional rituals can become a form of outward-oriented 'witnessing.'¹³

He concludes that the understanding of the role of ritual must be widened from perpetuation, to include assimilation and cultural change.

In most explanations of Fijian traditional behaviour, the 'narrow internal reading' criticised by Baumann still prevails, but here such a reading has some justification, since throughout the colonial century the official policy in regard to all indigenous affairs was conservation virtually to the point of fossilisation. Fijians were routinely praised for 'preserving their traditions.' In such a context of regime maintenance rather than regime change, the primary function of Fijian ritual was the promulgation of an ongoing and unchanging identity in active resistance to change, and this role limitation for ritual has been a persistent colonial legacy. Thus Ravuvu could write, nearly two decades after Independence, 'Traditional ceremonies continue to exist as a model of life for Fijians. They reflect their world view, and define the social and political structures, religious beliefs, values and practices inherent in Fijian communities' (1987: vii).

Schwartz warned about such an 'atemporal concept of collective memory' that 'if beliefs about the past failed to outlive changes in the society, then society's unity and continuity would diminish' (1990: 82). Nayacakalou (1975: 4-5, 95) had already in the early 1960s recognised the confusion for colonial Fijians who were steeped in a rehearsed adherence to tradition (including rituals), yet increasingly warned by others that they must change or perish. He identified the sectional interests promoting traditionalism, and instanced indigenous resistance to it.

¹³ It is this aspect of the ceremonies presented specifically for tourists, and similarly the production of indigenous-derived 'airport art,' that is frequently represented as having some positive effect in strengthening the originating societies' identity (e.g. Friedman 1994: 109-11; McKean (1977)1990). It may be debatable whether publicising identity actually strengthens it, though as McKean suggested in relation to the Balinese and Friedman to the Ainu, the act of representing oneself positively to 'others' may be reconstitutive of threatened identity.

While shared and ritually rehearsed traditions certainly sustain the ‘mutuality’ of the group,¹⁴ which is undoubtedly a primary goal of their current identity-affirmation project, Ravuvu has observed that ‘while these ceremonies generally emphasise the importance and maintenance of the existing traditional order, they are being increasingly manipulated as a means of achieving new goals and aspirations’ (1987: vii). It is not so much manipulation, as a rediscovery and accessing of an aspect which during the thrall of colonialism remained largely unused — ritual’s capacity to mediate change. Bennett wrote that ‘myths underwrite the *status quo* in times of stability and they chart the course of change in times of stress’ (1980: 168). Just so for rituals, which are essentially elaborated myths.¹⁵

Hubert and Mauss (1898) first identified the underlying structure of all ritual behaviour, which van Gennep ((1908)1960) then expressed as three stages:

- 1 . separation;.
- 2 . marginality or liminality; and
- 3 . reaggregation or reaffirmation.

These stages tend to be ‘run’ according to what was above termed a ‘template’ in each society, with different modular components particularising each performance. In Wittgenstein’s words, ‘There is a multiplicity of faces with common features continually reappearing here and there’ (1982; cited in Cartry 1992: 26).

That both the template and the phases of transition are recognised by Vatuleans is shown by the account of chiefly installation given by a village elder: ‘To receive the support of his people, a chief goes through something like our birth custom ... [after which] the chief is born’ (Teckle 1984: 49-50, my emphasis). And in stressing the consistency of the template in different applications, one informant hit on the device of referring to ‘Act 1, Act 2,’ and so on, for each of the different types of ritual he was describing (Informant E).

The template provides a link between past, present and future. It is sufficiently consistent that Fijians from distant places can recognise the structure of, and

¹⁴ This term references Thompson’s (1963) term ‘rituals of mutuality’ in describing the development of rituals associated with working-class unions in 19th century England, responsive to changing needs and events but stressing common purpose and unity. A similar conclusion has been reached by Gilbert with reference to African ritual: ‘although the ... ritual ... is thought to be unchanging in its performance and symbolic structure, in practice the community’s volatile politics are also reflected in the ad hoc modifications made each year to the lengthy ceremonial process’ (1994: 99).

¹⁵ This is not an attempt to re-ignite what Keesing decried as ‘a long and fruitless [anthropological] debate about which [of myth and ritual] was a reflection of which’ (1981: 343), but rather an assertion of their co-extensiveness.

participate confidently in, each other's rituals. But in no two places will the finer detail of a given ritual be absolutely identical, nor will any two rituals seen in one place ever be identical. Parkin refers to such variation as 'the apparent blueprint and the evident on-the-spot inventiveness' (1992: 19). Even throughout the colonial period, specific regional and temporal imperatives provoked evolution within the broad structure of the template, and in today's climate of rapid change and escalating ritual activity, the outcomes often show significant variation in both intention and form. As Sperber put it:

Each new evocation brings about a different construction of old representations, weaves new links among them, integrates into the field of symbolism new information brought to it by daily life: the same rituals are enacted, but with new actors; the same myths are told, but in a changing universe, and to individuals whose ... relationships with others, and whose experience, have changed (1975: 145).

That ritual can in this way sustain links between past and present while structuring change for the future is one of its most remarkable qualities. The mutability of the signs and myths in rituals permit this, and biological explanations may suggest a mechanism by which it operates. Neurologists conclude that while well-established neural paths of individuals are highly resistant to change, accounting for human adherence to the familiar, they are not immune to change. Edelman points out that 'even in a developed brain "sprouting" can occur, in which new neural processes form additional synapses,' and he considers the most important of all his proposals to be that of 'reentry,' whereby different 'neural maps' may be accessed simultaneously and form new interconnections (1992: 85-91).

The choices thrust in front of them, discussed in the previous chapter, and the diverse stimuli of multi-media ritual events, both fuel 'reentry.' Ritual thus has the capacity to destabilise individuals' neural *maps* at the same time as it accesses established neural *paths*. Thus at the same time as they rehearse the 'known,' those participating in rituals have a capacity, even predisposition, for innovative responses to, and rearrangements or re-inscriptions of, that information — what d'Aquili (1993: 60) describes as 'mazeway re-synthesis ... a transformation of [even] the most encompassing superordinate cognitive structure under conditions of intense stress.' Thus Turner (1993: 77) came to recognise an 'inherent resistance to conditioning' as part of humans' response to the social conditioning he had long identified as ritual's role. He concluded:

ritual is not necessarily a bastion of social conservatism; its symbols do not merely condense cherished sociocultural values. Rather, through its

liminal processes, it holds the generating source of culture and structure ... Performances of ritual are distinctive phases in the social process, whereby groups and individuals adjust to internal changes and adapt to their external environment (Turner 1993: 79).

Rituals may therefore be mobilised for *either* the reaffirmation *or* the reconstruction of identity, in response to external pressures or personal desires. An increase in either or both of these cause the stress which results in increasing mobilisation of ritual, along with art, language and other devices, as components of what Cohen (1995: 3-8) has called 'the politicization of cultural identity.' As he says, 'It would be quite incorrect to construe as cynical these representations of identity ... their expression and use speaks rather of a commitment to the integrity of culture and group.'

Stress, identity and the efflorescence of ritual

The roots of ritual in stress and conflict, which it then serves to disguise, mitigate and/or defuse, have been repeatedly asserted (Chapple 1970: 295-6; Collins 1975: 59-60; Keesing 1981: 318; Turner 1982: 110; Cannadine 1987: 15), and it is reasonable to interpret the increased ritual activity in Vatulele (and Fiji at large), and the associated *masi* production, as mitigatory action in response to increasing stress, just as Kavolis (1972) suggested. The conjunction of art and ritual, then, is not merely the fact that art functions as ritual object and vestment, or that ritual is made up of mythologies including those of art; they are actually separate but concordant and frequently concurrent social mechanisms.

Turner noted early in his fieldwork that 'among the Ndembu ... a multiplicity of conflict situations is correlated with a high frequency of ritual performance Turner ((1969)1977: 10, my emphasis).¹⁶ This observation irresistibly recalls Durkheim's comments about 'collective effervescence':

When under the influence of some great collective shock, social interactions have become more frequent and alive. Men look for each other and assemble together more than ever ... [and] see more and differently now than in normal times ((1912)1965: 241).

¹⁶ 'Stress' cannot, of course, be held to be synonymous with every definition of social conflict. However, Collins's 'conflict sociology' used the term in relation to the pursuit of wealth, power and prestige, and a resistance to coercion by others, and saw 'interaction ritual chains' as societies' ways of ordering these (Collins 1975; 1988). Such a reading of social conflict is quite consistent with the identity-related stress Turner recounted, and that is here proposed as the basis of Vatulele ritual.

In part, of course, it is comforting and reassuring for social groups to seek 'spontaneous *communitas*,' huddled together against the storm of perceived external threats and pressures.¹⁷ As Sarup puts it, 'one's own group provides a refuge' (1996: 11). But as pointed out earlier, many of the external forces are difficult to influence greatly, so 'huddling' is not enough in the long-term, and the group must develop ways to adjust its own emotional responses, even its social and cultural identity, so that it can become, emotionally at least, impervious or at least resistant to those stresses. Douglas points out that 'small communities that seem to run entirely on public spirited solidarity usually survive by implementing a lot of structure: contrary to the view of German and Chicago sociologists, *Gemeinschaft* is not just a warm, cosy feeling' (1994: 18). Ritual is, to use Hochschild's (1983) expression, one of the principle 'levers of feeling production' through which groups can manage their emotions through the full range from suppression to enhancement. In a rapidly-changing world, the process of affirmation of solidarity on the one hand, and flexible adaptation to/acceptance of change on the other, must be continuous.¹⁸

As Kornhauser has reminded us, contrary to criticisms that Durkheim's focus on social solidarity fails to address change, he clearly stated that social solidarity is implicated in change and vice versa: 'the same activities with reinvigorate the bonds of solidarity are those which make possible the transformation of society' (cited in Kornhauser 1984: 325; Durkheim (1912)1965: 245). Elsewhere he wrote: 'The periods of creation or renewal occur when men for various reasons are led into a closer relationship with each other, when reunions and assemblies are most frequent, relationships better maintained and the exchange of ideas most active' (cited in Kornhauser 1984: 326; Durkheim (1924)1965: 91).

van Gennep ((1908)1960), and later Turner (e.g. 1974b; 1982; (1969)1977; (1969)1990) proposed that it is through the middle liminal processes of ritual that it exercises its myth-like 'propensity ... to drift free of [its] original stimuli and assume new functions' (Dirks 1988: 866), and Turner reiterated Durkheim's notion of social solidarity and change going hand-in-hand, with his location of

¹⁷ Turner's definition of *communitas* is 'an unmediated relationship between historical, idiosyncratic, concrete individuals, the immediate or spontaneous phase of which is a deep, magical interaction and sense of 'togetherness' imparting a great feeling of power' (1982: 47-51).

¹⁸ As mentioned in Chapter Two, Peter Burke (1991; 1996) identified the continuous nature of such a process in his 'identity theory,' and also the fact that the mechanisms for change are frequently generated by stress. However, he left the actual mechanisms for this change rather in limbo, and did not identify ritual as one of them.

communitas in the liminal phase of rituals. Ritual itself also changes as part of the social change it generates. If this were not the case, if rituals were indeed 'invariant' as Connerton (1989) suggests, their relevance (and therefore observance) would inevitably diminish as globalising forces ineluctably alter customary practices, cultural values, and group needs. That this is far from the case in Fiji testifies to the fact that they are keeping pace with social change.

That Fijians understand the social reinforcement of ritual as an abstract concept, and recognise the mutability of their traditions (including rituals) but also recognise their voluntary agency in this process, are born out by the following ritual speech, pithy despite its formal language:

That our establishment be affirmed and reinforced ... That the objectives of our coming together, siblings, parents and offspring [i.e. kin], are enhanced; The time is marching on, marching with its changing characteristics, and with it, changing custom. The winds of change have reached Fiji and, if we do not handle them properly, our *vanua* [domain] is doomed to suffer (part of ritual speech by Tunakau of Nokoidrau, 1982, in Tailevu, Vitilevu: cited in Ravuvu 1987: 52).

Tunakau's sober tone is still more positive than the modernist credo of 'change as cultural decline,' as expressed by Guidieri: 'To live in modern times is to wander amid the ruins ... and mourn that which is lost forever' (Babadzan 1984: 317; citing Guidieri 1984 — my translation). In fact the evidence worldwide does not support such a lugubrious view. Babadzan rejected such images of a world of disengaged *flâneurs* and/or impotent victims, noting instead that socio-cultural evolution has resulted in the construction of new and relevant identities by 'inventing myths and creating rituals' (1984).

Boissevain, too, admitted (1984: 163) that his 1960s predictions of a decline in ritual in Malta have been confounded by actual events, which have seen some rituals decline but a number of others escalate remarkably — trends he also observed (1991; 1992; 1996a) happening throughout Europe and overseas 'on a scale that is surely unmatched in human history' (Manning, 1983: 4; cited by Boissevain, 1991: 87).

The point is that myth and ritual are not merely capable of evolving in themselves, but are uniquely capable of insulating and transporting societies' self-images and sense of self-worth, whereas without such vehicles in which to negotiate transitions, those fragile aspects of identity might not survive the passage. Even dramatically changed rituals can demonstrate a capacity to, 'despite changes in

meaning, successfully engage the same emotions across immense temporal and cultural horizons' (Dirks 1988: 866-7).

Ritual and play

Play is a kind of dialectical dancing partner of ritual ... [it] is the supreme bricoleur ... of frail transient constructions (Turner 1993: 92-3)

Boissevain notes two interesting relative correlations in Malta. The ceremonies that have declined are those in which there is a predominance of what he calls the 'ritual dimension' — perhaps referring to what Connerton calls 'invariance,' conventionalised behaviour and spatial organisation, and highly stylised language, music, dance etc. Those ceremonies which have had the capacity to increase the element of play, 'theatre, costumes, band marches and wild spontaneous demonstrations,' have increased (1991: 93).

This appears relevant to the vigour of Fijian rituals, which typically have, and probably always have had, ludic elements. This is particularly true of those Turner (1973: 1100) defined as 'noncontingent' rituals, elsewhere called 'rites of intensification,' which are not strictly rites of passage (for example the 'Vatulele Day' island fundraising celebrations, which bring mainland-resident Vatuleleans back to the island, and customarily also invite an Other group with whom they have connections, to receive their presentations and thus elevate the ritual beyond a domestic affair). It is these which have proliferated, along with newly-adopted rite-of-passage celebrations such as birthday 'parties' and baptisms, since though steady, the population increase is not rapid or great, meaning that traditional life-crisis rites of passage cannot increase much.

Even the most serious of Vatulele rituals have about them aspects of play, as part of the main action and/or running parallel to it, providing a forum for spontaneity and thus the potential for unpredictable outcomes. This unquestionably helps sustain 'collective enthusiasm' of participants to which Durkheim referred (see Ravuvu 1987: 172 for such an episode within what was an extremely solemn ceremony). There is no incongruity here: Tambiah (1985: 127) pointed out that 'ritual, festival, and play belong to a paradigmatic set (in a Saussurean sense).'

An important strength is that rituals are not spectacles to be observed by non-participants, like the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace or a cricket testmatch at Old Trafford (strong ritual iterations of collective identity though these are), but are actively engaged in by every member of the group. Like Bakhtin's carnival, ritual here is 'a collectivity in which the individual members become an

inseparable part of the human mass ... aware of their sensual-material bodily unity' (Bakhtin 1968: 196-277; cited in Connerton 1989: 50). This inclusive participatory nature means that, to borrow current administrative jargon, the people 'own' the action — they not only identify with it, they create it.¹⁹

Certain categories of people, particularly women of late-middle-age but occasionally also certain older men (neither normally of elevated social status) are permitted licence to 'clown,' particularly in 'noncontingent' rituals (see Ravuvu 1987 for a typical clowning performance by a woman dressed as a man). While formalised clowning has been noted for many parts of the Pacific (e.g. Mitchell 1992; Hereniko 1993; 1995) and other tribal societies (e.g. Makarius 1970; Crumrine 1976), occurrences in Vatulele appear to be *ad hoc*. This behaviour relates to what Gluckman (1954; 1965) identified as the two types of 'rituals of rebellion,' the first with women displaying aggressive or suggestive behaviour toward men, the second with subjects deriding their leaders. The fact that these are socially sanctioned makes Leach's definition of them as 'rites of reversal' more accurate (1961; cited in Graburn, 1983b: 13).

The 'clown's garb' of social indeterminacy of those normally permitted to clown (of middling 'rank,' not yet 'old' but past middle age, with loss of fecundity/potency), protects them in the world of power struggles (Turner 1993: 95). Their position corresponds with the marginal or liminal spaces in rituals (and it is temporal spaces of this sort during which they perform), so they are well placed to shake, or at least tweak, tradition and test the bounds of the possible as well as to 'mediate oppositions and fuse conceptual categories and discrete classes' (Crumrine 1976: 132).²⁰

But everyone participates in one or more aspects of the ritual — preparing the

¹⁹ This calls into question the conventional definition of ritual as involving 'sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers' (Rappaport 1979: 175; cited in Boissevain 1989: 146), which again derives from notions of invariance and the transmission of group wisdom rather than the group's participation in a process of transition. Even when the words and actions are traditional, the fact that they are re-contextualised at each utterance means that they are indeed being encoded anew by the performers, and the code assigned may be the same as it was previously, or different.

²⁰ There is one other marginal category of people in Vatulele who are often disruptive and joking during ritual, and that is the *vahu* — 'ego's sister's son [or daughter]' of influential men (see Chapter Four for further discussion of the extraordinary social licence these individuals enjoy). This category is interesting in relation to Koepping's (1984) analysis, in which he suggests that the clown (or 'trickster' in his terminology) may be seen not merely in terms of rebellion, but of anti-structure — a rubric which better suits the *vahu*.

ceremonial location, assembling and presenting goods, preparing/serving/eating food, or giving speeches, and in the intervals between their assigned activities, they assiduously monitor the ongoing action. Any new departure from routine or even recently incorporated practices are noted internally for later gossip, or commented on quietly: 'throwing sweets to all the people during this part of the ceremony is a Lauan custom, but we do it now — it's just for fun,' 'he is not actually the herald for this clan, but they have not had any good speakers for some years so they always "borrow" him from his clan,' 'the pastor should not have accepted a whale-tooth in this ceremony, he always acts above his station and spoils things.' Each change is tested and re-tested, and finally by tacit agreement either rejected or incorporated as part of now-traditional 'form.'²¹

Obviously many aspects of rites of passage appear far from playful in their demeanour, as they perform what Turner called the 'serious work' of ritual (1993: 91). However, even the most solemn presentation and counter-presentation of valuables and food are able to be read as an elaborate game. Formalised prestation defines the template which configures all rituals (*soqo*, *sōlevu*, *oga*), from fundamental rites of passage to recently-embraced events such as birthday 'parties' (*pati*) where the familiar template is used rather than Western models. There are differences in the level of pomp and circumstance, but not major structural differences, between the commemorative and/or celebratory events which range from small affairs within extended families, to increasingly complex and formal rituals between extended families within clans or between clans, to large rituals between groups within single geographical/political entities or ultimately, involving separate geographical/political entities.

Ritual prestation, economics, and capitalism

Leach maintained that the very concept of society is an elaborated process of exchange, with all relationships involving reciprocal obligations and norms of behaviour, the visible expression of which is gift-giving.²² He argued convincingly

²¹ The same type of keenly observant, critical yet open and contemplative, behaviour is observable in other parts of Fiji, and was also evident in Tonga during the numerous public ceremonies which took place on the occasion of King Taufa'ahau Tupou's 75th birthday/Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1983.

²² Leach acknowledged that in this definition of society he was following Radcliffe-Brown — without citation, but probably referring to the Presidential Address to the RAI 'On Social Structure' (1940). Leach's definition of gift-giving is also broadly-conceived, to include labour and payment for labour. In casting the 'gift relationship' net so wide he was essentially following Mauss's concept of 'total prestations,' which embraced exchange of everything from everyday courtesies to

that while to the external observer what is occurring is a gift transaction, to the 'insider-actors' what is involved is an active phase in a relationship of rights and obligations (Leach 1984: 149-52). Notwithstanding the clarity of this perception, he and many others have then proceeded to regard 'rights and obligations' in terms of debt and repayment, which are concepts born of economics rather than of social mutuality. Gregory (1982: 5) pointed out that as a result of this confusion, theorists have been unable to even arrive at a generally-accepted *term* for the traditional Pacific ritual exchange systems, and although all agree that they do differ from western capitalist economic systems, there is much disagreement about how.

The difficulty with most of the economic or quasi-economic concepts used to explain systems of ritual prestation is that they become procrustean exercises in fitting non-Western systems into Western models. As an example of the difficulty, the Neo-Marxist Godelier found it necessary to modify the Marxist distinction between base (the social relations and technology of production, i.e. the economic system) and superstructure (political-legal systems and their ideologies in religion and kinship). He recognised that in tribal societies there is no such clear distinction between base and superstructure, as demonstrated by the fact that kinship (part of superstructure) dominates, organising both production and distribution and thus functioning also as a relation of base.

Godelier's explanation for this was that since tribal societies do not stockpile goods, it is living human labour that matters, and this is physically generated by marriage and descent (Godelier 1978: 765-6; cited in Keesing 1981: 186-7). This explanation, however, is still constrained by a particular reading of Marx's theory of production, and persists in attempting to separate and hierarchise production above kinship. It should also be noted that in Vatulele significant stockpiling of ritual prestation goods does occur — it has to because of the continual round of rituals. Villagers lack both the cash and ready access to external sources to respond to demands which arise often at a few hours' notice (such as in the case of a sudden death), and must be self-reliant within the group, if not within each household.²³

women to rituals, and which Mauss held to have preceded, in linear stages, the giving of valuables and last of all cash exchange ((1925)1969: 68, 94).

²³ In the Ekubu-Taunovo survey (Appendix 5), 70% of households surveyed had stocks of bark-cloth on hand against emergency, and 65% had other prestation goods such as mats and whale-teeth, frequently in multiples. As one observer wrote last century, '[Every Fijian] must have rolls of mats and native cloth, as well as other property in store for all contingencies, even to the shroud in which he will fold up his dead. Plenty to eat and plenty to give is the *beau idéal* of a Fijian' (Stonehewer-Cooper 1880: 99)

Another Marxist, Maurice Bloch, has proposed a more comprehensive and convincing resolution of the 'superstructure/base' conundrum both Godelier and he identified. At the same time he provides valuable insights for understanding the relationship between the ritual prestation and non-ritual trade that Malinowski observed in Massim society, and which is also an aspect of Fijian exchange, as mentioned in the Introduction and will be discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Eight.

Bloch holds that there exist two cognitive systems, which he calls 'ritual communication' and 'non-ritual communication,' which the society uses at different moments in the 'long conversation' of social intercourse (1977b: 283-7). This is a broader concept than Durkheim's sacred/profane division, which as pointed out above is difficult to apply to traditional Fijian society. Superstructure relates, in his conceptualisation, to the ritual communication which mediates the relationship of past and present, and has generally been drawn on in positing 'social structure.' Infrastructure (or base) relates to a different cognitive system, to the non-ritual communication which deals directly with the more worldly concerns of the present. Importantly for understanding what occurs in societies like Vatulale's, he notes that the two systems can compete for precedence and can merge at their boundary.

Kinship can therefore serve production as Godelier suggests, but no less than production can be orchestrated to serve kinship. In Fiji, as will be elaborated in Chapter Six, production networks have traditionally been carefully organised in order to not only facilitate, but to actually necessitate both ritual exchange and non-ritual trade which together serve to keep alive the kinship paths along which the traffic of goods takes place.²⁴

²⁴ In Britain the rights of the common people to use certain public rights-of-way would be forfeited if these were not used at defined intervals. Therefore, people organise to walk these paths at regular intervals, not merely to keep them clear of weeds etc, but to maintain their legal rights. Fijian utilisation of kinship paths (which is also the exact term they use) may be thought of in the same way. There is also a strong sense of weighty responsibility to traverse those paths, on pain of loss of aspects of identity which are *their* birthright. In practice, distance and politics tend to weaken kinship bonds, since they are difficult to re-infuse on a regular basis, and transaction paths, with their heavy burden of group-conducted ritual, can prove too difficult to service over a sustained period. Hocart described the manner in which one group 'tested' a defunct path by sending a whale-tooth down it in the prescribed direction (Hocart 1952:226-228; see also Sayes 1982). They hoped for goods to come in response, but were uncertain because the path had remained unused for a long time, and they were unsure of their oral history regarding it, and whether the supposed social relationships had indeed existed. In this instance, no exchange, ritual or otherwise, resulted — the path proved to have been irrevocably lost, along with the attendant aspects of identity.

Prestation rituals are not the primary, or even a very good, example of capitalist-style 'economic' activity in societies such as Vatulele's. Throughout this thesis, it is stipulated that there does exist a matrix of non-ritual exchange activity which relates more recognisably to commercial practice, and has provided some useful precedents for Fijians entering the capitalist system. But even this requires a caveat: non-ritual exchange between groups and individuals within groups has traditionally utilised the same kinship-based production/exchange networks, and so has tended to reinforce, albeit less strongly, the social cohesion which rituals provide. These matters will be amplified in Chapter Eight.

Durkheim's conviction that Western capitalism would provide the social 'glue' previously provided by the mechanisms of pre-industrial societies, has come under challenge (e.g. Handy 1997). Gregory and Altman (1989: 28) applied Polanyi's conclusions to highlight the fundamentally different objectives of the two systems: *individual* profit in the case of capitalism, as against *group* wellbeing and the maintenance/constant re-negotiation of relationships in the case of systems of ritual exchange. Durkheim considered that social order resting on self-interest cannot be stable, and he took voluntarism and self-interest to be the same thing. He thus sought in the division of labour the basis for ongoing 'organic' solidarity through mutual interdependence.²⁵

But as will be explored in Chapter Six, the pre-capitalist networks of production and distribution, through their system of 'licensing,' already ensured the dependence of other Fijians on Vatulele for *masi*, and Vatuleleans' dependence on them for other goods (like mats) and foods. Thus a species of 'division of labour' had already been established, but it both depended on and reaffirmed aspects of mechanical solidarity, rather than providing a replacement for it as Durkheim proposed. Apart from challenging the 'mechanical' limitations assumed to exist in societies such as Fiji's, it helps explain how, as will be explored in Chapter Eight, Vatuleleans have been able to move almost imperceptibly to a position where fewer in-kind barter exchanges now occur, and more exchanges of *masi* for first shop-goods, and increasingly for cash, as Vatuleleans' own dependence for goods and

²⁵ Durkheim's vision has been criticised as at once over-optimistic and under-voluntaristic (Aron 1967; Lukes 1975; Giddens 1978; Jones 1986; Holton 1995), and Patricia Chang (1989) has argued that the evolution from mechanical to organic solidarity is implausible, suggesting that the two forms are 'nested' and mutually constitutive. This is probably closer to that which Durkheim himself reached in his later work, which is less anti-voluntaristic, with 'the creation and reaffirmation within the minds of individuals of common values and collective norms ... no longer seen simply as external obligations but ... desired commitments as well' (Holton 1995: 35). He came to see these operating through the civic rituals of democratic society.

foods moves outside the indigenous system.

Obviously Fijians, like people of other so-called 'developing' countries, have no choice about whether or not they will accept and adapt to capitalism. Weber pointed out that 'The capitalist economy ... presents itself ... as an unalterable order of things ... It forces the individual in so far as he is involved in the system of market relationships, to conform to capitalist rules of action' (1976: 54). Fijians have been caught up in that system of market relationships ever since colonialism imposed them as its supreme paradigm.²⁶ It is arguable that in their highly stratified society, social distances are already so great that capitalism is unlikely to increase them, but the economic distances between individuals which it creates may, as tends to be the case in Vatulele, be differently sectioned from traditional hierarchies, creating a further source of social stress.

It is the capacity of the system of prestation rituals to create, reaffirm, and adjust common values and collective norms which explains the efflorescence of art-as-myth and art-in-ritual in Fiji today. The imposed capitalism, largely located outside the matrix of interrelationships, does not provide the social reinforcement that ritual prestations or even non-ritual exchanges traditionally have. Therefore, given the perception of threat to Fijian social and cultural structures, both ritual and non-ritual bonding mechanisms have been increasingly mobilised. By this same logic, tourism commercialisation of artforms like *masi* cannot provide an adequate explanation of these phenomena. Other traditional 'economies' have also been documented to have manifested such efflorescence in the post-contact era (Strathern 1979; Gregory 1982: 112-17; Harrison 1987). As Gregory pointed out, this confounds the predictions of development theorists and neoclassical economists, who, elaborating the teleological conceptualisation of Mauss, forecast the progressive and total shift to capitalism.

Ritual as empowerment

A word that constantly recurs in conversations about [Fijian] ceremonies is kaukauwa, meaning strength, power and ability (Bakker 1986: 207).

As pointed out earlier, the functions of art, myth and ritual relate to controlling that which is uncontrollable by force or logic, empowering the actors. Also, the

²⁶ Polanyi pointed out that the market economy was very much a nineteenth century construction, dominating Western thought as a result of the industrial system and requiring 'a change in the motive of action on the members of society' (Polanyi (1944) 1957: Chs.3-4). That change was what the British attempted to impose on Fijians, with only partial success even today.

establishment of commonalities and difference which occur in the identifying performances of ritual not only establish links, but also establish and rehearse hierarchies and power relationships between individuals and groups. Frazer recognised that social exchange had great potential for power and status differentiation (Ekeh 1974:23), and Mauss also saw traditional exchange systems as important in power and status relations. It could not be otherwise, since as has been maintained throughout the foregoing discussion, symbolic actions (such as art-making and ritual) are concerned with social relationships, and all social relationships engage at some level with power. However, the manner in which a Vatulele ritual relates to power and status is very different from the capitalist association of power with wealth accumulation.

Money, status and power

In fact, money of itself does not impart either power or elevated status within the society — mostly, it merely makes one a prime target for *kerekere*, the pervasive socially-sanctioned cadging (see Chapter Eight). Why then do the people seek wealth (as their industrious application to masi-manufacture and sale suggests they do)? Apart from the money required to underwrite their increased dependence on Western goods, food, travel, schooling, levies to the District administration and the church, quite extraordinary amounts of money are expended on ritual events, and as these proliferate the through-put of cash increases accordingly, demanding that people acquire more.

This situation is familiar in the anthropological literature — for example, it is very much as described by Hogbin for the Solomon Islands: ‘Reputation is ... enhanced not by accumulating possessions in order to use them oneself, but by giving them away’ (cited in Gluckman 1965: 51). Similarly, the economist Boeke (1953) commented on the lack of ‘rationality’ in Balinese economic behaviour, stating that ‘peasants’ (*sic*) were ‘less interested in saving and investing than in traditional goals such as gaining status, performing rituals, and building solidarity with neighbours’ (cited in McKean (1977)1990: 121). And Finney observed in 1966 that the Papua New Guinea Highlanders ‘strove to become wealthy and to use that wealth to gain prominence in the ceremonial exchange system’ (1993: 103). ‘Prominence’ is a vague term, but if it means the same as Hogbin’s ‘reputation,’ or ‘respect’ or ‘esteem’ as distinct from ‘status’ (and they are not the same, though Boeke perhaps uses the term as though they are), then his description would fit Vatuleleans also.

If asked to define Fijian identity, no Fijian could fail to mention sharing generously

and uncalculatingly with one's relatives, clansmen and fellow-villagers. Toren (1989) has pointed out that this self-image is an idealised one today, and that the exigencies of contemporary life have greatly impinged on the reality. But in Vatulele observance of the 'ways of the land' (*i-tovo vāvanua*), including the munificence of spending on group projects and on ritual, remain critical to peer approval. Gluckman contended that the generosity and charity that are so admired must be considered in the context of a tribal lifestyle where the standard of living is essentially standardised, so hoarding could not facilitate, even if society permitted it, 'flamboyant personal living as an alternative' (1965: 51). But that does not explain the eagerness with which they pursue ritual and their willingness to suffer considerable financial hardship to do so. One explanation is that so doing earns the respect of the community.

Community *esteem*, however, while certainly enormously important to Vatuleleans, still today does little or nothing to elevate assigned social *status*. In 1995, during a long conversation on this topic with a group of half a dozen middle-aged men from several clans and status-levels, I asked whether a commoner might enhance his/her influence in matters affecting the village (effectively their status) by demonstrating exceptional learning, ability and virtue. The answer was an unhesitating and unanimous 'no!' While agreeing that such virtues would achieve the respect and approval of peers, they were quite definite that such respect would not mean that anyone would follow the respected commoner's advice or leadership if it conflicted with the advice or leadership of their chief, however poorly regarded or demonstrably inept the chief might be. All acknowledged this as an unsound longterm survival strategy, but saw it as unchallengeable.²⁷

There are avenues for something approaching acquired status on the island: education to Fifth Form or better;²⁸ membership of the army (especially with overseas service such as the Fijian U.N.F.I.L. contingent of peace-keepers in Lebanon);²⁹ having family members in well-paid work on the mainland or in the Resort Hotel (or being an employee of the hotel); owning or crewing on the *boto* vessels which commute to the mainland. As well as this, nice clothes, a good (timber or concrete) house, and a modest range of 'western' material possessions (such as beds, chairs, radio/cassette players, L.P.-gas cookers, crockery and

²⁷ Nor did they consider the 'model' purely abstract or hypothetical, acknowledging that precisely such choices confront them in their own village.

²⁸ Grade 11, the year in which the School Certificate examination is taken.

²⁹ United Nations Forces In Lebanon.

cutlery), are all considered desirable and their ownership is a source of some status (provided ownership is tempered with due modesty — ostentation would cost more than the ownership would gain).³⁰

But ultimately people remain hierarchically-located members for life of a particular status-group — sub-clan, clan and super-clan, and their prerogatives, limitations and responsibilities flow from that.³¹ They ‘know their place in the community and act appropriately. They comply ungrudgingly with their various social obligations’ (Ravuvu 1987: 18).³² Quain (1948: 434) saw this immutability as a neo-traditional state brought about by the colonial entrenchment of a hereditary élite which will be discussed in Chapter Four:

[The] system of hereditary titles has overlain a culture in which recognized status could once depend largely upon achievement. The bases for such

³⁰ It was pointed out in Chapter Two that braggadocio and ostentation are considered highly undesirable traits. As Durkheim indicated, the punishment, seeking to protect and reaffirm the conscience collective, is emotive (Giddens 1971: 75), in this case the withdrawal of the social approval such behaviour specifically courts. The following is a specific example: Cataract blindness is a problem on the small islands of Fiji, where ultraviolet levels from the glare of sun on sea and sand are very high. On a field-trip in 1993, I therefore took good-quality sunglasses as gifts for my host and his wife, and suggested they wear them whenever they are out of doors in the sun for long periods, just as I do. The wife expressed delight at the gift, but promptly put them away. When I remonstrated with her, she said ‘I’ll wear them if I go to Suva. If I wear them on the island people will say I am a show-off [*viavialevu*].’ No amount of explaining the perils of u/v exposure could shift her from her resolve on this matter. Visiting them again in 1995, I was able to confirm that she had only used them once, on a trip to the mainland, and they sit in a basket while she squints in the sun. She would sooner face blindness than be scorned by her fellows as vain. Conversely, she has been regularly wearing a pair of industrial ear-muffs I took her, to help guard against the industrial deafness which is a second almost universal affliction of elderly women (from the daily, piercing, noise of mallet on anvil when beating bark-cloth indoors). There may be two reasons for the difference in her behaviour in the two situations. First, the earmuffs are worn in the relative privacy of her own kitchen/workshop. But more importantly (since there is a constant flow of people through her kitchen), earmuffs are known to the islanders only as something they see roadworkers wearing on the mainland, and have not become local status-markers. Thus she can satisfy enquirers by referring to their medical utility, without having to justify any supposed ostentation in their use. Whether she can manage to keep them against the cadging or theft by others, is another matter.

³¹ ‘Status group’ is used as Weber defined it ((1922)1978), in contrast to the Marxist model of economic class which does not fit the Fijian situation well, either in terms of capital or estate.

³² The descriptions sound remarkably like Lockwood’s category of ‘deferential traditionalists’ in postwar working-class England, of whom he also asserted that they are ‘devoid of all sense of participation in a class movement seeking structural changes in society’ (Lockwood 1966; cited in Marshall 1996: 235-6).

achievement were no longer present in the new order, and no new bases were substituted. Social ambition and obsession with status persist, but the cultural means of satisfying these have become confused and contradictory.

Migration to the city, where capitalist norms prevail, does permit genuine acquired status in their new milieu. Skills and status achieved there do earn respect back in the village, particularly where it is felt that those skills (or the influence associated with their job-status) can be put to the use of the village in the outside world such as those of banking or investment.

Somewhat paradoxically, when emigrés pay return visits to the island, their liminality does appear, in certain domains at least, to earn them a sort of 'temporary pass' to elevated status, not altering their assigned status, but setting it to one side for a time.³³ Thus I observed two of 'our boys' who are bank clerks in Suva, officiating at the money-collection of a 'Vatulele Day' celebration in 1995 on apparently equal terms with the paramount and village chiefs, who even displayed deference toward the emigrés in light of their familiarity with the mysteries of banking and finance.

A modernist reading of Fiji would no doubt represent it in Parsonsian terms as 'transition[al] from particularistic-ascriptive standards or values to ... universalistic-achievement values ... [with] a greater emphasis on individual social mobility than upon deference or traditional standards of prestige and honour' (Turner 1988: 4). Such views are indeed expressed by urbanites, particularly the urban élite (politicians, academics, journalists) as distinct from the traditional élite:

Urban [Fijian] people ... will only respect chiefs if they deserve it. ... The basis for leadership or moving ahead [that is, altering status] is changing. Whereas before it was a matter of birth — you were born into [a chiefly family] — now more and more of the Western values are coming in, like performance, success, education (Durutalo, quoted in Rory Ewins 1997: 432).

But in Fiji there was never more than a modest shift in the centre of gravity between the power of ascribed status and that of achieved status. The Pandora's box of commoner demands for accountability, never actually opened very far, was slammed shut by the Coup. In Vatulele as elsewhere, chiefly power and traditional

³³ As several such people who have retired to the island show, however, when they return permanently that 'temporary pass' expires, and they resume the role of respected commoner, with no special influence.

structures were reasserted.

In Vatulele much of the control of *masi* as ritual wealth, and of the cash wealth that comes from the sale of *masi*, is indeed in the hands of commoners or minor chiefs, but while this may be even acutely embarrassing to high chiefs with little direct access to cash (since their relative capacity to deal with their traditional obligations has diminished), their status and concomitant authority remains largely unchallenged.³⁴

Money or the lack of it either facilitates or impedes the carrying out of social responsibilities with style and grace. Indeed this is its primary social function, rather than personal gratification. As Toren (1995: 175) puts it, in Fiji 'legitimate riches are those one is prepared to give away and in so doing at once demonstrate and constitute kinship.' When cash wealth accompanies high assigned status, the person is fortunate indeed, occupying the relativity to the rest of the people that existed in pre-Contact and even colonial times, when chiefs were in a position to control the wealth of the community, and thus had the wherewithal to distribute largesse and gain respect commensurate with their status. But there is little evidence that cash wealth *per se* imparts more importance to a chief's voice on village or island councils, the fora where the big decisions are taken — there, lineage prevails. Only among assigned-status equals do wealth, demonstrated ability, and temperament differentiate amounts of influence, though it is likely that if a chief is miserly, cash wealth may serve to emphasise the fact and diminish his credibility rather than enhancing it.

Ritual and power

Thus, unlike the direct access to power that cash wealth provides in Western society, in Fiji it tends to operate primarily through the ritual system. But there is no doubt that ritual and the associated myths and artforms are inextricably tied up with power. 'Ritual ... is itself a type of power ... if the workings of any society are to be fully unravelled, then the barriers dividing the study of power from the study of pomp need to be broken down' (Cannadine 1987: 19). There appear to be at least three distinct aspects to this:

- 1 . There is the inherent power of the ritual to gain control of nature and the unknown. Its stylised actions and language, and its sign-systems encoded in art

³⁴ Boeke's use of the term 'status' (cited above) probably implied 'respect' as used here. If he was observing an actual change of status through wealth, this would differ from the Vatulele case.

and other myths, all transform the realities referred to, and provide an imagined means of controlling them. Thus Fortes emphasised ritual as 'the handling of otherwise unmanageable power,' (1966: 411; cited in Turner 1993: 80), a view apparently similar to d'Aquili's assertion that religious ritual 'aims at ... [reconciling] contingent and vulnerable humanity with a powerful, possibly omnipotent, force' (1993: 63). Durkheim also depicted religion and ritual as the transformed image of the parent society, a view rehearsed in Geertz's characterisation of all social structures including kin group organisation, mythology and iconography combining to 'a dramatized statement of ... what status, power, authority and government are and should be: namely, a replication of the world of gods that is at the same time a template for that of men' (Geertz 1983: 29-30).

2. Bloch (1977b: 289) has pointed out a direct correlation between the level of 'ritual communication' and the amount of social structure and institutionalised hierarchy in a society, since through ritual's mystification of 'nature' and divorcing of time and persons from everyday experience, social inequality 'takes on the appearance of an inevitable part of an ordered system.' Such ritual maintenance of hierarchy, he points out, can mask the oppression implicit in inequality and stabilise the regime, while without it, a regime embodying inequality is (*vide* Weber) highly unstable. As mentioned above, Cannadine (1987: 15) asserted the capacity of ritual to 'support both hierarchy and community,' and Platenkamp observed that 'the hierarchical order of relationships ... is revealed above all in rituals' (1992: 74).

This helps explain the unwavering commitment of Vatulele's élite to the perpetuation of ritual, and the control of ritual structure and performance. They play the key roles in ritual, and through it sustain and magnify their relative status. The ritual template itself rehearses traditional hierarchic structures through the spatial organisation of the actors, and the key performative roles and the disproportionately large share of the prestation goods that are reserved for the (hereditary) leaders of the participant groups.

Further, as Baudrillard discussed in relation to the Western art auction, the élites' control of the means to stage the rituals traditionally meant that the competitive back-and-forth of the prestation process (discussed fully in Chapter Five) served primarily to ratify 'their collective caste privilege with respect to all others, from whom they are no longer separated merely by their purchasing power, but by the sumptuary and collective act of the production and exchange of sign values' (Baudrillard 1981: 117; cited in Appadurai 1986a: 21). As Cohen put it:

The ceremonials of authority have to be periodically staged in order to

reassert its existence and its efficacy in the face of the subversive processes of change and anarchy. Symbols achieve this measure of continuity-in-change by their ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings. A ceremonial may be repeated over and over again in the same form though its symbols may be charged with different meanings to accommodate new developments. There is thus a continuous process of action and counteraction between the symbolic order and the power order even when there is no significant structural change (1974: 135).

3. This fostering of ritual by local élites in Fiji has been extended to national political/social arenas, particularly since the Coup in 1987, not only to entrench the status and assert the power of the traditional élite who have held political office since Independence,³⁵ but also to define ethnic boundaries, and bond Fijians to the concept of a shared ethnic identity with assumptions of a birthright to preferential entitlement that Fijian politicians wish to promote. Through this device they hope to bring errant group members back into the fold (which is to say, under their control), and as far as possible, to control and direct change.

The emphasis on ritual by leaders is, therefore, a recognition of its power to steer change and to carry with it those aspects of their groups' social identity in which their role and status are clear and secure.

Tradition now, and culture, are used by the powers that be as a stick to beat their adversaries with. ... I'm sure it was always used like that, but now we are at a stage [where] the ruling classes all over the Pacific are digging in, because they feel that their position is being questioned. And so they are moving back to tradition and culture. ... Ultimately it is to buttress their positions (Helu-Thaman 1993).

At the grass roots level in Vatulele also, people express some cynicism about the motives of their leader. 'Anyone who wants to have a *soqo* must always get permission from the *Vunihālevu* [paramount]?, even if he is a chief himself. But the *Vunihālevu* will never say 'no,' because he likes getting the big share of the *i-yau* [ritual prestation goods]!' (Informant G, July 1995). However, Kertzer rejects the notion that ritual is a device for the powerful to dupe those less powerful or less educated, and emphasises that 'political power relations are everywhere expressed

³⁵ It has been pointed out (Dumont 1966; Bloch 1977a) that political rank does not always equate with power, and as pointed out above, ritual helps to publicly lay claim to this. In parts of Fiji there has existed a distinction between the political leader (formerly the warlord or *vunivalu*) and the spiritual leader (*rokotui*), and the latter would be seen to outrank the former. The distinction is not so clearcut in Vatulele — rank and power are virtually always conflated.

and modified through symbolic means of communication ... [and] it is not just the regime that is in the business of cultural management, but all players in the political scene' (Kertzer 1988: 178-9).

If commoners are cynical, however, why do they not only tolerate, but actively pursue the use of ritual? What do they get out of it? Three interrelated things suggest themselves:

1 . Cohen (1974: 136-7) commented that 'people engage in ritual and ceremony to derive comfort, perform a social obligation, achieve recreation, discover their identity, pass the time, be with others, and for an endless variety of other private and personal purposes.' This is Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow experience' mentioned in Chapter Two. Several of these things relate to **self-gratification**, and this should not be minimised. The humdrum of village life can be very boring for enquiring minds, young or old, and Vatulele's lively ritual life makes it far less boring for all. However much they may grumble at the hardship rituals impose, they clearly enjoy them. This probably helps stem the urban drift of the young, the bane of island and rural communities — though the industry's capacity to provide an income is probably a greater factor, as will be discussed later.

2 . Among Cohen's list of private motivations are also '*perform[ing] a social obligation*' and '*discover[ing] their identity*.' These are the group issues discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter Two, where it was suggested that these operate also at an individual level. As mentioned there, the individualism propounded by both romanticist and modernisationist theorists remains a peculiarly Western, historically recent (and possibly unstable) deviation from a more holistic focus on clan and community (see Gergen, 1991: 10-12, 239-45). In Vatulele group norms continue to configure the parameters of acceptable behaviour. It would be difficult to categorise this as oppressive, since the high level of 'ritual communication' in such societies³⁶ emphasises mythic identity, with concomitant very strong social and cultural inscription, above the everyday world dealt with in 'non-ritual communication.'

³⁶ Bloch points out that while Balinese society [and Vatulelean society] is of this sort, not all societies are like this. He cites the African Hazda (first described in 1968) as the archetypal exception, with little ritual communication, little reference to the past, and virtually no rites of passage. That their society is not dysfunctional, Bloch points out, presents a great challenge to the conventional anthropological focus on the ritual rather than the non-ritual communication also characteristic of all societies in varying degree. While Vatulele is certainly strongly ritualistic, non-ritual communication (as for example with trade) has also always been an important aspect of society, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Thus, seeking alternatives to those norms is exceptional, and almost never more than partial. Even the current degree of 'resistance' that is shown, mainly by young males and the more adventurous young females, should be viewed as defining a personal stance in relation to the continuing society, rather than an actual opposition to it or wish to move outside it. This can be seen in the very strong loyalty they retain to the island, their village, and their clan/subclan, their eager and enthusiastic participation in ritual life, and their continued (if perhaps not always unquestioning) acceptance of the authority of traditional élites.

3 . As discussed earlier, ritual does provide a *stress-reducing safety valve*, not only for the group in response to externally-generated stress, but also for the individual, through the abstraction and identity-reaffirmation of ritual, to assuage hostilities and to counter feelings of impotence which may arise within the hierarchic confines of village life (Kertzer 1988: 131-2). There can be no doubt that the effect of such stress-relief is cathartic (even perhaps emotionally addictive), leaving participants, as Kertzer states, with at least the *impression* that they do have some control over their lives.

From the point of view of a Vatulele villager, this is undoubtedly a very important aspect of the power associated with ritual. Foucault (1996: 41-2) stated with persuasive simplicity that today our primary concern regarding power is with who has control over the various aspects of our lives and destinies. When it is impossible to identify those people because they are members of alien cultures who exist in unimaginable cabinet-rooms or board-rooms thousands of miles away, it is a most attractive prospect to reaffirm the ongoing viability of a tangible regime where the decision-makers are clearly recognised and can be dealt with face-to-face, where their place and one's own in the scheme of things are indisputable. Then, to be involved in adjusting the myths which give form to one's identity to respond to change, even incorporating elements of intrusive cultures into one's own by transforming them through ritual, gives one a sense of wresting back control.

Irrespective of the *material* outcome for themselves individually, Vatuleleans emerging from a ritual walk taller and with a more purposeful step than those that went in to that ritual armed optimistically with bundles of *masi*, *tabua* or platters of food to present. Their manifestly buttressed sense of self and self-worth helps one understand their resilience in the face of seemingly irresistible forces for over a hundred years, and explains their locating ritual and its associated myths (including relevant artforms) at the centre of social life.

Summary

Art as a sign-system is a potent identity-forming tool in its own right, able to be accessed directly by the person or group, seemingly 'true' by virtue of its tangible materiality, yet able to be invested and re-invested endlessly with imagined narratives, values, and emotions which may or may not involve a revision of the materials and physical elements of the artform. Art which is replete with such connotations may be generalised into a myth or myths possessing even wider, if less sharply focused, power by virtue of the higher level of abstraction in myth. It becomes part of the array of group and ethnic myths by which the society defines its evolving identity and maintains its value systems. This is particularly important in times of social stress, especially that caused by virtually irresistible external forces, when strategies for 'emotion-focused coping' become critically important to the group. The continuing viability of indigenous art is therefore dependent on the relationship its encoded meanings bear to the (changing) current socio-cultural reality to which they relate.

Referencing by 'tourist art' of the myths of culturally-embedded art, and/or the appropriation of its materials and/or production-methods, while they may impinge on it in a number of ways, will neither guarantee its continued culturally-embedded relevance, nor displace it, since tourist and culturally-embedded art have their social lives within separate domains of meaning.

In order to reach their full affective potential, myths may require the multiple stimuli of ritual: the 'layering' and further abstraction of the contained myths; bodily engagement; compression; stylisation; repetition. The cumulative effect of these is far more persuasive than any of them singly, making ritual at once powerfully affective and able to be used in the definition of and exercise of power. Ultimately all of this 'in some way or other, seem[s] to confirm consensus, to disguise conflict, and to support both hierarchy and community' (Cannadine 1987: 15). That such things should assume particular importance at times of social stress relates to their capacity to reaffirm identity when it is felt to be under threat. Mestrovic suggests that 'Durkheim named [such] solidarity "mechanical" precisely because it does not really bind people together, but is brittle and breaks apart under times of stress' (1991: 34). Recourse to the solidarity-reaffirming capacity of ritual at such times, therefore, is critically important, and its capacity to adjust elements of that identity in the very process of reaffirmation allows the group to better protect itself against the next assault.

In the next chapter, the historical, social and cultural elements that have combined

to define Vatullean identity will be reviewed and related to the threats that have confronted that identity and provoked the recourse to art and ritual described here. Some of the most persistent challenges to identity will be seen to have been inherent in the geographical and geological features of the island and the manner of its settlement, exacerbated by colonial and post-colonial forces that to outsiders would seem to have been irresistible. Their persistent sense of self and self-worth demonstrates remarkable resilience, in part facilitated by their traditional instruments of social definition and management, epitomised by their *masi*.

Chapter Four

VATULELEAN IDENTITY: FOUNDATIONS AND STRESSES

Sociologists should go beyond saying "This is how it would be other things being equal" to saying "This is how the thing works in this case, given its particular historical setting" (Max Weber, cited in Raison 1979: 215).

All persons, in all situations of interaction, bring with them personal histories, unique identity sets, and common cultural norms that help to contain the interaction and to control it, as well as to individualize it (Freese & Burke 1994: 17)

There have been two principal themes in the foregoing discussing of the socio-cultural role of *masi*:

- 1 . that art and ritual are devices used by societies to construct and maintain their group identities and social solidarity;
- 2 . that these functions are of particular importance in mitigating social stress.

Both identity and stress have been presented as processes rather than fixed states, products of the socio-cultural life of particular groups. Consistent with such an ideographic approach, before the thesis moves to examine Vatulele's art and ritual, this chapter explores the layered Fijian-Vatulelean-traditional-modern (and now arguably postmodern) identity mythified in Vatulele's *masi*, and seeks in that process of layering the sources of threat to identity which have been posited as provoking increasing use of *masi* in mitigation.

The social history of Vatulele falls naturally into four parts: pre-colonial, colonial from 1874-1945, 1945-90 (that is, post-WW2), and post-1990, when the Vatulele Island Resort opened for business. This chapter does not attempt to review even the little that has been written about Vatulele,¹ let alone all that has been written about the history of Fiji, but rather to relay something of the memories and histories Vatuleleans recount of their origins, of life before and after WW2, and life today.

¹ The size and political/economic marginality of Vatulele in colonial terms resulted in few mentions in British official papers, and academic notice of it has largely been restricted to its geology (Ladd 1930; Coulson 1968; Gill 1970; Rao 1984; McInnes 1988; Nunn 1987; 1988a; 1988b) and the unique prehistoric paintings on its western cliffs (Palmer & Clunie 1970; Ewins 1995), apart from ethnographic work undertaken by Geddes (1959; 1977; 1978) and Teckle (1984). However, the brief summary of oral history which is presented here, and the conclusions I draw from it, both derive from my own research.

It is shown that multiple immigrations brought together people with an exceptional diversity of origins, biographies, and traditions in a very small physical space. This has resulted in struggles for status and power which still persist, but most importantly made obligations to the group in terms of sharing, kinship and hierarchy, singularly important. Their regulation necessitated regular ritual definition of identity, adjusting and transgressing boundaries of traditional identities to establish a new composite identity. Coupled with their isolation, this has meant that most of Vatulele's ritual and artistic activity has always been directed inwards, making for an unusual level of continuity of traditional mechanisms, able to be mobilised in response to what have been succinctly called Fiji's 'colonial contradictions and post-colonial predicaments' (Crick 1997).

Origins

There are enigmatic prehistoric cliff-paintings on the west coast of the island (Plate 3a) that attest to an early human presence perhaps as much as two millennia ago, but it is unclear who these people were or if inhabitation of the island was continuous (Ewins 1995). Today, two groups in Lomanikaya village (the Kade and Rota people) are generally acknowledged as the original inhabitants of the island, and believe they have always been there. They state that before others started arriving, they existed merely as groups of people (*uma tamata*) with no clan strata and no chiefly élite. Many groups migrated to the island, probably as part of the 18th Century period of great mobility and expansion in Fiji, particularly outward from southeastern Vitilevu.² All of these have Austronesian cultural origins, and typically, they inextricably link places and journeys with genealogy in the narratives which define their group identities and group and individual status (Pomponio 1992; Toren 1995; Fox 1997a; Sakai 1997; Waterson 1997).³

² All pre-Cession dating is my own calculation, using 25-years for each generation identified in oral histories, and in the post-contact era by cross-referencing known events with documented and dated events elsewhere in Fiji. The chiefly clan still perpetuates every High Chief's name (and those of very high-born women) in their post-settlement lineage, and there has apparently been little of the compression of generations that often occurs in oral histories.

³ 'Austronesian' cultures derive this name from the languages spoken by an estimated 270 million people in some 800 societies living over a huge geographical area spreading from Taiwan to New Zealand on one axis and from Madagascar to Easter Island on the other (e.g. see Bellwood *et al.* 1995). As well as language origins, they share many persistent cultural attributes, none more so than this manner of conceiving identity. Fox has introduced the neologism *topogeny* to describe the naming of actual, identifiable places along the migration 'paths' from a point of origin, in much the same manner as a genealogy (Fox 1997a: 91).

Plate 3.



(a) Prehistoric cliff-paintings
on limestone cliffs in N.W. Vatulele
This is the most famous panel (see
Ewins 1995).

(b) Ekubu & Taunovo villages
from the sea due east. Ekubu
stretches to the south of the two
large buildings, Taunovo to the
north.

(c) Ekubu
from the sea south east. The large
thatched house is Werelevu, the
meeting-house of the leading House
of the chiefly Nalimolevu clan. The
red roof belongs to the Wesleyan
church. The two buildings between
these in the photograph belong to
Ratu Mitieli Narukutabua, brother of
the paramount and my host.

(d) Werelevu meeting-house
There are three such houses in
Vatulele, two in Ekubu and one in
Lomanikaya.



Each group in the four villages recounts a separate ‘journey’ before and since settlement, frequently with named ancestors.⁴ Their ‘settlement paths’ are regularly travelled in imagination, and often in actuality, as they maintain kinship links from as far away as Rā on the north coast, the east-central Colo highlands, Rewa, Suva, much of the south coast of Vitilevu and parts of its hinterland. Some of the same origin groups settled neighbouring islands of Yanuca, Beqa and Kadavu, and over time these connections were strengthened by further affinal links.

One connection may bear on Vatulele’s *masi* production. The Valevale of Taunovo village originated in Korolevu-i-Colo, far up the Sigatoka River (Ruwailevu), where the belief persists that they gave Vatulele the art of making *masi*. Since the knowledge of making utilitarian bark-cloth undoubtedly belonged to the first settlers of Fiji, and existed everywhere, the story cannot be taken literally, but that area *was* renowned for its *masi* (Roth 1934; Ewins 1982a: 19), and their expertise may have contributed to Vatulele gaining status as a ‘specialist’ producer (see Chapter Six). When I told them this story, Vatulelean elders related it to the fact that prior to about 1930 all of their *masi*-making equipment came from highland Ruwailevu villages.

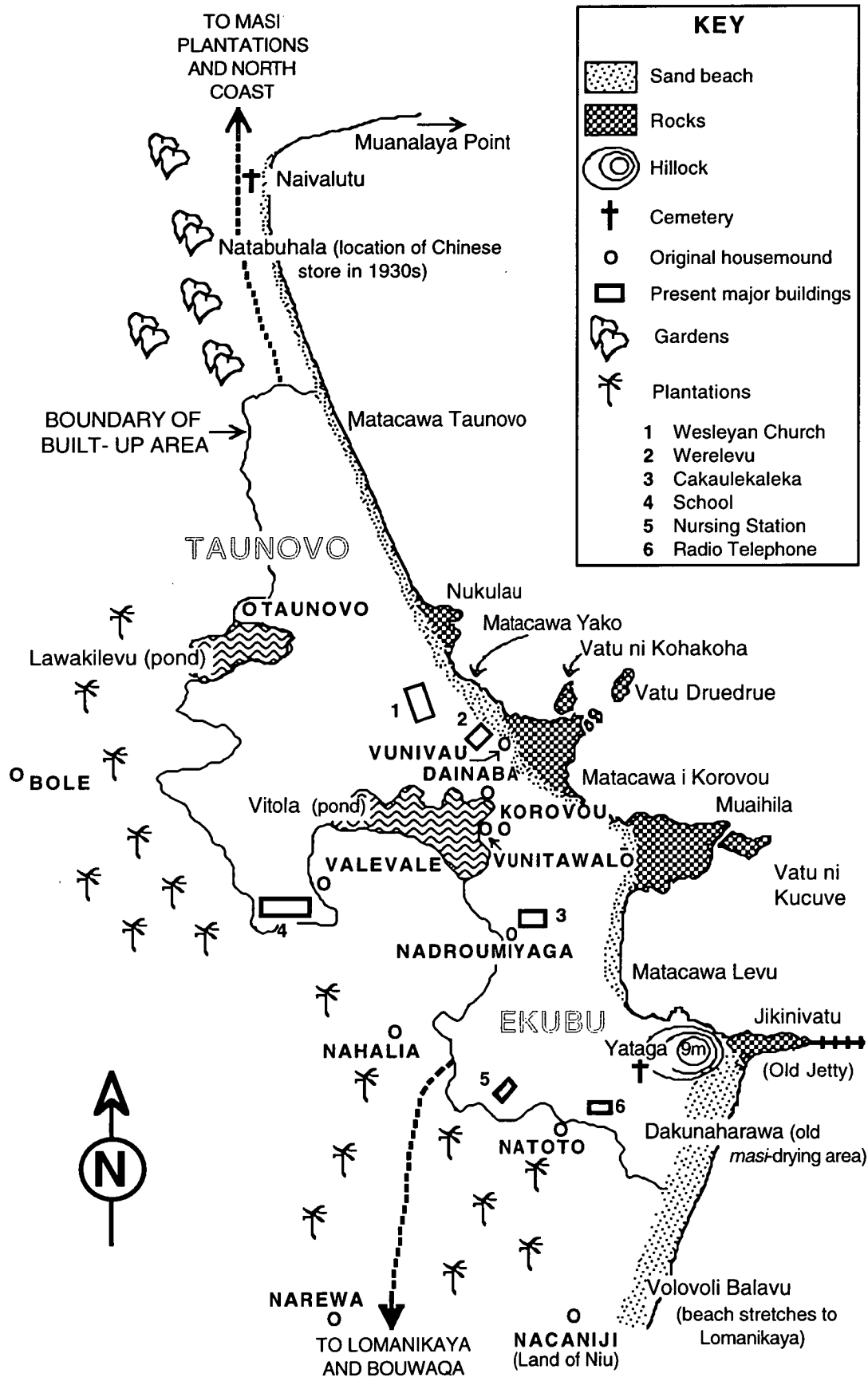
Each small initial settler group lived together in a single large house (*were*), and referred to their collective as a ‘house’ (*vūwere*).⁵ As numbers increased, offshoot houses were established. Identification with *vūwere* groups remains strong, and many original housemounds (*yavu*) still exist (see Map 3 and Fig.4), the spirits of



Fig.4. Disused *yavu* housemound, Ekubu village

⁴ What follows is a very brief account. Some amplification of group-origin-places and social structures is provided in Appendix 3.

⁵ The same basic unit was called *bure* in Wainimala in Eastern Vitilevu (Ravuvu 1987: 14-15), and *bito* in Nadrogā (Belshaw 1964: 26-7).



Map 4. The villages of Ekubu and Taunovo
showing original settlement sites and/or housemounds. Map by R. Ewins © 1999

ancestors buried in them making them important markers of identity, regularly referred to in ritual (see Toren 1995: 165-9). Subsequent arrivals were assigned land, groups settled near each other for security, coalescing into large, named, 'land-group' units (*uma qwele*), each also a 'totem' group or *i-cavuti*.⁶ Forceful leaders took control of *uma qwele* until more powerful able leaders, sometimes outsiders, displaced them. The present paramount is descended from a 'fair stranger cast ashore, found by a young noblewoman, and made king,' a generic myth which occurs in many societies, as explored by Sahlins (1981; 1982). This chief was from Rewa,⁷ was installed as Tui Ekubu, chief of the Ekubu people of Taunovo village, and founded the chiefly clan of Nalimolevu.

Following a civil war in the 1830s, with assistance from kinfolk in Rewa and other allies from the near coast of Vitilevu, the numerous Nalimolevu took control of the island. Bouwaqa played little part in the war, and suffered few consequences. Lomanikayans lost their chiefly title *Tui Vahilele* ('King of Vatulele') — today their chief is called *Tui Nam ō* — but they suffered few other consequences other than the loss of fishing rights to all of the seas around Vatulele. Ownership of all the small offshore islets also became vested in the Nalimolevu.⁸

The greatest humiliation was reserved for the 'rebels' among the Ekubu people. After an abject surrender of themselves and their land, their group name Ekubu was appropriated as the name of the Nalimolevu settlement (previously *Korovou*, 'Newtown'). The Nalimolevu chief assumed the title *Vunih ālevu*, 'paramount chief,' in addition to his title of Tui Ekubu, and in ritual is always addressed by

⁶ Although Hocart cautioned that 'totem' is an inappropriate translation of *i-cavuti* (1914: 2), they do have a number of the characteristics Freud, following Frazer and others, imputed to totems ((1950)1975: 2-6), though in Vatulele the totems do not appear to surpass other kinship relations. For each group, one totem is drawn from each the three categories of life excluding humans (see Tippet 1968: 117):

(1) animals (*manumanu*), including those that fly (*manumanu vuka*) — birds, insects and bats;
 (2) water dwellers (*ika*), including crustaceans, mammals, and reptiles;
 (3) plants, including trees (*kau*), creepers (*wa*), and grasses (*co*).

⁷ The chief, Rō Tabakanalagi, had been enroute from Rewa to Kadavu in a great double canoe, and was driven to Vatulele by a storm. His brother Rō Vuruvuruvana, in a second vessel, made it safely to Kadavu and settled in Tavuki, whose origin stories confirm all of these details, and with whom the closest ties still exist. There seems little doubt that this was an actual occurrence, blended into the standard myth.

⁸ The chiefs of Lomanikaya appear sometimes to display a degree of hubris in their relationship to the Nalimolevu chiefs, who use ritual to rehearse their political dominance.

both.⁹ Finally, and symbolically most oppressively, the Ekubu people were forbidden forever to call any of their leaders by the chiefly title *R ātū*. They have a Head of *Yavusa*, the *Takala-i-Ekubu*, but even he is not called *R ātū*.

This imposed 'commoner' status rankles today, particularly with some of the Taunovo younger generation, from whom the most persistent challenges to the élite appear to come today.¹⁰ Yet Taunovo's status is paradoxical. The people are the 'officials of the feast' (*limanimagiji*) and are also the 'carers' (*vīqwaravi*) for the *Vunih ālevu*. A member of the Nalimolevu grumbled: 'They are his carers and he keeps them under his wing. Anything they want they ask him and he gives it.' The chief's obligation to the whole island actually moderates any partisanship, but they do see their 'carer' role as ameliorating their other humiliation:

We look after the chief. That is our duty, and when we do it well, we are the equal of anyone on the island. We are all chiefs then, we don't have to call ourselves *R ātū*. If we don't have enough *tabua* or mats for a ritual, we can ask the *Vunih ālevu* and he will give them (Informant G, 25/07/95).¹¹

Yet, after a century and a half of intermarriage and coexistence, a latent tension still persists, expressed (as is usual in Fijian society) through competitiveness — they strive to demonstrate their own industry and initiative relative to their neighbours, which the Nalimolevu always trump by emphasising their chiefly status.¹²

⁹ This use of 'Ekubu' creates considerable potential confusion for the researcher, since the Taunovo grouping continued to be called Ekubu, and ultimately so did the superclan which was assigned to that village by the Native Lands Commission. Thus the Ekubu people are those who live in Taunovo, whereas the people who live in Ekubu village are the Nalimolevu people.

¹⁰ In July 1993 I took part in an after-dinner discussion between two elders of the Nalimolevu, and a younger but influential Taunovo man. He said that some of their young men were 'sick of this unfairness' and were going to start using the title *R ātū*. The Nalimolevu men became very heated and declared that it would happen over their dead bodies, and it took some effort on the part of the women present to mollify all parties.

¹¹ This assertion of pride in particular place in the social order would be made by any Vatulélean, not merely by someone from Taunovo.

¹² Their industriousness is exemplified by a community hall Taunovo decided to build because they have no hall or chiefs' house such as Ekubu has. In 1992 they organised events to collect the money, commissioned an architect from Vitilevu, and built a large concrete-block and galvanised iron structure to lock-up stage. Then everything stalled. The reason went back to the power of norms. The toilets are inside the building, and potential users would be embarrassed to be seen by the assembly to be going in. This sensitivity overcame pressing need for the hall and the already-expended effort, and in July 1995 the building sat still unfinished.

There is daily contact and much intermarriage between all four villages today, and the four village chiefs and paramount share island decision-making. The paramount does not speak for Ekubu village — that falls to the head of Nalimolevu's 'second house' (Cakau). This is sound politics. Originally, paramountcy rotated between the three 'houses' of the Nalimolevu. But the British administration, neither understanding nor sympathetic to local particularities, locked succession onto Werelevu, the house in power at the time. One house, Ewaqa, has disappeared, but members of Cakau still grumble that their turn is overdue. Their chieftainship of Ekubu provides a safety-valve, and grumbling has become virtually a ritual, unlikely to ever go further.¹³

The symmetries of kinship

'[While most observers] have shifted away from seeing precontact history as static ... outsiders find clan histories — with their complex mobility, division, regroupings, alliances and wars — almost impossible to follow. To clan members this is essential knowledge (Waiko 1985: 9).

Fijian religion was essentially ancestral, and kinship defined origin, relationships, and assigned status. Christianity replaced some edifices of the old religions with new ones, but the wells of kinship are deep. Geddes (1945a: 4) pointed out that up until their war service in WW2, many Fijian men had not even imagined friendship based on other than kinship, and still in Vatulele the people with whom one will associate throughout one's life are one's closest kin. Even those outside the clan, the village, or the island with whom one will most readily have social or cultural exchanges will still probably be sanguinal or affinal kin, though when people emigrate to the mainland to work, they naturally form (often close) relationships with workmates and/or neighbours who may even become surrogate kin. Kinship is not merely genetic but a state of mind.¹⁴

¹³ Nonetheless, many in both houses contend that Cakau has more worthy candidates for succession among young men of the next generation than does Werelevu, so the tension may build up again. None of the four paramounts since Cession has been properly installed, which appears to relate to this interruption of the normal rotation of office. The first post-Cession 'colonial-legal' heir (from Werelevu) was in their eyes not the rightful heir (who should have come from Cakau). It should next have gone to Ewaqa, and only then back to the Werelevu line. Thus the current paramount, Rātū Apenisa Racava, simply assumed the role without fanfare when his father Rātū Jioji Toge died. Not even a *yaqona vātūruga* was held — extraordinary in an island so obsessed with ritual.

¹⁴ The term *tavale* (cross-cousin) is often used to address close friends, implying the closest kinship relationship (discussed shortly). Actions considered appropriate to kin can establish quasi-kinship, as Sahlins noted in relation to *kerekere* or 'sanctioned cadging' in Moala (see Chapter Eight): 'If

Descent in Vatulele is cognatic — both paternal and maternal sides contribute essential aspects of one's identity. Principal clan membership and land entitlement are mainly (though not absolutely) inherited patrilineally, while important aspects of intra- and inter-group relationships are derived matrilineally. A symmetry between male and female 'principles' proceeds from the most basic level of personal identity, extended in the elaborate mechanisms developed around avuncular/nepotic relationships and those between cousins (Appendix 3). In ritual such relationships are invoked metaphorically where they do not exist in reality, and the manner in which male and female interact is symbolised by gendered ritual prestation objects (elaborated upon in Chapters Six and Seven).

Siblings (*vītacini*, *vīgwaneni*) and Cross-Cousins (*vītavaleni*)

Freud's 'horror of incest' ((1950)1975: 1-17) may be read from Vatulele's avoidance rules. After the age of puberty even verbal contact was formerly prohibited between cross-sex siblings, or parallel cousins (children of ego's FBr or MZ) who count as siblings. Even same-sex siblings are seldom as close as are same-sex cross-cousins (in particular children of ego's MBr but to some extent also FZ). These are normally close friends throughout life, will often work together, undertake commercial enterprises together, and can refuse no request of one another. Mutual joking may go to extremes that in Western society would be regarded as verging on malice.

Similarly, opposite-sex cross-cousins go to extremes of familiarity in both word and action. They are normatively ideal marriage partners (they are even addressed as 'husband' and 'wife'), though marriages are usually at a second or greater remove.¹⁵ This, plus the sibling constraints between their parents, establishes the necessary distance, while the kin closeness keeps the obligations resulting from marriage (discussed shortly) within the clan. Upon marriage a woman becomes classified as a cross-cousin of her husband, whether she is genetically or not, and

[my relative] didn't give it to me, and [an]other man did, I would know that the other man was really my relative' (1962: 204).

¹⁵ This still remains a significant factor in marriages. Of a random sample of married women I undertook in 1995, 11% were married to first-cross-cousins, and 22% to more distant cross-cousins — 33% in all. A further 28% were more distantly related, while 33% were unrelated. There was also in the sample a single case of parallel-cousin marriage. See Thomson ((1908)1968:182-205) for a detailed analysis of traditional marriage customs and the cross-cousin relationship. See also Belshaw (1964: 30) for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon in Nadrogā/Navosā Province, to which Vatulele now belongs.

all other relationships, forms of address, and avoidances are based on this.¹⁶ Similarly, classificatory status and connections must be established for outsiders marrying into the island (Sahlins 1962:161-2; Toren 1990:53).

The sister's child: *vahu* (*vasu*)

The other strong cross-gender kinship connection is that of *vahu*, described by Hocart as 'the uterine nephew' (1923; 1926), though in fact the institution affects nieces as well as nephews. Ego is said to be *vahu* to his/her maternal uncle(s) and to those uncles' extended families, which in the case of chiefs implicates the village or beyond.¹⁷ The *vahu*'s lien over the property of his maternal uncle and family/clan/federation were emphasised in early accounts, but more socially relevant today is the very significant license *vahu* have to flout convention and challenge authority. There are reciprocal obligations both from the mother's side and from the *vahu*, but the latter may not adequately observe these today.

Vahu rights are still exercised more in Vatulele than I have seen elsewhere. One Nalimolevu elder grumbled: 'Children will impose their *vahu* rights on others, but in our day we would have been ashamed to continue doing so when we grew up. Today they just carry on the way they did as children.' While the main reason for the present increase is partly the élite's control slipping, the relatively reduced observance during his youth may have been due to the fact that the colonial administration, seeing the institution as a material imposition, banned it (Thomson (1908)1968: 75-6). This drove it underground to a degree, but was ultimately futile, since they missed the point — it is not mainly about property, but goes to the heart of kinship and the resonance between male and female elements in society.

The chiefly clan Nalimolevu are the main 'victims' of their *vahu* taking liberties. The resentful mutters of 'bloody *vahu*!' often heard from the traditional élite relate most often to breaches of tradition. In order of seriousness, this ranges from ignoring non-ritual conventions of propriety (e.g. rules for walking through the centre of the village, forbidding wearing a hat, laughing and calling out, or

¹⁶ With first-order cross-cousins, the exceptional degree of familiarity can prove difficult when they marry, and the normal order of the household, in which the wife is expected to be submissive to her husband, is imposed. This is discussed at some length by Toren (1990: 50-56).

¹⁷ If the uncle is a chief (*tūraga*), ego is *vahu tūraga*, the 'family' extending to the entire clan, or in the case of *vahu levu* (the uncle being the paramount) to the entire *vanua* (island, in Vatulele's case). The *vahu* relationship extends also to the *i-cavuti*, or totems (see above), of the *vahu*'s mother, so each person has three totems from the paternal kin-group, and a further three from maternal group.

smoking), to intentional flouting of hierarchy or procedure in ritual, or impolite language and/or excessive familiarity toward chiefs.

As will be further discussed later in this chapter, today the young of all ranks are inclined to 'test the water' to see how far they can go in being 'modern,' following individual self-interest rather than group norms, challenging authority and ignoring conventions of politeness and respect to elders and élites. Kasper *et al.* (1988: 128) identified two sources of social tension in Fiji, one between Fijians and Indians, the other between younger commoners and those who support the traditional chiefly structure. In Vatulele at least, other than clowns or others performing sanctioned 'reversals' in ritual as mentioned previously, *vahu* are the one group with traditional licence to challenge authority with impunity. Ironically, this license derives from the very traditions they flout.

The maternal uncle (*gwazi*)

Gwazi is the maternal uncle — if more than one, the oldest one present plays the part, and an important part it is. He may counsel and reprimand the growing child without fear of contradiction or argument, and should always be obeyed. But it is in relation to the ritual life of his *vahu* that his main importance lies. At the two occasions that generate the great rites of passage in Vatulele, marriage and death, the *gwazi*'s role is pivotal — marriages are said to 'belong to' the *gwazi*, as the remarks in Chapter Two showed. The man's *gwazi* proposes marriage on his behalf, the bride's *gwazi* formally gives her to the groom, and the bride's and groom's *gwazi* 'divide the spoils' from the wedding among the families. Finally, at death it is the *gwazi* (or, in the case of old people whose uncles have all died, the person of that classificatory office) and his family who lay out one's body and prepare it for burial. In return, the *gwazi* and other 'mother's side' relatives receive much of the wealth presented at the funeral, and all of the wealth presented at the '100 night' (*bogidrau*) ceremonies which finalise the funerary period and precede the lifting of mourning, described in the next chapter. Indeed, in most rituals it is the *gwazi* who receive the goods, who divide them up, and are well rewarded.

Son and his father's maternal uncle— the institution of *limatabu* (*ligatabu*)

Despite these rewards, the female side may appear to bear a disproportionate share of obligations. But a child also has a leverage on the father's maternal clan through *limatabu*,¹⁸ an institution similar to, but considered even stronger than, *vahu*. If

¹⁸ *Ligatabu* in Standard Fijian. This translates as 'sacred hand(s),' explained to me as relating to the

several generations were alive simultaneously, theoretically the *mana* (effectiveness) of the bond would become more powerful with each generation — a reversal of the ‘decay’ of kinship force over distance in the West.

The upward ramification of relationships reinforces community linkages with each subsequent generation. For a person of Vatulele to say they are not related to another person on the island is far more surprising than to say they are. One of them probably also has some degree of classificatory obligation to the other, though the elephantine memories required to operate such a system mean that in practical terms it is normally limited to one or at most two generations.

From the above overview, it can be seen that establishing boundaries and defining connections, particularly through art and ritual as discussed previously, are of paramount importance to a Vatulelean’s understanding of the rights and obligations which determine his/her identity.

Early challenges to identity

The coming of the Westerners

Vatulele was in fact one of the earlier Fijian islands charted by Western explorers,¹⁹ and one of the earliest known depictions of a Fijian is de Sainson’s portrait of *A man of Vatu Lele* (Fig.5). However, there is no evidence of sustained Westerner contact with Vatuleleans. Elsewhere, encounters with traders, castaways and settlers significantly altered the two most powerful devices for sustaining and re-defining identity, warfare and prestation rituals. Battle-axes and muskets quickly replaced the club and bow and arrow. Westerners also discovered that sperm-whale teeth were the most powerful Fijian talisman (*tabua* — see Chapter Seven) with power to command almost any goods or services. Having ready access to them from whalers, sailors used them promiscuously as currency, affecting the number circulating in rituals, and concomitantly the spiritual and temporal power of *tabua*-rich chiefs who could forge ever more alliances (Clunie 1986: 161, 176-7).

privilege of *vahu* to both physically touch their uncles and to carry off their possessions. I have never seen this institution described elsewhere, though informants asserted that it is widespread. It should not be confused with another institution of the same name, whereby certain chiefs’ and priests’ hands were considered sacred so that they might not feed themselves and no-one else might touch them (Clunie 1986: 190, Note #202).

¹⁹ First by Captain Bentley of the American ship *Ann and Hope* enroute between Kadavu and Vitilevu in 1799, then using its charts, Dumont d’Urville’s *Astrolabe* in 1827 (Derrick 1946: 36,65; Rosenman 1987:131). In 1840 Commander Wilkes of the US Exploring Expedition squadron also surveyed the coast of Vatulele, without landing or contacting the inhabitants.

The resulting chiefdoms developed large confederations of allies (*matanit ū*). Rewa developed the powerful confederation of Burebasaga in the mid-19th Century, competing for power in a protracted war with its rival Bau and its confederation Kubuna (Derrick 1946; Routledge 1985). Due to the Nalimolevu chiefs' lineage



Fig.5. A chief of Vatulele

drawn by Dumont d'Urville's artist Louis de Sainson in 1827
(see d'Urville & César 1834-5; Rosenman 1987: 131-2)

from Rewa, Vatulele enjoyed independent federation (*vanua*) status within Burebasaga, a proud component of Vatulelean identity to this day.²⁰

²⁰ There were three *matanit ū* at the time of Cession — *Kubuna* (grouped around the powerful island kingdom of Bau), *Tōvata e Viti* (formed by an alliance of two smaller confederations, *Cakaudrove* and *Lau*), and *Burebasaga* (grouped around Rewa, and to which Vatulele belongs). Confederations were notionally superseded by the system of provinces established by the colonial administration, but they in fact remain very important to identity. As Burebasagans, Vatuleleans sometimes criticise the 'Bau/Lau' (Kubuna/Tōvata) tussle over, and arrogation of, political power since Independence. The *prima facie* case for their resentment is that no-one from Burebasaga has held one of the two principle offices in the land since Independence, and nor have they been numerous

The Wesleyan Methodist Church

The Europeans came in with the government, with the flag, but with the Bible as well; and the Bible was much more destructive than the flag. Everything that was Fijian was devilish (HighChief/Politician 1993).

The arrival of the Tongan Wesleyan missionary Paula Avea from Rewa in 1848 was the first directly Western-sponsored intervention in Vatulele (see Wood 1978: 84, 157), and the islanders remain staunch Wesleyans. However, as happened throughout history as Christianity spread, it displaced some but was interwoven with many of the beliefs and paraphernalia of indigenous religions. Thus virtually all Vatuleleans, however devout, retain belief in totems and ancestral spirits, and in the origins of their chiefs and their clans from fundamental forces or entities (*vū*).

Ravuvu's understanding of this syncretism provides one of his most compelling, and arguably most important, accounts of Fijian culture (1987: 254). It accords well with an indigenous viewpoint recorded seventy years earlier (Hocart 1912). Though most Christian Fijians might shrink from putting it so bluntly, he points out that a degree of polytheism continues in Fijian belief, with a 'hierarchical order of gods' subordinate to but coexistent with the Christian God.²¹ The hierarchy continues downward from high chiefs (conceived of, as mentioned earlier, as latent divinities) to other chiefs and commoners. His explanation exemplifies Geertz's (1983: 29-30) characterisation of all social structures, including kin group organisation, mythology and iconography, as combining to give 'a dramatised statement of ... what status, power, authority and government are and should be: namely, a replication of the world of gods that is at the same time a template for that of men'. The hierarchy described by Ravuvu helps explain:

- 1 . Vatuleleans' acceptance of their assigned status;
- 2 . the ongoing power of the church, due to the location of the Christian God at the absolute apex of the hierarchy of spiritual and temporal power;
- 3 . to persistent deference to chiefs irrespective of their personal qualities due to their believed possession of divinity as well as temporal power;
- 4 . the emphasis on 'identifying performances' to clearly define all of the relativities in the scheme;
- 5 . Fijians' devotion to the British royal family, which has survived Independence,

in other high offices, despite the size and socio-economic importance of the Burebasaga domains.

²¹ This explains why a Fijian feels no conflict when he asks the blessing of the resident Wesleyan minister (*talatala*) prior to a kava (*yaqona*) ceremony, then touches the rim of the bowl to seek the blessing of the spirits whose involvement the ceremony engaged (see Chapter Seven).

Coup, and Republic, since with Cession the monarch became supreme chief, highest among earthly spiritual manifestations;

6 . the deference of 1997 military Coup leaders after the event to the Council of Chiefs, and their instituting of fundamental religious observance.

Finally, as described in the last two chapters, sign, myth (including art) and ritual (both traditional and church) are devices for maintaining the coherence of the earthly order described, and the only means of contacting and influencing the spiritual agencies which control the physical world. In Chapter Seven it will be argued that this cosmological order is both a denotation of, and inscribed on, *masi*.

Fijian identity in the colonial era

The policies which directed events throughout the colonial era were put in place, under the guidance of the first permanent Governor of the colony Sir Arthur Gordon, during the first five years of colonial rule following Fijians' cession of their country to Britain in 1874. Although Western influence had substantially modified Fijian culture (particularly technology and warfare) during the pre-colonial period, this had occurred within a context of indigenous hegemony. The Fijian signatories of the Deed of Cession, though they could not possibly comprehend the implications, ceded control over not only their lands, but also their lives and identities. For nearly a century these would be determined by British colonial agendas and conceptions of Fijian society and culture.

The details of the colonial interregnum in Fijian hegemony have been dealt with at length by many writers (e.g. Derrick 1946; France 1969; Clammer 1973; Macnaught 1982; Thomas 1994), and need not be rehearsed in detail here. These authors make it clear that while the colonial policies were framed in a spirit of genuine altruism, they were often based on misunderstanding. But they were given the force of dogma to such a degree that all future events in Fiji, including the terms under which Independence was granted in 1970, the context of the 1987 military Coup d'État, and Fijian life since, were to be shaped by them. In retrospect, one might conclude that the Fijian people have been as constrained and limited by benevolent paternalism as they might have been by severe repression — indeed paternalism may have been more insidious in that it dulled the will to question.

Colonial government policies were premised on the assumption that a single Fijian identity could be forged from the extraordinary diversity of disparate groups. They constructed a composite model on the foundations of, or using materials appropriated from, a host of formerly Fijian socio-cultural structures, many of them

substantially reworked. It formed the basis of 'the colonial myth of [Fijian] homogeneity' (Routledge 1985: 220; Lawson 1990). The homogeneous entity they imagined into existence was a modified neotraditional socio-political structure. It took as its foundational assumptions an essentially unchanging traditional lifestyle, with communalism as the norm of all social interaction, an unquestioned hereditary hierarchy, and the village as the only feasible collective entity in which these could operate. All of these assumptions had problems both in their universal applicability, and in their implications for the evolution of Fijian identity and capability to function in a world which was changing rapidly outside their bubble of tradition..

Particularly significant for Fijian identity was the codification of land tenure and securing ownership of most freehold land for Fijians. This was to assume particular importance in light of what were the administration's two most critical decisions: first to import indentured Indian labour, then to permit them to settle.

While many colonial structures remained peripheral to daily life in Vatulele, at least for the first sixty-five years, the policy of maintaining a traditional village lifestyle (with ritual and art an ongoing part of it) prevailed beyond WW2, and this, plus associated policies relating to leadership, social structure, land tenure, and capitalism, all had a profound bearing on Vatuleleans.

In an effort to hasten the realisation of the myth of homogeneity, administrators adopted the Wesleyan missionary policy of using one language (initially that of the Kubuna confederation centred on Bau) as 'Standard Fijian,' and all official business and teaching occurred in this language. Informants describe how as children they were caned for speaking Vatulelean even in the local school playground. But while all Vatuleleans still learn and can speak Standard Fijian, they have never abandoned their own language — it is too fundamental an aspect of their identity.

Its application was insensitive, and it was only ever partially successful, but it is true that the colonial policy of imposing homogeneity did provide Fijians with a socio-cultural and linguistic common ground without which today's emergent ethnic nationalism would be impossible. Whether that would have been a good or bad thing is another debate.

Despite the disruption of regional identities, most groups could find in the quasi-traditional model enough components that were familiar that they could accommodate them or re-structure their genuine cultural forms to fit them. A public edifice of mutual respect and affection was based on the pragmatic decision to use

Fijian chiefs as ‘middle management,’ identifying the colonial administration with the traditional power structure of the country, and thus grafting traditional chiefly authority and commoner loyalty onto the British administration.²² The status and privilege this guaranteed the élites held them hostage, while the common people were already bound by ongoing traditions of respect and obedience which continued to be carefully nurtured. The rehearsed aspects of art and ritual became important tools in the maintenance of a ‘tradition’ that was held to validate chiefly privilege, while their identity-affirming aspects were also co-opted as chiefs were represented as embodying all that was best and most ‘Fijian.’ Any indigenous criticism of the system was able to be stigmatised as ‘un-Fijian.’

The administration misconceived the manner in which communalism functioned, and the reciprocity of commoners’ obligation to chiefs (Toren 1994; Thomson (1908)1968: 66). Individuals and/or families had enjoyed considerable autonomy — they did indeed work together, but only for specific purposes and on a reciprocal basis or as agreed duty. Now their responsibility of labour and first-fruits to chiefs (*lala*) was extended. The colonial administrative structure was superimposed on the chain of command (see Figs.6 & 7). All determinations from on high came down through the chiefs to the groups, and they were the only spokesmen with any access to recognised fora. All of these things placed villagers in thrall to a greater than ever extent. They were trapped in a ‘bubble’ of tradition, with little opportunity and no incentive for social or cultural evolution. Successive administrations praised their adherence to tradition and suppressed any commoner assertiveness in ‘an emphatic demand that they must not alter their way of life’ (Nayacakalou 1975: 3).²³

²² Also, as Benedict Anderson (1991) suggests, underlying British colonial policies was the imagining of a ‘world aristocracy’ in whom leadership was an inherent right. Numerous comments in the writings of Gordon (e.g. 1897-1912), who imagined himself ‘a chief among chiefs’ (France 1969), and many comments in the writing of his cousin Constance (Gordon-Cumming (1888)1901), demonstrate such views. The British administration persisted in the conviction that Fijian chiefs were ‘cut of finer cloth’ than their ‘subjects,’ and made this a self-fulfilling determination by selectively educating and affording career opportunities to the men (and later women) of this group. In other words, they employed the same strategies that sustained aristocratic privilege in Britain.

²³ After even Independence had failed to bring any significant changes, anthropologist Nayacakalou complained:
 [The] original conception [by Gordon of] the Fijian administration ... [was] the hope of developing a modern political organization by building on the old institutions. However, the Fijian administration has failed to develop into this kind of institution, which means that it continues to be seen in terms of the chiefly system (1975: 92).

Many of Fiji's political difficulties of recent years, and a significant amount of what

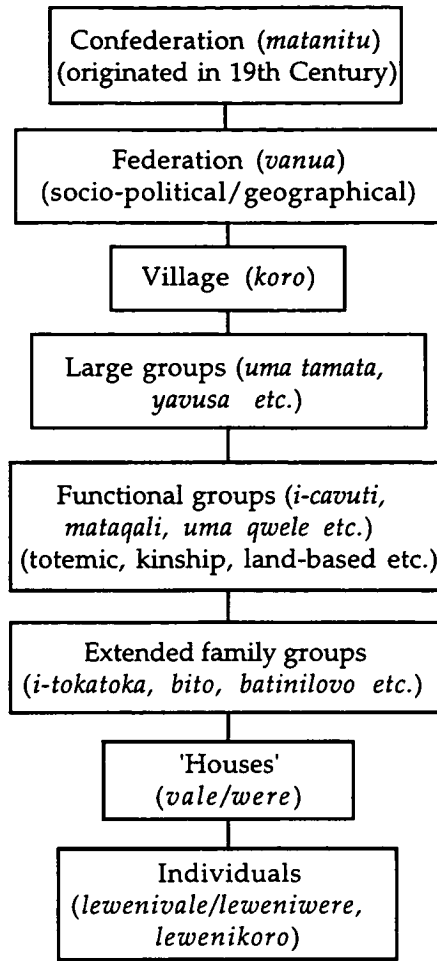


Fig.6. Pre-colonial Fijian social structural organisation

(Not all of these levels up or down would necessarily exist for any particular village. Each level had its own chief(s) and elders, with various titles and authority)

has been represented as adherence to tradition, may be read as this élite group's strategies to retain authority and power against increasing scrutiny and scepticism.²⁴ As Lindstrom and White observe: 'Almost everywhere in the Pacific today, people are debating the importance of "chiefs" and the legitimacy, or illegitimacy, of current chiefly political practice' (1997: 3).

The land and traditional ownership

The difficulties the administration had in codifying land ownership and determining landowning groups, in a country where there was very little uniformity, has been exhaustively examined by France (1969). Between 1913 and 1930 the Native Lands Commission (NLC) embarked on a procrustean exercise, dismissing local

²⁴ These issues are teased out in Robie (1992), White & Lindstrom (1997) and Rory Ewins (1998)

confusion, mistrust and frustration as 'reckless perjury ... and ... sullen secretive-

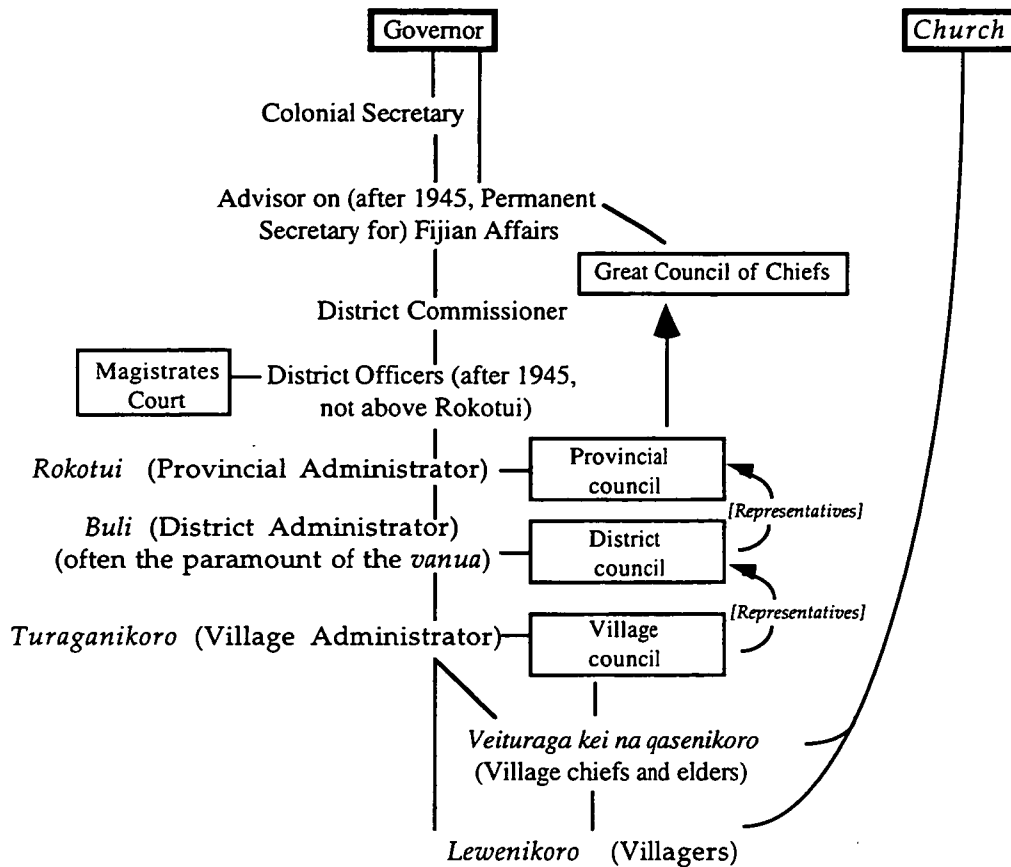


Fig.7. Colonial Fijian administrative organisation
(Generalised, not date-specific. Lines = 2-way interaction, arrows = upward)

ness' (1969: 167). They settled on a scheme which postulated a universal structure of founding units called *yavusa*,²⁵ putatively established by a founding deity whose offspring established units called *mataqali*, these ultimately splitting up into *i-tokatoka*. Vatulele's diverse originating groups and founding deities, and still in an uneasy association following their civil war, were a very poor 'fit.' Undaunted, the

²⁵ The term *yavusa* denotes 'foundation' and 'heaping' as does the housemound *yavu* (Capell (1941)1973: 290). The concept has proven difficult even for generations of anthropologists to reconcile with the actualities they confronted. For example, Thompson ((1940)1971) and Geddes (1959) described *yavusa* as 'phratries,' a term which connotes ancestor-focus, the ideal-type depicted by the NLC (France 1969: 166) but which seldom obtains in practice, and certainly not in Vatulele. Quain (1948) called them 'moieties', which connotes marriage or other exchange relationships, which while true is not exclusive to *yavusa*. Hocart ((1929)1971; 1952) simply called them 'tribes', which probably better describes *vanua*, which typically include several *yavusa*. The NLC in many places, including Vatulele, listed as *yavusa* what are simply groups of clans with no traditional identity, no ancestral focus, and no structural connection with other similar units. Sahlins (1962) recognised the inconsistencies, using 'stock' and 'local *yavusa*.' I prefer the non-specific term 'super-clans,' connoting *yavusa*'s size and their superordination of clan groups.

NLC 'construction team' pronounced the *uma tamata* groupings of each *koro* to be *yavusa* (transliterated by Vatuleleans as *yavuha*), *uma qwele/i-cavuti* to be *mataqali* (VL *mataqwali*). Some names were reduplicated (with the same membership) to become *i-tokatoka* (VL *i-tokotoko*). Some *vūwere*, their most fundamental units, became *i-tokatoka*, others were lost.²⁶

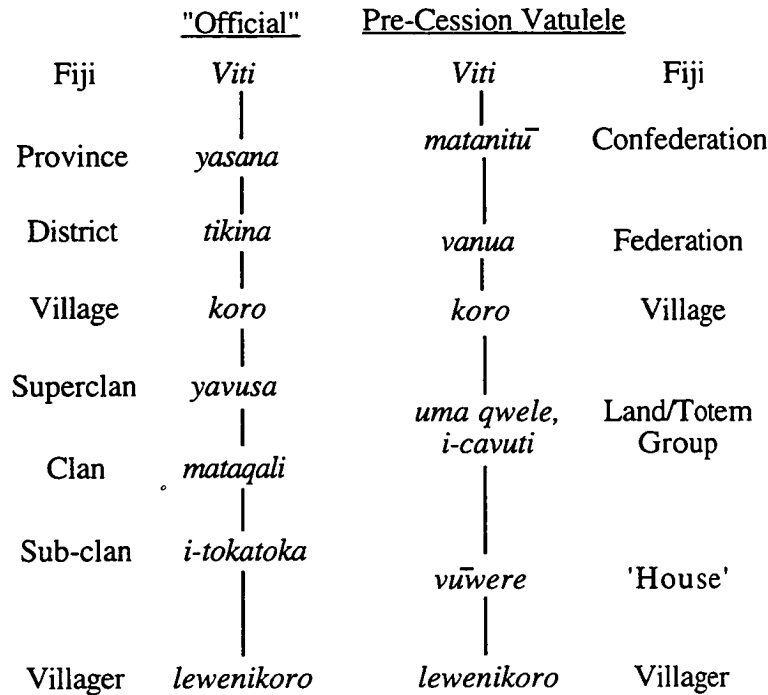


Fig.8. Traditional domains of identity ²⁷

Needing to locate everyone precisely in relation to everyone else, Vatuleleans describe themselves in terms of both the imposed official model and, for rituals or other domestic affairs, their traditional groupings (Fig.8 and Appendix 3). In this as in other areas where colonial (and now post-colonial) law has proven too painfully at odds with local realities, 'people have simply ignored the regulations

²⁶ The model that even some anthropologists saw as the 'neat ... simple system ... beautifully structured' (Geddes 1959: 201) was always an ideal-type that existed nowhere, and the patterns of descent and land 'ownership' that were written down seldom represented local understandings. France (1969) and Clammer (1973) both highlighted this facade, as have numerous writers since. But Fijians everywhere had to accommodate to it, and today Fijians generally speak of the *yavusa/mataqali/i-tokatoka* sequence as though it were indeed their own timeless construction. Ward (1995) has summed up well the disjunctures between tradition, the law, and current practice.

²⁷ This differs somewhat from the conclusions of Geddes (1959) or Teckle (1984), though the latter at least would probably agree that the 'official' structure is a poor fit. As evident, official and actual structures actually intersected only at the levels of villager, village and country. Domains span kinship as well as place and politics. Each is conceived of as both an abstract entity and a defined group of people, with every individual bearing lateral and vertical relationships to every other.

and their intent' (Ward 1995: 198).

Vanua — Land, place and identity

In pre-colonial Fiji, warfare rearranged the land available to groups, or placed liens on its produce, or both. The larger occupying group laid claim to a loosely-defined area of jungle, and assigned all of those areas its members occupied and worked, housemound, garden and the area of reef they fished. Marriages and deaths necessitated renegotiation of land allocation. Such flexibility defied codification, but Gordon wanted the appearance of 'traditional' sanction for his laws, and with threats of abrogating their title, finally obtained from his new 'advisory' body, the Great Council of Chiefs, a structure he could use. Title was glossed as perpetual group ownership, and the *mataqali* (clan) was settled on as the landowning unit 'despite all the debate in earlier meetings which had pointed to smaller units or even individuals ... being the prime landholding units' (Ward 1995: 216). Many places, including Vatulele, had no such unit as *mataqali*, which made for difficult negotiations (Belshaw 1964: 123-5; Clammer 1973: 211-12).

The loss of traditional flexible mechanisms for adjusting land use according to group size and needs has proven problematic in Vatulele, small in area and with limited arable land. The steady population growth, trebling since the 1930s when title was finally fixed (Appendix 6), and the post-War boom in *masi* cultivation increasing the land needs of all groups, are occurring in the context of some clans with dwindling numbers retaining large holdings, while large and growing clans have little at their disposal. Disputes are not uncommon, and official intercession does not always produce a solution acceptable to all parties, leaving simmering resentments. Also, under present legislation the land of extinct clans is not redistributed among other clans, but reverts to the government — anathema where every square metre has group associations.²⁸

Notwithstanding such difficulties, the primary intention of the land laws, to keep land in Fijian hands, empowered them as they were steadily outpaced numerically, economically and educationally by the Indians. Indigenous ownership of 83% of the land in perpetuity, with a further 6.4% of crown land and the remainder

²⁸ Attempts to subvert this are understandable. For example, the *i-tokotoko* Nakula (*mataqali* Naicokocokobalavu, *yavuha* Ekubu — see Appendix 3) effectively became extinct, but rather than lose all their land to the government, a man who was *vahu* to the Nakula, but living in Yadua village in Vitilevu, was asked to return and take up their land. Today his three grandsons are the sole representatives of the *i-tokatoka*, and are therefore very land-rich. Better than losing it to the government, but still a source of envy.

freehold, is probably unparalleled in colonial history. Fijians came to see that they had been dealt the ultimate trump card in what seemed an otherwise losing hand.

This was always going to create great pressure from other groups, particularly Indians, who by 1939 already constituted 51% of the population, yet owned only 2% of the land. A Native Lands Trust Ordinance (NLTO) was passed in 1940, and a Native Lands Trust Board (NLTB) created to arrange leases of Fijian land superfluous to landowner needs, ranging from 99 down to 20 years. This eased the problem for a time, but in recent times it has re-emerged as the major inter-ethnic issue. Fear of losing title drew many Fijians to the side of the 1987 Coup leaders, and arguably the greatest test the 1999-elected government will face lies with land ownership and leases.²⁹

Yet it would be wrong to characterise land as solely a matter either of ethnic competition (particularly in Vatulele where there is little threat) or of avarice. The reason it is so emotive is that land and place are integral to identity, which as pointed out above is defined in terms of spatio-temporal journeys. France's (1969:120; also 11-14) statement that 'changes of ownership ... had been a constant feature of the land practices in pre-Cession times' should have referred to occupation, not ownership, since the traditional Fijian concept of relationship to land was dynamic rather than static as in British law. Legal 'fixation' created by its very exclusivity a bone of contention without recourse to traditional solutions.

The fact that only the *taukey ni vanua* can install the chief of later occupants, as described above, demonstrates that even conquerors recognised the inalienability of that identification, even when the *taukey* may not have occupied the land for generations. For no-one is this identification stronger than for a small-islander such as a Vatulelean, who has probably traversed every path on the island and knows every piece of it by name and legend. In this association, *masi* functions as both a physical sign and a conceptual constant, as will be elaborated in Chapter Seven with the description of chiefly installation as 'giving the *masi*.'

²⁹ In the heightened ethnic aggressiveness which surrounded and followed the Coup, a number of Fijian clans are now refusing to renew expiring farm leases, dispossessing many Indians whose families have developed farmland from bush and worked it productively for decades, and whose own identity is defined by it. The injustice is plain, but in the present ethno-political climate the solution is elusive. See *The Review*, June 1995, for a series of articles dealing with this issue. In his first newspaper interview after election, Prime Minister Chaudhry 'revealed that he planned to move quickly to resolve the issue of the country's 99-year leases over traditional Fijian land' (O'Callaghan 1999).

In Vatulelean, as in the many languages of Fiji, there are two root-words for what is covered by 'land' in English, with many dependent uses:

1. *Qwele*, which also means soil or earth, connotes specificity and finiteness, so has most relevance to 'legal ownership.' As *qweleniyaga* (cultivated land), it was always conceptualised as one part of a tripartite grouping, the other two being *vikaikai* (forest) and *qwoliqwoli* (fishing grounds). Entitlements to adjacent components often vest in different groups, and major disputes have arisen with hoteliers who assumed that their leases applied to all three areas. For example, the *mataqwali* Valevale and Bole, which leased beach frontage to the VIResort, had no rights to confer below the high-tide mark.³⁰ As mentioned earlier, these rights were assumed by the chiefs of Nalimolevu following the civil war, and confirmed by the NLC as Nalimolevu clan title. The Resort needs access to the beach and lagoon for its guests, whom it also likes to take to small offshore islands for picnics. Access negotiated with the paramount is grumbled about by other clan members, saying they were not consulted and (perhaps the real complaint) received no share in payments they (rightly or wrongly) believe their chief has received.

2. *Vanua* can mean 'place,' or 'land' in its broader sense of 'this place,' 'the land of Fiji' or 'our country.' It has accrued numerous connotations, all contributing to its mythic dimensions and relating it to group identities (see Ravuvu 1983: 70; Lasaga 1984; Ravuvu 1988: 6-14). It may mean a group's land, or, as discussed earlier, a group of villages in a socio-political relationship or 'federation.' But its most important connotation of identity is when it is compounded as *i-tovo vāvanua*, 'ways of the land' (see Ravuvu 1988: 8), encompassing 'tradition' and 'cultural capital,' concepts Thompson (1971) embodied in her term 'moral economy' which Rutz (1987: 536) defined as: 'production, distribution and consumption activities which occur within a matrix of social relations that are normatively prescribed, strongly obligatory, bounded by highly shared rules, meanings and symbols, and perceived as more or less permanent or natural.' In short, the yardsticks by which identities are defined. The concept *vanua* is thus mythified, as is *masi*, relating to the essence of 'Fijianness.' It is thus not surprising that *vanua* is signified in *masi* figuration, and can therefore be signified by *masi* itself.

³⁰ To give some idea of the complexity of land-ownership patterns in Vatulele, and consequently of lease arrangements, the leasehold of the hotel land including the road and airstrip, involves six separate clans, five of them from superclan Ekubu (Taunovo village). However, most of the land in the hotel compound proper belongs to the Valevale, who while originally part of the Ekubu people, were loyal to the Nalimolevu during the civil war and consequently became part of the superclan Nalimolevu. That loyalty has paid off handsomely, since (together with the paramount) they now receive the largest amounts of hotel lease rent.

Indians and ethnic competition

Pre-colonial European planters, keen to detach and distance themselves from any obligation to the original owners of the land, replaced early expressions of admiration for Fijian labour with stereotypes of them as lazy, unreliable and unproductive (France 1969: 39-41). This 'justified' their 'conceit of ownership' (Reynolds 1998), but left them without labour, which they obtained from the Solomons and New Hebrides (Vanuatu). As a result, many Fijians were utterly excluded from land with which they still had abiding connections.

Gordon abolished the virtual slavery of Melanesian 'blackbirding' (Lucas 1883). But fearing that the loss of manpower caused by a drift to towns and plantations seeking cash employment would seriously compromise village life, he also severely restricted the employment of Fijian labour as part of his 1877 'Native Regulations' which controlled the movement of Fijians as well as the sale of their land. An alternative workforce was provided by the import of indentured labour from India less than five years after Cession.³¹ Political expediency was re-imagined as 'insulating Fijians' traditional lives' from the socially and culturally destructive effects of 'modernisation.' Fijians were unconvinced, fearing that they would 'be blotted out by the number of these people who keep coming' (Scarr 1984: 100-101). Their concerns were ignored, and when given a choice at the end of 10 years of indenture, over 60% of the Indians elected to stay rather than be repatriated (Gillion 1977: 4). Fiji's 'race problem' had taken root.

'Success was the great offence of the Indians,' wrote Scarr (1984: 101), particularly to European businessmen who had hitherto enjoyed a monopoly. So, having imported Indians for their own economic advantage, while continuing to exploit the labour and produce of Fijians, Europeans in a strategic reversal proclaimed Fijian sympathies, fanned the growing unease, and represented themselves as allies against this 'upstart' population. In such a scenario, the British decision to quit the Colony was greeted by most Indians with satisfaction, but by Fijians with dismay and a sense of betrayal.

Vatulele, with no resident Indians until the establishment of the Resort in 1990, seemingly had less cause for concern than did areas with large Indian numbers. But

³¹ This was a betrayal of the trust of both groups: of the Fijians, who were not consulted or listened to, and of the Indians who suffered deceptions in the signing of indentures. The Indian experience of financial exploitation, appalling living conditions, sickness and social stigmatisation has been extensively explored (e.g. Gillion 1962; 1977; Subramani 1979; Ali 1980; Vijay 1980; Lal 1983; 1992).

prejudice grows best where knowledge is least. Where Indians and Fijians work closely together, there is usually a better rapport and less prejudice than where there is little contact (Rory Ewins 1998: 155). Vatuleans had very little contact with Indians until WW2, then until 1990 it was almost completely restricted to trade with shopkeepers in Vitilevu, most of whom were Indians by the 1940s. Vatuleans, like other Fijians, attributed to them those qualities despised in their own ideals of behaviour, and '*Vā kai Idia*' ('like an Indian') quickly became an epithet signifying calculating and acquisitive behaviour. Mistrust clearly magnified their 'offence,' as acquisitive European or Chinese shopkeepers were not similarly regarded. The Indian retort was to stigmatise Fijians, particularly rural/islander Fijians, as dullards. These social poisons have debilitated Fiji for decades.³²

Fijians and the economy — insulation and surrogacy

The scapegoating of Indians deflected attention from Fijians' marginalisation from the mainstream of 'modernisation,' particularly isolated islanders. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, Fijians' experience of their own trading systems gave them a good basis for adjusting to capitalism, but because of 'protective' policies, and mistaking for financial incompetence Fijians' proclivity for sharing their wealth, they were discouraged from any serious economic engagement. When they *did* show a realisation that they must adjust to a money system, this was bemoaned as a sad sign of 'corruption' (e.g. Robson 1956).

Government protectiveness did not, however, extend to protecting the value of Fijian market produce and labour, the classic colonial 'dual economy' (Gregory 1982: 113).

- 1 . For produce and manufactures, even for 'in-kind' collections that Gordon introduced in lieu of cash taxes, government agents allowed very low equivalences, actively contributing to devaluation.
- 2 . Fijians who did leave their villages to work (first having to pay a Commutation Tax to their Provincial Office for the privilege), entered an uncontrolled and exploitative labour market. Indeed, the fact that much of their work was seasonal or intermittent, with workers returning for support to their villages, encouraged organised capital to validate their underpayment on the grounds that the communal

³² In July 1993 this simmering dislike was demonstrated in Vatulele when the Resort management had to suspend a chief from Ekubu, a works foreman at the Resort, for striking an Indian employee with whom he had a minor disagreement. When I asked the chief, whom I know as a man of normally mild and affable disposition, what had provoked such uncharacteristic behaviour, he muttered that he had no time for Indians, and reiterated the resentment often expressed in the village that the Resort had 'imported them to our island.'

system supplemented cash earnings. For over a century, Fijians have been forced to subsidise their own wages to the advantage of capital.

Vatuleleans, men in particular, have been travelling to the mainland singly and in 'work gangs' for contract employment since shortly after WW2, and suffering the effects of such rationalisation without having the communal support on which it was cynically based.³³ And in 1993, management of the VIREsort cited village residence and communal support as justification for their paying villagers well below even depressed mainland averages (Livingstone 1993). At the same time, the pressure on workers to share their earnings with relatives and friends through the institution of *kerekere* (discussed in Chapter Eight) makes it difficult for wage-earners to enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Belshaw (1964: 273) praised Fijians' demonstrated capacities for commercial enterprise, blaming their frequent failure on the imposed 'rigidity of the institutional framework' (of Fijian administration, communal village structure, and social obligation). But Sutherland (1992: 28) pointed to inequities as the cause of Fijians being economically overrun by other groups. They *have*, he stressed, contributed significantly to the commercial sector all along, but this has been constrained and largely hidden 'in particular *forms* of economic involvement which not only held out little hope of economic success but also lacked even the appearance of direct and extensive participation in capitalist relations,' while all European and much Indian employment did give this appearance. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, early Vatulelean experience epitomised these frustrations.

³³ Never justifiable, such rationalisations are glaringly unjust to urban Fijians, isolated from traditional support systems and subject to urban costs. The assumption was that indigenous workers (and Indians) were not *worth* equal pay to Europeans (with mixed-race people often located in between). It is still evident in neo-colonial Fiji (including among non-European capitalists), except in a few categories. Since their skills are generally not marketable in town, unless given extra education and training, village emigrants are forced into menial jobs on poor terms. The exploitative employment terms and working conditions of Fijian and Indian unskilled workers in 1959 drove them to combine in the first multi-racial general strike in Fiji's history. Three of their highest chiefs convinced the Fijian commoners to disperse, calling on their concern for the 'reputation of Fijians,' thus quashing the strike (Hempenstall & Rutherford 1984: 83-85). They managed to restore law and order, protect the European business community, and drive a wedge into the 'dangerous' unified action of the Fijian and Indian urban proletariat. These next found a united voice when they elected the Bavadra Coalition government in 1987, again defeated by the forces of Fijian conservatism. Again in May 1999, Fijians and Indians have elected a coalition government for its policies rather than ethnicity. It remains to be seen how it will fare this time.

Art, ritual and daily life in the 'high colonial' years (1874-1941)

Despite the rhetoric about maintaining the traditional way of life, in fact the balance of social interaction in Fijian society during the colonial era shifted dramatically from (in Bloch's terms) ritual to non-ritual communication. Administration by edict and statute replaced administration by ritual (including warfare, which was conducted in a highly formalised manner and was integrated with religion). The administration failed to comprehend that art and ritual not only provided symbolic continuities, but afforded social identity-maintenance and adjustment.

Rituals and the traditional artforms on which they relied were seen as the 'elaborate ceremonial display which is so dear to the native mind,' and as part of the 'pomp and circumstance' associated with élites, of whom the administrators now fondly imagined themselves to be the pinnacle. They also misunderstood ritual goods exchanges, seeing them as primarily an economic exercise, and believed these could 'form a substitute for commerce until the natives should become accustomed to money as a medium of exchange' (Thomson (1908)1968: 286).

They therefore encouraged *sōlevu* at half-yearly Provincial Council meetings, with each district to play host in rotation. The chiefs could only interpret this as meaning that these meetings were comparable in importance to their own great inter-*vanua* gatherings, so their identity performances were lavish. The authorities, shocked by the 'illogical excesses,' not merely stopped the Council *sōlevu*, but attempted to ban them completely, just as Canada's and New Zealand's governments attempted with potlatches (Cole & Chiakin 1990) and *hākarai* (Hanson & Hanson 1983: 113). The bans in all cases failed because the people could not mark their critical life-transitions without at least some ritual displays and gift-giving.

However, in Fiji what could not be achieved by legislation was to some extent achieved through social change. With the abandonment of the Provincial Council *sōlevu*, and the fact that those rituals which had utilised the great weight of Fijian artistic production had related to the conjoined concerns of religion and warfare, the requirement for great quantities of goods diminished. The rituals of the new religion did not entail the presentation of ritual arts, and *Pax Britannica* brought warfare to an end. Although Gordon had been at pains to stress that the terms of Cession 'forbade' Fiji from being 'a white man's colony' (Colonial Report, 1880-83, cited in Ravuvu 1991: 44), change was actually both directed, and limited, by 'white men.'

Fijians were effectively transfixed by the determination of the administration to

constrain them within approved versions of tradition, and by the Native Regulations which controlled their freedom of movement and employment, and limited inter-area marriage and even traditional ritual and non-ritual goods circulation. Life entered what Geddes (1945a: 1) described as a 'hyphenated stage of neo-native equilibrium,' with the people, as Ravuvu put it, "'tame" and ... dependent ... on their traditional leaders and British administrators to protect their heritage and integrity' (1991: 41).

Vatulele was an extreme case of this. The major administrative changes were buffered by its remoteness from the centres of power, and its size making it peripheral in the colonial vision. It was made a separate District attached to the Province of Nadrogā-Navosā, and the *Vunihālevu* was appointed *Buli* or District administrator, answerable to the appointed *Rokotui* or Provincial administrator, a high chief whose traditional status was comparable with his own. But tradition and history, as usual in Fijian affairs, determined how the government edict actually operated. Thus the loss of status implicit in the *Vunihālevu*'s loss of autonomy, was buffered by the long pre-colonial relationship Vatulele had with Nadrogā (including intermarriage). Also, each had *vanua* status in the Burebasaga confederation, ensuring mutual respect. This, and Vatulele's isolation, meant that the new arrangements entailed only minor adjustments, and the paramount continued to be the law for all practical purposes. Accounts of the elders make it clear that, with the exception of the major anxieties and inter-group tensions caused by the visit and deliberations of the Lands Commission during the 1930s, throughout the first half of this century the features of daily life hardly changed. 'The great octopus of the modern world' as Rātū Sukuna called it (Scarr 1984: 121) had not yet embraced Vatulele.

Kavolis (1972) demonstrated that during such periods of social stasis the pulse of artistic activity also slows (see Chapter Two). In fact, only artforms of particular social importance or irreplaceable functional utility survive, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. Since inter-group relationships were determined by government decree rather than ritual negotiation, the need for inter-group rituals entailing art production diminished: 'When I was young [in the 1920s & 30s], there were probably only about 3 or 4 major *hōlevu* on the island in one year... [and] those were only for marriage and death' (Informant A, 7/95). While these marked individuals' transitions and inter-group adjustments, they were not used to bring about social change, but were confined to maintaining people's officially-sanctioned identity.

Regime-maintenance needed ritual to underscore the *status quo*, and the liminal

aspects of major inter-group (particularly inter-island) rituals were insecure. It was therefore largely restricted to the many chiefly protocols which endorsed the authority of the traditional élite. Considerable *yaqona* was drunk, some *tabua* presented, and much food eaten, but far less art was required. In sum, this was a period when ‘we did not import the ways of other places or people. We are only a small island, but we had our own customs and we held to them’ (Informant U, 6/93). But that was about to change abruptly and forever.

World War 2: the watershed of Vatulelean identity

In WW2, when the government established a battalion called the Fiji Labour Corps (FLC) to assist in the loading and unloading of supply ships, a high chief was sent to Vatulele from Rewa to exhort his fellow Burebasagans to assist. 48 men went to Lautoka in December 1942 — nearly half of the able-bodied men on the island, with the result that women had to do the men’s chores, and food became even scarcer than usual. Ritual life effectively ceased (cf. Geddes 1945a: 2-3).³⁴

For the volunteers, however, it was a time of relative plenty and exotic experiences that would affect their sense of identity profoundly, and in due course, the lives and identity of all Vatuleleans. Many had never been off the island, or had much contact with other Fijians, but here they were thrown together with 1,500 men from Cakaudrove, Bua, Macuata, Rā, Ba, and other parts of Nadrogā-Navosā. Few of these had connections to Vatulele, but over time friendships developed, as the homogeneity Gordon had counterfeited at last found authentic expression.

Returning at War’s end to families, vegetable gardens, and chores such as housebuilding and maintenance, with women resuming their normal routine, including making *masi*, life must have appeared to the men as though it would return to its sleepy pre-War state. But they were trojan horses for change. They had enjoyed a status they had never experienced,³⁵ a cosmopolitan life in the urban centre, and lived in Western-style houses. They received the same pay as regular Fijian soldiers (Ravuvu (1974)1988: 21), two shillings a day plus keep, average for unskilled labour at that time (Usher 1941: 86) and unprecedented wealth to Vatuleleans. Some say they brought almost their entire earnings home with them to

³⁴ In the course of several conversations, two men from Taunovo (Informants P & Q) provided the following details of their experience. Various women and younger men described conditions on the island, and several of the men involved in the ‘Urau’ club gave the details of that episode.

³⁵ The FLC was a military battalion, and though they never held a weapon, veterans were, still are, referred to as *sotia* (soldiers) — to the Fijian ‘warrior-race’ the most prestigious of descriptions.

spend in concert with their wives.

The FLC veterans reflect on how they now saw their lives and their island as impoverished.³⁶ Further, provincial taxes were increased after the War, and the trivial income-earning or in-kind payment capacity of coconut production was unable to meet even these, let alone satisfy their new desire for cash, possessions and a more affluent lifestyle. Ways of making money were sought with more determination than ever before. They formed a *Soqosoqo* ('Convocation,' a sort of Returned Servicemen's League) with the intention of setting up village stores which could buy goods in bulk and re-sell them. In late 1952 this was registered as the island's first Cooperative.

On demobilisation, each man had been given a meagre toolkit (an axe, a digging fork, a cane-knife and a file) which, basic though it was, wrought a technological revolution. Previously cash for even these simple tools had been beyond the resources of most. Traditional slash-and-burn clearing of land for agriculture was facilitated, steel forks replaced wooden digging sticks (*mataukai*), still in use by men and women. Gardens and coconut plantations were increased in size and extended further afield. Coconuts continued to be overwhelmingly 'the only path of money.' Men started drying copra themselves rather than just selling nuts to the Chinese storekeepers, sending it to Suva for sale. 'Whoever had a lot of land had a lot of coconuts, and had plenty of money, good food and good houses' (Informant A, 7/93).

'Plenty' and 'good' are relative terms — life in the pre-*masi*-selling era was clearly very spartan. None of the old folk harks back to 'the good old days' — on the contrary, all have stressed how good life is today, and how hard life used to be, despite decrying the lack of respect for traditional values by the present generation, a preoccupation of the elderly in most cultures.

For the first time, the FLC veterans formed themselves into 'work gangs' hiring out for six months at a time to cut nuts and make copra as far away as Taveuni, Kanacea, and other islands. A second *Soqosoqo* formed, which went regularly to Korotogo, Nadrogā and Nadi cutting cane. They point out that they simply had no choice, it was the only way they could earn the money for their taxes and to buy their families the necessities. Most importantly for the future of their island, when opportunities for selling *masi* presented themselves, the men pursued them with

³⁶ These recollections recall Lea's (1973: 73) description, cited in Chapter One, of formerly-isolated PNG tribesmen, after contact with the outside world, referring to themselves as 'rubbish men.'

alacrity. How that occurred will be dealt with in Chapter Eight.

An unwanted legacy of their war-service (Informants E, L and unidentified others) was that, virtually to a man, the *sotia* had developed a great liking for alcohol. With the ambitions kindled by the FLC experience unrealisable for many of them, in classic Mertonian (1968) fashion a 'deviant' culture of alcohol abuse developed and passed to later generations. This reached a crisis in the 1970s, when, the men admit, they earned a reputation for drunkenness which reached to Suva and beyond. At its peak, ferries were bringing in 60 dozen large bottles of beer twice weekly, which reportedly would be consumed between 4pm and breakfast. Clothes, tools, *tabua*, anything of value were pawned to raise drinking-money. Brawling and rowdiness were commonplace, work in gardens and *masi* patches was fitted in between boat trips and hangovers.

Women stepped up their *masi* -production in an effort to establish some financial independence and keep pace with the drain on money, but these earnings were also often taken from them, sometimes by force. Some women rebelled, attacking the men with their *ike* (*masi*-mallets), sometimes causing serious injury.

The chiefs, while not models of sobriety themselves, were frightened by what was happening to their village, and in 1977 imposed a blanket ban on the importation of alcohol to the island. When a strong-willed *talatala* (church minister) was appointed in 1978, he announced that drunkenness would be punished by removal from the church register — the Wesleyan equivalent of excommunication. The battle was won, and the ban held until the opening of the Resort in 1990.

Colonial disengagement and Fijian traditionalism

Throughout the first half of the 20th Century, the colonial system was based on two fundamental assumptions: that Fijians still wanted and were content with rule by their chiefs, and that the case for leading the people toward a truly democratic system was outweighed by the belief that this would inevitably lead to the loss of the whole of their way of life.³⁷ The Council of Chiefs consistently rejected most recommendations for administrative change ostensibly because they would conflict with 'tradition,' but in practical terms they feared that any elevation of commoners must erode their own power-base. When in the post-WW2 period colonial administrators were directed from London to 'shift... from policies of gradualism

³⁷ As noted earlier, Nayacakalou (1975) identified and questioned both of these assumptions, and earned considerable elite animosity by doing so. Ravuvu (1991), by contrast, justified the Coup by accepting the time-honoured elite strategy of declaring democracy inapplicable to the 'Fijian way.'

to those of development in anticipation of self-government' (Rutz 1987: 557), the several official enquiries they set up to recommend how best to achieve this (e.g. Spate 1959; Burns 1960; Belshaw 1964) were impeded by the entrenched inertia of both colonial and Fijian administration.

In particular, both chiefs and commoners rejected advice that their communal way of life and villages were increasingly unviable as late 20th Century organisations. Their neotraditional identity, the only real strength they had been encouraged to sustain and develop during the colonial era, seemed unimaginable in any other setting. It is not surprising that they have continued to mobilise every available strategy to maintain that way of life and that identity ever since.

From Independence to the present

The legacy of the colonial period ... [in the Pacific] has been the creation of new states that significantly conflate pre-colonial polities territorially, and that comprise divers societies whose modern sense of ethnicity has emerged from the modification of tradition during the period of colonial rule (Hassall 1991: 285).

Fijians faced the prospect of independence with many qualms when it was thrust upon them, after their sustained opposition, in 1970.³⁸ They were left in possession of most of the land, and were handed an ethnically-weighted constitution under which they dominated the incoming government and were virtually guaranteed perpetual political control of the country.³⁹ They also had higher rates of educational participation than did Indians. These were enviable positive handicaps with which to enter the ethnic competition they saw ahead. But they were, and recognised that they were, far less prepared than the Indians for managing the country's fledgling economy and international affairs in a period of the most aggressive economic and cultural imperialism the world has seen. Typical of most small emergent nations, Fiji left one form of colonialism only to be pushed inexorably into another, less structured but also totally lacking in altruism. Indian

³⁸ 'Fijian opposition to independence stemmed primarily from the general weakness of the Fijian position. Fijians lacked economic clout and the resources necessary for Fijian political mobilisation' (Sutherland 1992:121).

³⁹ As Macnaught put it five years before the military Coup was mounted on the pretext of forestalling Indian power- and land-grabs, 'the constitution gave iron-clad security, short of revolution, to the paramountcy of Fijian interests articulated at Cession, defended against Europeans by Gordon and Thurston, weakly maintained by their successors, never threatened by the Indians, and reaffirmed effectively in 1944 by Governor Mitchell and Ratu Sukuna in alliance with the local European élite' (1982: 159).

input was critical in ensuring that the country did not quickly succumb to economic disaster as many other small nations had.

Far from endearing the Indians to them, this made Fijians feel beleaguered, in danger of losing control of their country. They perceived themselves becoming second-class citizens relative to the Indians, whom the British had always encouraged them to think of as their social and cultural inferiors but who were outdistancing them in the areas of business, employment, and now education, and (they feared) threatening them politically. They were unable, in the 27 years after Independence, to become strong in the economic sector, although increasingly they have it is imperative to do so. The simplistic but widespread view of Fijians was:

We can't ever beat these guys; we've got to use the government or something like force, particularly for this generation who are not educated; and then at the same time we have to educate our kids [to] be able to stand on their own and meet the coming competition, both from the modern world and other races' (Durutalo, cited by Rory Ewins 1997: 436, my emphasis).

Urbanisation, nationalism and *masi*

Vatuleleans are still relatively insulated from 'the whirlwind of globalization' (Castells 1998: 326), and the principal stresses throughout the post-Independence era have been to do with sustaining a communal village life. Though obviously emotionally implicated in the general predicament of Fijians, their reality has been atypical. While other Fijians saw themselves as being marginalised by the growing Indian business sector, Vatuleleans came to rely on it for the sale of a large amount of *masi* (Chapter Eight). But though they may perceive some of the issues differently, wider Fijian perceptions have been critical to Vatuleleans in terms of their market for *masi*.

No unifying nationalist spirit existed in Fiji at the time of Independence — as most writers on the subject agree, nationalism requires a people who are 'fundamentally homogeneous [my emphasis] and only superficially divided by the lines of status, class, locality, or ... ethnicity' (Greenfeld 1996:10). Indeed, nationalisms tend to refer back to unifying ethnicities to establish convincing identities (Smith 1984: 288), and 'ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and ... should not separate the power-holders from the rest' (Gellner 1983: 1). Hassall (1991: 284) noted, 'Island ethnicity was dissimilar to European-style nationalism,' and independent Fiji effectively 'reconstituted [the] precolonial nation.'

Gluckman noted long ago: 'where in a changing system the dominant cleavage is into two culture groups, each of these groups will tend to set increasingly greater value on its own endo-culture' (1954: 65), and Smith generalised that 'The myths of origins and descent [in particular] have helped to coalesce a sentiment of solidarity among populations and to classify them into separate units, when other factors might have brought them together and even fused them into one' (Smith 1984: 291). The principal political use of ethnic identity, along with its markers such as *masi* and ritual, has been to maintain Fijian distinctness from Others, particularly Indians. As argued in Chapter Seven, contemporary pan-Fijian *masi* plays its part in this by defining a commonality of Fijians which is belied by their continuing deep intra-ethnic divisions, but is strategically and emotionally advantageous. In fact Fijians and Indians have *each* reinforced their myths of origin and descent and thereby their separateness.⁴⁰

Successive post-Coup Fijian-dominated governments invoked the 'cult of a golden age' (Smith 1984: 291) and self-consciously used a number of signs of Fijianness, including large pan-Fijian-design (or museum-reproduction) *masi*, real or facsimiled, decorating public spaces from Nadi airport to the GPO in Suva. But whether the 'cultural revival' could always be defined as strategic is questionable. A report by the New Zealand Government's *South Pacific Policy Review Group* in 1990 noted that 'Pacific Island leaders and peoples spoke of a Pacific cultural renaissance. It is a spontaneous rather than a directed or coordinated phenomenon' (cited by Hassall 1991: 294). Fiji does indeed offer greater evidence that myths and signs like *masi* are used for grass-roots reaffirmation of identity rather than in official strategies in Lini's use of the myth of '*wantok*' in Vanuatu.⁴¹

As one prominent Fijian elder statesman commented:

You will find that some of the urban people are more traditional than people in the villages. There are traditional things that are being done in urban areas that people in villages never thought of ever doing because they cannot afford it. Usually they're not entitled to it in the villages, but

⁴⁰ Such myths can be discerned even in contemporary academic writing coming from representatives of each of the two ethnic groups, which tend to display at least some of the features listed by Smith (1984: 292-3) — temporal and spatial origins, accounts of migrations and/or liberation, idealised 'heroic ages' of the community, accounts of communal decline and deceitful leaders, and calls for rebirth, political action and destiny.

⁴¹ But this does not mean that it is any less political — as Cohen insisted, 'Ethnicity is fundamentally a political phenomenon, as the symbols of the traditional culture are used as mechanisms for the articulation of political alignments' (1974: 97, my emphasis).

now they can afford it. It's people in the urban area trying to find out who they are (HighChief/Politician 1993)

The 'traditional things' he hinted 'they're not entitled to' are rituals, as he pointed out in the same interview often lasting several days and involving people in travelling from distant parts to participate, then returning home. What he was describing is an aspect of Fijians' resurgent concern with ethnicity, the 'huddling' for *communitas* discussed at some length in Chapter Three, re-forming groups by using, as Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) put it, reconstructed images of the past (cited in Morris 1996: 232-8).⁴² In other words, urbanites are 'imagining' communities into existence to replace the lost communities of their originating villages and clans, but they are doing so by constructing, in a very postmodern manner, loose, space/time-limited, associations.

Signs like *masi* become extremely important integrative tools for such relationships, instantly recognisable but with myths which are general enough to be adapted to the needs of the new groupings, and as discussed above, mediating their passage through the liminalities with which they must deal in daily life as well as in the rituals they perform. The requirement for these has contributed greatly to *masi* sales, the angst of other Fijians underwriting Vatulele's economic strength.

The 1997 Coup d'État

The species of nationalism that developed after Independence, therefore, was an ethnic Fijian one, that would broach no input from the more numerous Indians.⁴³ Though some politicians from both groups extolled multi-racialism, many Fijians wanted none of it — for them 'self determination [was] viewed as an opportunity to reclaim the past' (Hassall 1991: 285), and their opportunity to do so came with the military Coup d'État on 14 May 1987, one month after Fiji elected its first multi-ethnic government.⁴⁴

⁴² There is a considerable literature today about cultural reassertion as a form of resistance in non-Western countries marginalised by overwhelmingly Western, predominantly American, globalising pressure. Rushdie's famous phrase 'the Empire writes back to the Centre' has been cited in Crick's (1997) succinct summation of the discussion in relation to the Pacific. The suggestion here is that in Fiji cultural reassertion has at least as much to do with ethnic competition as with resistance to globalising pressure.

⁴³ By 1986, in the lead-up to the Coup, Fijians comprised 46.2% of the population, Indians 48.6% (Hassall 1991: 289).

⁴⁴ The amount of literature which has emerged since the Coup is prodigious. It was reviewed and analysed by Rory Ewins (1992), while the political situation following the coup is covered well

Right up to the year of the Coup, commentary about the stresses in Fiji focused predominantly on economic difficulties (e.g. Taylor 1987), and though the 'racial divide' was widely recognised as problematic, few acknowledged that it may be a fault-line for mounting social stress.⁴⁵ Belshaw, working among villagers, had seen the signs that 'stress is in danger of passing beyond that which stimulates to become that which destroys ... [and may lead to] organized political agitation with probably racial and violent overtones' (1964: 275).

Without questioning that this hostility had become very real, what too few observers recognised was that ethnic competition was always a tailor-made 'issue' in which to smuggle more subtle agendas relating to intra-Fijian politics. It is clear that there were many factors in play in the Coup, many related less to ethnic issues than to 'status panic' (Turner 1988: 3) on the part of the most powerful blocs of the traditional élite over the instability of their privileged position. This arguably related less to Indian/Fijian rivalry than to chief/commoner hierarchy, and even to retaining control in the hands of the Kubuna/Tōvata blocs. As one Fijian academic put it:

In a sense the coup was a counter-revolution against what they defined as a breakdown of culture and custom, meaning the chiefs' power. They needed a strengthening of culture, a strengthening of *i-tovo vakavanua* — epitomized by the chief, of course, because the apex of Fijian structure and culture is supposed to be the chief (Durutalo, cited in Rory Ewins 1997: 432-3).

Whether, in a Fiji without Indians, a class challenge to customary élites might have provoked a coup, remains extremely doubtful. The legacy of paternalism and dependency had locked Fijians into this paradoxical system of entrenched hierarchy and communalism, without any blueprint of how this might be able to operate in the Western system they had been first excluded from, and then thrust into. On the contrary, the Western-based education system and its values, and the pronouncements of successive foreign experts, all suggested that there was only one road really open to them — the abandonment of this same communal system which they had come to believe embodies their identity, and the embracing of monetarist values and individualistic modes of social behaviour which are in many ways inimical to those traditional value systems.

by Stephanie Lawson (1996) and Rory Ewins (1998).

⁴⁵ Norton (1977) even pondered the possibility of developing a political balance equivalent to a 'joking relationship,' but finally had to acknowledge that 'Race relations once again appear to be reaching a crisis' (1977: 160-61).

These contradictions have left village Fijians understandably bewildered, and in that bewilderment they are, for the most part, not eager to create yet more uncertainty by serious challenges to their traditional leaders. Rather, they have tended to cling to the 'immutable and immemorial tradition' which Clammer saw as actually the most persistent 'mental creation' of the colonial system, upon which the Fijian élite had always relied, and now 'the commoner has little option but to do likewise' (1973: 219). Revitalising traditions has its perils, however. Some of the traditions their colonial masters had sought to suppress remained dearest to Fijians' hearts. In particular, the old *matanit ū* confederation rivalries have again broken through the surface they always remained just beneath (Rory Ewins 1998: 87-90). Channelled into things like football matches, these have helped to reinforce a sense of local identity, and at the village level this parochialism provides a distraction from growing disaffection with the performance of élites. But this occurs at the expense of the myth of homogeneity, and the dilemma is that at the national political level, élites are better served by a united Fijian bloc — the 'internal bickering within the Fijian set-up, increasingly ... acrimonious' (Rory Ewins 1998: 90) was forecast by one academic to greatly weaken their power-base over the next few years.

That myth, therefore, has had to be bolstered, through ritual but now also artforms, to access the group-affirmative qualities discussed in Chapters Two and Three. While at the village level art and ritual have emphasised local structures and values, at the national level they have been used to emphasise Fijianness. The tension between villagers' Vatuléan and Fijian identities has not eased, therefore. *Masi* has had to play a role for both purposes, important as local identity marker and carrier of meaning, but increasingly sought by mainlanders for its myth of Fijianness. These are issues that will be further explored in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Every Vatuléan with whom I have discussed the Coup has accepted the 'party line' that it was a matter of Fijian hegemony. While to the 'great' chiefs this may well mean power, as Durutalo suggested, for commoners and/or minor chiefs such as those of Vatuléle it involves a somewhat hazy myth of 'Fijianness' which snaps into sharp focus in relation to *vanua*, with all that entails.

The immediate impact of the Coup on Vatuléans was that they quickly ran out of food and supplies in their village shops, all of which deal with Indian wholesalers in Sigatoka who had been forced to put up their shutters against the looting and rioting which were part of the doubled crime rate in the months following the Coup (Robertson & Tamanisau 1988: 122-3). As in most Fijian villages today (Ravuvu 1988: 143-7), Vatuléans rely heavily on staples such as flour, rice, potatoes,

onions, dry biscuits, cooking oil and tinned goods, but shops carry only small stocks because of proximity to the mainland and multiple ferry trips each week. In any case petrol supplies also dried up, so ferries lay at anchor. On my first post-Coup visit to Vatulele in June 1989 things had only recently returned to a level of normalcy, with fresh memories of genuine food shortages an unwelcome reminder of earlier years.

The other change which was obvious during that visit was the fundamentalist revival in the Methodist Church. Vatulele had no target for the violent aggression shown by Methodist youth groups elsewhere following the Coup, but the new regime had promulgated laws which imposed fundamentalist principles on the entire community. Vatuleleans had always had a relaxed, though sincerely devout, attitude to their religion, but now none of the shops opened on Sundays, most cooking was done in advance on Saturdays, and there was an increased observance of week-night prayer-meetings. Slogans such as 'Jesus is the head of this household' featured prominently on house walls above pictures of the Royal Family, and family photographs. The presumption of privilege and license on the part of the clergy had increased to levels where it attracted considerable comment. Most disturbing was the obvious fear of non-compliance.

It may seem that the Coup would have still been pre-eminent in the minds of all of the villagers a mere two years on, but it was not. The reason was that more forceful local winds of change were blowing from the northwest of the island — as someone joked, 'the direction our hurricanes usually come from' — with the building of a new resort hotel.

Social effects of the Vatulele Island Resort

Vatulele had no lease agreements prior to that with the VIResort in the late 1980s. It is said that there had been pressure from different would-be-developers to permit the establishment of a hotel on the island for thirty years, but that the late *Vunihālevu*, Rātū Jioji Toge, always vetoed such developments. Within a year of his death, however, deals were done and the development proceeded. From being voluntary suppliers of a commodity to the tourism industry from the safe haven of their offshore island, Vatuleleans (of Ekubu/Taunovo in particular) were now caught up in the familiar scenario of having a resort occupying clan land and accessing their meagre resources, and its human dimension affecting many aspects of their social lives.

In 1989, while the Resort was being built, the population of Ekubu/Taunovo was

very divided on this issue. The land-leasing clans were much criticised for inadequate consultation with other islanders. This was felt to be against tradition, and reprehensible in view of the anticipated impact on the whole populace.⁴⁶ Strains were not eased by what was seen as the ostentation of two elders who had already used lease-purchase money they had received to build themselves houses of a quality other villagers could not dream of.

There are at least two sides to all such issues, and this is a record of the social tensions stated by villagers, not a value judgement. The establishment of the Resort was the first intrusion into the island by any outside entity since the last 19th Century migrations, and it was certainly the first time that very large amounts of money had come into play. None of the islanders had ever dreamed of amounts like the \$300,000 paid to landowning clans to purchase the lease (Livingstone 1993). Suspicion and envy about who might benefit more or less was, and remains, inevitable.⁴⁷

On 6 May 1990 the VIResort opened its doors. By 1993 (my next period of fieldwork) most of the quarrels so evident in 1989 had submerged — it would be fair to say that in Fijian communities such issues never disappear, and are apt to re-erupt unexpectedly. The most usual complaint about the Resort's policies at that time was that local workers were paid below what they knew fellow Vatulleans received for identical work in mainland hotels. The Resort's co-owner acknowledged this, but employed the well-rehearsed colonial rationalisation of the fact that workers 'need less money' because of local residence and access to communal resources (Livingstone 1993).⁴⁸ Conversely, the right of 'first option'

⁴⁶ Some argued that matters as important as leases should involve all elders of Ekubu/Taunovo, some said all four villages, but certainly not just the landowning *mataqali* and the paramount.

⁴⁷ Such disputes tend to occur wherever money is involved, with or without leases. The land surrounding the cliff paintings and the 'Red Prawn Pool' (Ewins 1995) is typical. Title to sections of the land surrounding these vests in three *mataqali*, Narewa, Niu, and Nahalia (Appendix 3), who regularly squabble over the \$4,000 p.a. fee the VIResort pays to secure viewing-access for guests. On a more general issue, under NLTO regulations, chiefs receive different percentages of lease rent money. The *Vunih ālevu*, the chief of the *yavuha* and the *mataqali* each receive fixed percentages on a sliding scale. The balance is then divided equally among the remainder of the families of the landowning clan. A common complaint is that chiefs who are members of landowning families, *mataqali* and *yavuha* receive several 'bites of the cherry.'

⁴⁸ I determined independently that the VIResort was in fact at all levels paying above the minimum rates laid down in the First Schedule of the *Hotel and Catering Trades Wages Councils Act*. The shifts and other conditions of employment were likewise all completely within both regulations and guidelines. However, the workers may have had legitimate concern that they were not being



Plate 4. The Vatulele Island Resort 1993

(a) Main entrance

(b) The new rituals

Islander employees farewelling guests leaving on the flying boat.

of landowners to available jobs, negotiated as part of the lease, is clearly an ongoing advantage but can also cause resentment from other clans.

Though the islanders undoubtedly have a sense of injustice at the differential between their own situation and that of the Resort's wealthy clientele, the focus of that is so diffuse that it seldom warrants comment. The amounts these pay the Resort for the services which are largely provided by Vatuleans is another matter. Workers can easily calculate for themselves that the \$7,000 the Resort charges each couple per *week* is half as much again as the highest-paid Vatulean receives in wages per *year*, and that does generate comment. Both issues are endemic in the tourism industry throughout the non-Western world, and the VIREsort is certainly not unique, but being at the top end of the market the polarisation is extreme.

The Resort has experienced some difficulty recruiting and maintaining local staff (Livingstone 1993), but it is doubtful whether this is mainly because of the above issues. One worker suggested that islanders are generally not confident of their spoken English, and also that should they apply and be rejected they will feel shame in a community that 'knows everything about everyone' (Informant O, 1993). The principal reason, however, is more probably that *masi*-making continues to be a viable source of income with all of the advantages outlined in Chapter One for cottage industries.

From its side, the Resort has to contend, as do most hotels in Fiji, with constant pilfering of property. This sometimes reaches serious levels and is difficult to control on an island where there is no police presence. Even some villagers complain about the theft of hotel linen and other items which are blatantly evident in village homes, offending their quite sincere morality. Such behaviour is part of what Crick has referred to as "everyday" forms of resistance — pilfering, foot dragging, absenteeism, sly civility ... which during colonial times were often regarded as signs of native criminality or laziness ... [but] are important areas of agency' (1997: 92). Even if village elders are unsympathetic to the perpetrators (an untestable assumption), it is as difficult for them to deal with as it is for the Resort management, since kinship links and village politics can neutralise their control, reluctant as they are to test the limits of their rapidly weakening authority.

Despite such problems the villagers, as usual, remain one of the Resort's greatest drawcards. According to the co-owner of the Resort, people come on their first

treated according to industry norms, since my independent information from other hotel sources indicated a differential of about 25%. I have no information on what the situation is following the reported recent downturn in wages Fiji-wide.

visit in pursuit of sun, sand and sea, but return year after year because of the natural beauty of the island and because they 'like the staff and think Fijians are great' (Livingstone 1993).

The liking is often mutual, and job-satisfaction seems highest among villagers who have positions involving most contact with the multi-national guests, intrigued by the diversity of their backgrounds and countries. Two 'front-region' staff members (Informants O and X), who would be typical of the most committed hotel staff, said how they liked the cosmopolitan and lively atmosphere of the Resort. One of them said the work helped combat her feeling trapped in the village mould. The other had been invited by some Australian guests to visit them, saved up to do so, and in 1999 has recently returned from an extended stay in Sydney.⁴⁹ Most of the women at that level would choose to work in the hotel even if they could earn more making *masi*, while the men have nothing which could occupy them even remotely as profitably on the island, so their choice is easy.

Dissatisfaction is predictably highest among the 'back-region' staff, those performing the menial chores associated with maintenance, laundry, and cleaning — tasks which are often performed in mainland hotels by Indian staff, but almost all of which are done by villagers here. Their wages are lowest also. One ex-employee actually received less pay working long hours in the laundry than she now earns once again as a part-time *masi*-maker of average ability and energy.

The reactions of non-employee villagers to the presence of the Resort are varied. The days when Fijians felt tourists looked down on them seem to be past — most accept the interest shown in them by the tourists to be genuine and well-intentioned, and generally find contacts congenial, though the behaviour and dress of some of the guests is viewed as unacceptable and a bad influence on local staff in particular. Female guests' immodest dress, particularly if coupled with over-familiarity with Vatullean male staff, worried one group of elders discussing the Resort. 'These are village boys,' they said, 'they are not used to that, and if a woman behaves like that they might think they can 'try' [to have sex], even if the woman doesn't want it. If they rape her, who will get the blame? We in the village!'

Attitudes of some to the Western staff at the Resort are even less positive. Contact with them is prolonged, personality defects easy to impute and magnify, and perceived unacceptable behaviour regarded as an affront to be brooded over. Their main concern, as with the immodest tourists, appears to be with challenges to their

⁴⁹ VIResort online newsletter <<http://www.vatulele.com/newsletter.htm>>, July 1999.

traditions and strong Wesleyan morality, that they feel are seeping through various channels from the Resort. Most of the incidents cited cannot be substantiated. Indisputable, however, are two still-very-young single mothers with mixed-race children, fathered by Resort employees who left without acknowledging or providing for them, perpetuating one of the less-pleasant patterns of colonialism.

By no means all of the attitudes to the *otela* on the part of other villagers are negative, however. The wages that flow into the local community are generally considered positive, but since the women at least could earn comparable amounts of money from their *masi*, the money is said to be secondary to the Resort's importance as a learning institution. Workers learn not only about the ways of Westerners, but also about engines, cars, scuba gear, Western cooking, even things like modern plumbing which remain a mystery to most villagers. Hotel workers are minutely quizzed about all of these things. Also, the VIREsort has training policies which include overseas experience, and has in recent times promoted individual villagers to positions of genuine authority/responsibility within the local staff structure. The workers clearly see in all of this models for their own identity-construction, recalling Friedman's comment that 'the practice of identity [may become] truly the accumulation of otherness' (1994: 113).

Given their reservations, it may seem paradoxical that many elders, like the workers, see the main advantage of the Resort's presence as culture contact with people and customs from outside. Their reason for valuing this knowledge, however, is different. Since they feel themselves to be very isolated and ill-informed about the wider world, they seek information on cultural values and attitudes they might otherwise not understand, and about changes they may not realise are occurring in the outside world, which may either leave them behind or overwhelm them. In both cases, their motive is that fore-warned is fore-armed.

Villagers express widespread appreciation for the 'in kind' support the hotel gives the community. It has supported the school in various ways, paid for mercy flights for the sick, and it pays well for *ad hoc* goods and services (such as purchase of foods, fees for tourist access to non-leasehold sites, and commissioned *masi* for re-sale in the hotel shop). There is undoubtedly a carry-over of colonial paternalism in such arrangements, with an arrogation of the right to determine what is in the people's best interests, whereas Vatulleans have shown themselves quite capable of joining together to achieve things *they* feel are important to their community. But debating paternalism is not within the province of this thesis, and it is worth observing that while some level of exploitation is arguably the norm in the tourist industry, few hotels and resorts in Fiji assume any responsibility to support the

communities from which they draw their workers, other than paying wages. By comparison, it is hard to see the VIREsort's commitment as anything but positive.

In sum, the views of the people of Vatulele are equivocal. Their assessment that knowledge of the outside world is preferable to the vulnerability of ignorance, is a sophisticated one. It would be ridiculous to suggest that the Resort is the only source of changes of perception and values, or the insecurity they bring — as their history shows, these issues are of long standing. But it would be obtuse to deny that the Resort contributes to that insecurity, and poses challenges to their identity.

Conclusion: Vatulelean identity today — a model of syncretism

High levels of 'acculturation' were already being identified by Thomson ((1908)1968: 1), and in the manner of his time he saw this as terminally destructive of Fijian culture (and possibly of Fijians as a 'race'), an attitude still detectable, as discussed in Chapter One, in much of the literature of tourism. But though such an extreme position is rare in other anthropological accounts today, it is still common to read statements about Fijians and other non-Westerners being located 'between tradition and modernity,' as though both (or either) of these had some fixity. This perpetuates the *gemeinschaft/ gessellschaft* formulation,⁵⁰ polarising 'pre-modern' societies from their imagined opposites associated with modernisation and industrialisation, while often seeing no alternative to the evolution of the former into the latter, teleologically describing societies like Vatulele's as 'transitional.' It has been justly criticised by Luke (1996: 110) as ignoring the many 'stories' of identities in which the two mingle, without the destruction of either.

As the foregoing account shows, many Fijian traditions were rapidly changed from their pre-colonial spatio-temporal particularity by deliberate administrative intervention. The reason this was not disastrous was that Fijian societies understood change very well, including the mutability of tradition, and were able to accommodate the alien authorship, intentionality and breadth of colonial change. What resulted was still uniquely Fijian, and has continued to change by both absorbing external influences and evolving in its own right. But it shows no evidence of being 'between' anything, or en route to some imagined 'modern Western' model. The following account demonstrates this clearly for Vatulele.

⁵⁰ *Gemeinschaft/ gessellschaft* ('community/society') was first proposed as a process of linear social evolution by Tönnies ((1887)1957), whereby the process of modernisation inexorably changes group relationships from 'close, emotional, face-to-face ties, attachment to place, ascribed social status, and a homogeneous and regulated community' to 'urbanism, industrial life, mobility, heterogeneity, and impersonality' (Marshall 1996: 196).

On the first evening of a short field-trip I made to Vatulele in July 1995, my family⁵¹ invited me to accompany them to a choir-practice for the Methodist church choir eisteddfod which is held in Suva each year.⁵² They were congregating in Taunovo, in the house of an elder who was a senior employee of the VIREsort. It is a large timber and concrete structure with a Colorbond steel roof, built using lease-purchase money and wages he and his wife (who also worked at the Resort for two or three years) had earned. It is a composite Fijian/Western design, with the usual large main room of Fijian dwellings, and traditional arrangement of side-doors, but the sleeping-end in western and un-Fijian fashion having several other rooms attached. The choir-practice was held in the large main room.⁵³

People continued join the practice throughout the evening. All wore good clothes, most of the mature women print dresses over plain longer skirts, giving the characteristic two-tiered effect (see Chapter Seven). Some of the younger women wore the now-fashionable modified-Asian waisted jacket and form-fitting skirt.⁵⁴ Most men wore cotton shirts and long trousers, but a couple of senior men wore dress-kilts (*i-sulu*). Everyone had rubbed themselves with scented coconut-oil so their skin shone, and the room had a pleasant perfume. No-one wore shoes — those of us that wore sandals or ‘flip-flops’ left these outside on the verandah.

Seating arrangements spatially rehearsed social hierarchy, only secondarily acknowledging the parts individuals were singing, so that within each status grouping people separated into bass and tenor, soprano and alto. There were no

⁵¹ I refer to Rātū Mitieli Narukutabua and his wife Lavenia Lave, who as noted in the Preface have adopted me into their household and with whom I invariably live on fieldwork trips.

⁵² The concept of the church choral competition had its origins in the West, but has been localised so thoroughly that every Fijian would assert ownership of it. It provides both an outlet for expressing their faith and a vehicle for the ubiquitous spirit of *veiqati* competitiveness referred to throughout this thesis. When the people set off on their ferries to take part in these eisteddfods, the spirit is festive and raucous, comparable to that of a group of football supporters heading for a grand final. There is much talk of winning.

⁵³ For a clear description of signficatory spatiality in traditional Fijian house design, and the deployment of people during a *yaqona* ceremony, see Toren (1990: especially 90-118).

⁵⁴ One young woman was dressed in this manner, in clothes noticeably better in quality than those of the other women. I knew her to be a waitress at the Resort. She arrived rather late and looked very tired throughout the session. I confirmed with her later that she had come from working a shift which had only ended in the evening, and she told me she was working the morning shift next day and would have to get up before 5.00 am.

chairs and all sat cross-legged on the single layer of pandanus mats spread on the hard concrete floor, which caused frequent shifting of position.⁵⁵

Ritualising the occasion, in the middle of the room they had set up a ceramic *yaqona* bowl, which, lacking feet, was cradled in a wheelbarrow tyre in place of the woven pandanus ‘doughnut’ traditionally used.⁵⁶ It was attended by three of ‘our’ young men (unmarried Nalimolevu clansmen). They were quietly preparing the *yaqona* drink from roots which they had pounded earlier in the day in a *tabili* (mortar), once wooden but now made of a short length of 15cm diameter steel pipe welded to a plate, using a long steel bar as pounder.

Some water was ladled into the bowl from a plastic bucket, using a small Indian enamel *piala* (drinking bowl) — in a more formal ritual setting it would be poured from a bamboo water container with some grassy reed-tops in the mouth to act as strainer. The *yaqona* pulp was rolled in a piece of cotton muslin, soaked in the water in the bowl and wrung out — formally a sieve (*bo*) of multiple strands of hibiscus fibre would be used. The *Vunih ālevu*, beside whom I had been directed to sit, lamented the cost of *yaqona* today. That for this evening, he said, cost \$20, ‘but we must pay it, because we cannot continue our traditional practices without *yaqona*.’⁵⁷

The first bowl was presented with normal form and intonations to the *Vunih ālevu*, then (since this was a church-related affair) to the Wesleyan minister, then to two or three other chiefs and finally me. That concluded the formal section of the *yaqona* session, and the cupbearer throughout the remainder of the evening quietly passed the coconut-shell cup around the men (not the women) during each intermission, when many also smoked their Fiji-packaged Philip Morris cigarettes. After each round of *yaqona*, many of the men sucked on large multi-coloured lollipops on plastic sticks ‘to clear the taste of the *yaqona*.’ The combined effect of tobacco and *yaqona* provoked much coughing and hawking in each interval.

⁵⁵ A traditional floor would be compacted earth, covered with springy plaited coconut-leaf mats called *tabakau*, then a thick layer of dry grass, and finally several layers of *cōcō* floormats. The result is a very comfortable mattress-like floor. It is seldom found in Fiji today except in chiefs’ meeting houses, as is the case in Vatulale.

⁵⁶ Called *dare*, these are made in the kinship-connected village of Nayawa near Sigatoka on the Vitilevu coast, and either given in ritual or traded for *masi*, never bought for money.

⁵⁷ No *yaqona* is grown on the island, and it is all bought from the Sigatoka or Suva markets (frequently routed through the local Co-Op stores, which add a 60% markup) or through relatives in the Navosā highlands or Kadavu where a great deal is grown.

Shortly after the *yaqona* session had been launched, the minister called the people to order and said a prayer to bless the business of the evening. Leave was sought of the spirits by the server touching the rim of the bowl, then practice began. Near the *yaqona* -bowl sat the choirmaster, a young local man armed with a tuning-pipe. With impressive versatility, he confidently sang two or three bars of each of the four parts before each section was practised. Every choir member had sheets which had been roneoed on pulpy paper in the central church in Suva, but since they do not read music the annotation was merely divided into the different phrasing for each part. The piece being practised was from *The Hymnal of the Fiji Wesleyan Church*, and was written by an English Wesleyan in the 19th Century, translated into Fijian by early missionaries and printed at the Methodist Mission Press in Suva.

Near the end of the evening, there was a general relaxation, and the women of the family of the house in which we were visitors came in with glasses of sweet cordial, and small parcels of *roti* and curry that they had made earlier in the day.⁵⁸ They glided around the room passing these out, adopting the polite stooping position and murmuring '*tilou, tilou*' ('pardon me') as they unavoidably moved behind and higher than the heads of those seated. Each of the chiefly males (and I) received two parcels, then other men received one each, and whatever were left were passed out to be shared among the women. Some ate immediately, others put the parcels aside to take home.

There followed a period during which announcements were made, some concerning the forthcoming trip to Suva to compete in the eisteddfod in about one month's time, others concerning the forthcoming Vatulele Day fundraising celebrations in less than two weeks' time. The people were exhorted to dig deep for the money required for each event. More prayers followed, and people began to quietly disperse. The hard-drinkers among the men stayed at the *yaqona* bowl and would do so until the small hours of the morning.

Though it seemingly has little to do with indigenous art or bark-cloth, the above account has everything to do with contemporary Vatulelean identity. Every aspect of the situation and the events of the evening described here was a composite, a testimony to the permeability of cultures. To attempt to pontificate on 'authenticity' in such a situation would seem nonsensical. Clifford stated that 'in a world ... in which syncretism and parodic invention are becoming the rule ... it becomes

⁵⁸ This too has been so localised that there are few if any households that will not eat curry at least once a week, and every woman knows how to make *roti* and serves it frequently in place of, or with, starch vegetables at any of the three daily meals.

increasingly difficult to attach human identity and meaning to a coherent “culture” or “language” (1988: 95). Yet that evening did present a coherent culture, remaining not only Fijian but Vatulelean in its identity.

While not a single aspect of the situation or proceedings was devoid of Western intrusions, nothing was unmodified — all had been reconfigured by local perceptions and signification. The central importance money has come to have was implicit in the imported *yaqona*, the food made from bought flour, tinned fish, curry powder and Tasmanian onions and potatoes, and explicit in the major costs they were being told they must meet for Vatulele Day and their trip to Suva for the eisteddfod. And in Vatulele to mention money is to invoke *masi*, and all of the other associations of that. So after all, the evening had a great deal to do with bark-cloth, as do most aspects of life in Vatulele.

Similar evenings might have been experienced in many other villages and many urban Fijian settlements today, and Vatulele is in many ways typical of rural Fiji, particularly island Fiji. Yet as this chapter has shown, although knowledge of the wider Fijian context is essential for an understanding of things Vatulelean, it does not of itself provide that understanding. As in virtually every *vanua* throughout Fiji, people are proudly Fijian, yet hold fast to a clear sense of their own particular group identity.

As the above description shows, the customs they regard as ‘proper’ for Vatulele are an amalgam of elements from many sources: ancient western-Fijian ‘Melanesian’ elements relating to the oldest groups on the island; Austronesian elements derived from numerous subsequent central-Fijian immigrant groups (perhaps most importantly their chiefly clan from Rewa); colonial neo-traditional relationships and status organisation; beliefs in founding entities, ancestor spirits and the latent divinity of chiefs, slotted into a hierarchy placing the Wesleyan Christian God at the apex; and a host of more recent, and ongoing, borrowings from various parts of Fiji with which they have had contact, and from Western society and customs as they perceive them.

In short, their customs and traditions reflect the total history and experiences of Vatuleleans, and they carry these into their daily lives and into their art, myths and rituals. In the chapters that follow, it will be clear that it is the permeability of the boundary between the ritual and non-ritual domains, and between the different roles of goods, which permitted Vatuleleans to accommodate the commercialisation of their *masi*, and then apply that to the importance of its social role in current projects of ethnic revitalisation.

Chapter Five will open that discussion by examining Vatuleleans' perception and practice of ritual, and the underlying concepts of social organisation it reflects and configures, and Chapter Six will describe the elaborate inter-group social structures on which rests their recognised 'licence' to manufacture their *masi*.

Chapter Five

THE 'RITUAL TEMPLATE' IN VATULELE

Rites can be seen to be the regulated symbolic expressions of certain sentiments ... [and] have a specific social function to regulate, maintain and transmit ... [those] sentiments (Radcliffe-Brown (1952)1979: 157)

In ritual, semiotic types of social action are made manifest as tokens and dwell among us ... [they] reveal the cosmological model (Parmentier 1993: 367).

It was asserted in Chapter Three that ritual occurs according to a template. This chapter discusses the nature of that template in Vatulele, and also the particular social structures and norms (such as the resonance between the male and female sides of society) that are revealed in the details of the actors, ritual procedures, and objects employed. Vatuleleans integrate art, myth and ritual to cope with transitions such as birth and death, socio-cultural events such marriage and other social or political unions. All relate to managing group and individual identity, and are thus used to mitigate perceived threats to identity which generate social stress.

The mutual prestations of objects that characterise Fijian ritual are represented as simultaneously defining the separate identities of the participants and forging links across the boundaries, as well as concurrently rehearsing and influencing power relationships between and within the groups. It is in this domain particularly that *masi* has traditionally functioned through its generalised and specific meanings, as will be further elaborated in Chapter Seven.

The Vatulelean case is considered against the assumptions of exchange theory, and the conventional representation of gift exchange and trade as radically different. Examples are provided of two simple forms of ritual interaction, betrothal, and the lifting of mourning, to exemplify the manner in which groups ratify and rehearse relationships of kinship and gender through ritual. Finally, it is argued that it is the social role of ritual in relation to identity-affirmation and group solidarity that explains its efflorescence on the island today, rather than the current wealth of Vatuleleans, which is seen as facilitative rather than causative.

Ritual prestation: the 'game' of presenting and receiving goods

Ceremonial events are referred to generically as *soqo*, and where significant

exchanges of goods take place, whether it is a relatively small intra-clan event or a major inter-federation ritual, it is a *hōlevu*. An essential component is a ritual prestation sequence called *vīqwaravi* or *vīqwaraqwaravi*. The template is that Side #1 (classified as visitors) makes a presentation (*i-cabo*) of one or more categories of gender-related goods called *i-yau* which normatively are culturally sanctioned as ‘their’ products (a matter that will be developed in Chapter Six). Side #2 may or may not make small responses of *i-yau* during the progress of this presentation. The ritual then proceeds to a major reciprocation (*butaniyau*) from Side #2 to Side #1 with a presentation of their sanctioned (and again gender-related) food. This is normatively of two sorts, *magiji buta* or cooked food, presented in woven coconut-leaves, in the case of animals normally slung on a pole, and the *buru* of uncooked starch foods (yams, plantains and cassava, but not flour or rice), presented in collecting-baskets. All are removed from the ritual place and divided among the groups on either side at a later time. The event closes with a feast (*magiji*) of different food which the two sides share (the recipients of the ritually-presented food keep it for later consumption).

The ‘sides’ in a ritual invariably rehearse *male and female relationships* — in the case of an individual, relating to their paternal/maternal groups, further ‘contained’ in the case of marriage (or the deaths of married people) in the husband’s side and wife’s side. This is one of the imbalances Lévi-Strauss stated is a precursor to all ritual, and which ritual balances ((1962)1976: 32). In *hōlevu* between people from different *vanua*, if the link being rehearsed is not sanguinal or affinal (when male and female sides will exist), classificatory kinship will be assigned. If visitors to the island are involved, there are minor preliminary rituals, variable in number depending on the importance of the visit and the relationship of the people to the visitors. These preliminaries generally involve the presentation of *yaqona* roots and whale-teeth back and forth, and/or sharing a bowl of *yaqona* with them.¹

In intra-island rites of passage for individuals, their ‘female side’ (maternal sub-clan and/or clan) normally acts first, presenting the *i-yau*, and their ‘male side’ presents the *butaniyau*. In inter-island events, two or more host groups will share responsibility for presenting both goods and food, and providing the feast, while their guests may merely reciprocate with *tabua*, or they may give goods and/or food as well, depending on both logistics and the specific ritual involved.

¹ Epitomising the importance of an individual’s group-identity, some of the most elaborate preliminary rituals are reserved for an event known as a *vācadra*, when exogamously married local clanswomen return to the island to show their children to their clan for the first time.

This formal interaction of the two sides is fundamental to ritual's role as identity performance, and engagement with Others in establishing boundaries and commonalities, 'functioning as a framework within which Fijians evaluate [and adjust] their behaviour continually in relation to others ... as a means of achieving and maintaining unity' (Ravuvu 1987: vii). In other words, what is actually being transmitted in such exchanges is meaning, related to identity: 'The meanings conveyed along the goods channel are part and parcel of the meanings in the kinship and mythology channels' (Douglas & Isherwood (1979)1996: 88).

In collective exchange theory such as articulated by Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, 'exchange involves shared values and trust, the expectation that others will fulfil their obligations to the group or society rather than pursue self-interests' (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1994: 157).² In the language of exchange theory, Fijian ritual exchange is 'asymmetrical reciprocity,' which is to say that it is either unequal in value, or payment is delayed on one side. It is certainly the case that there will frequently be an apparent imbalance, in that a group of visitors is not expected to carry with them the volume or value of goods or food that their hosts will lavish on them. But a return visit normally follows, where the weight reverses, and judgements are finely tuned to sustain a balance through time. In the language of the mathematics of symmetry, what happens is a form of 'glide reflection' — an action, a translation in time, followed by a reflective action which results in approximate symmetry (Washburn & Crowe 1988: 50-51). Rather than thinking of reciprocity in such systems in terms of obligation and debt, the language of traditional exchange theory, it may be better to think of it as 'mutualising' identity.

Appadurai's (1986a: 21-2) conception of 'tournaments of value' provides a useful theoretical model against which to consider Fijian ritual prestations, conflating as they do 'status, rank, fame, ... [and] reputation' with 'the disposition of the central tokens of value in the society,' and consequently power, as discussed in Chapter Three. The 'reciprocity' of Fijian ritual prestation ceremonies is therefore perhaps best understood in terms of the competitiveness (*veiqati*) which pervades every

² The Parsons school of theorists arguably overstated the polarisation of 'individualistic' and 'collectivistic' sociologies (Ekeh 1974: 5-6). Exponents of the former, such as Homans (1961) and Blau (1964), emphasised self-interest as a prime motivating force (in the mould of, if seldom as extreme as, Hobbes), the latter stressed the group's interests as being to the fore in motivation. But while Homans proposed that social behaviour is predicated on reward measured against loss, he also pointed out that psychic profits (sentiments) count in such reckoning, and among these social approval ranks highly (Buckley 1967:107-12). As discussed in Chapter Two, the norms and sanctions of Vatullean society are such that self-interest is even today generally perceived by individuals as best served by, if not indistinct from, group interests.

level of the negotiation of Fijian social relationships. Ritual gift-exchange has been described to me as *na qito* — ‘the game’ — with the notional striving for value-equivalence of the goods and food passing in either direction actually masking a determination to win (Informant E).³ Hence Quain’s statement that ‘in theory any individual may challenge his affinals to an exchange’ (1948: 430, my emphasis).

The Vatulelean definition recalls Lévi-Strauss’s proposal that ‘ritual ... is also “played,” ... [but is] like a favoured instance of a game, remembered from among the possible ones because it is the only one which results in a particular type of equilibrium between the two sides’ ((1962)1976: 30). In this game, he went on, ‘there is an asymmetry which is postulated in advance between ... dead and living, initiated and uninitiated, etc., and the game consists in making all the participants pass to the winning side by means of [structural] events’ ((1962)1976: 32).

Tambiah (1985: 128) reflected that this bears on the manner in which Trobrianders have transformed cricket ‘into an elaborate ... display where not an outright win but a near equivalence of exchange (with the host team enjoying a slight edge) is the outcome.’ This would be totally comprehensible to Vatuleleans.

Lévi-Strauss’s other suggestion (following Mauss) is that ‘exchanges are peacefully resolved wars’ ((1949)1969: 67), but this can be misleading. Wars are fought to dominate and thus terminate the engagement, whereas in the ‘games’ of ritual exchange winning is always carefully judged so as to not dominate or crush, but to spur the opposition to spirited response, ensuring that engagement is *never* terminated, that there are re-matches in the game-sequence.⁴ Fijian ritual rivalry is perhaps closer to that of Kwakiutl potlatches where leaders sought prestige in alternating displays of largesse (e.g. Hawthorn 1967; Snyder 1975; De Laguna 1988; Joneitis 1992).

Such ritual encounters are identity-processes designed to *define boundaries and to simultaneously transgress them*. In the act of ostentatious giving, the parties honour one another and express cohesion and shared sentiments, drawing themselves

³ Writing of Lau, southeastern Fiji, Thompson described ritual exchange as being ‘based on rivalry for social prestige. Each side, whether an individual, a clan, or a village, strives to outdo the other by presenting gifts which are of greater value in quantity or quality than those of the other’ ((1940)1971: 207).

⁴ Even in historical *tribute* presentations described in contemporary accounts (e.g. Williams & Calvert (1858)1982: 40-41; Cary (1887)1972: 21-2; Thompson (1940)1971: 207), the festiveness of the occasions and the pleasure evinced by those being virtually bankrupted by the tribute offering sits rather oddly with any notion of ‘surrogate warfare.’ The primary importance of kinship in even-status exchange networks is also difficult to reconcile with such explanations.

together inexorably.⁵ The sustained competition, however, as Gluckman (1963: 18) contended, exaggerates difference, even conflict, and affirms that there is unity despite these. It is a process not of social balance but of delicately sustained tension.

‘Winning’ in the competition therefore never coincides with Western capitalist notions of ‘getting the better of’ the exchange economically. The value of goods is assessed (albeit with studied nonchalance) by each side, since if one ‘side’ appears to have ‘won’ a presentation, the other will have to attempt, either in the next ‘Act’ of the performance in hand, or alternately in the next encounter, to even things up. Conversely, if the presentations of both sides are considered equivalent, or if the winning is by a fine margin and in the opposite direction to the last encounter, it will be declared a good *hōlevu*, and both sides will retire well-pleased at having ‘shone.’ In the event that one side in an exchange holds back, the other side will feel cheated, and in the next encounter will contrive to lose (Informant E). The uniformity of their ‘underperformance’ reveals that they have actually won by intentionally losing, and their loss shames their ‘opponents.’ It is reminiscent of the call of *misère* in whist-based card games,⁶ which similarly reverses the normal expectation of the game and renders strength an actual handicap. Provided the offended party succeeds in ‘losing’ this second bout, a draw is felt to have been reached, and the next stage starts with a clean slate.

Bourdieu has made the point that ‘practice never ceases to conform to economic calculation even when it gives every appearance ... [that the] stakes ... [may be] non-material and not easily quantified’ (1977: 177),⁷ but a misunderstanding of the resonance between ritual and non-ritual systems has led to the ‘tendency to romanticize small-scale societies... to marginalize and underplay [their] calculative, impersonal and self-aggrandizing features’ (Appadurai 1986a: 11).

The acknowledged value of goods, in both ritual and non-ritual exchange, has little if any relation to labour input as in the capitalist market, but is better thought of as

⁵ The ritual speeches reported *verbatim* in Ravuvu (1987) show the preoccupation with these two components, the rehearsal of participants’ connections, and how they are ‘honouring’ one another by the munificence of their gifts. At the same time, a palpable competitiveness runs through all of the ceremonies documented.

⁶ A player or partnership ‘going *misère*’ must lose every trick — if they win even one, they will lose the game.

⁷ Humphrey and Hugh-Jones (1992) also contend that the economic calculation of gift value is often far greater than Mauss conceded.

'social value,' which is based primarily on sign function and the capacity of the goods to not only reflect but constitute the value of the presenters. Utility plays a relatively small part in social value, and this accounts for the fact that among utilitarian objects, irrespective of their usefulness, those which are weak signifiers have a significantly lower exchange currency than strong signifiers. The importance of this point will become clear in Chapters Six and Eight particularly.

'The value of goods lies in their use by "members" to make their judgements on each other visible to each other' (Munro 1996: 256), and 'without ... [such goods] men (*sic*) cannot define their own value; in this respect, ... [ritual goods] and men are reciprocally agents of each other's value definition' (Munn 1983: 283). When Western goods or cash are presented in lieu of traditional valuables, their non-indigenous origin makes them far weaker signifiers, with commensurately low social value. Quantity must make up for quality, and quite prodigious quantities of expensive Western goods, and very substantial sums of money, may be presented in lieu of or in exchange for traditional valuables which would have far less cash value in the open market.⁸

Exogamous marriage establishes exchange relationships which the blood-ties make particularly 'heavy' and 'difficult.' One extreme example given allowed one side to provoke a return of much for little. Able to be activated only on the occasion of an important death, the people from the other side could make a small prestation, a 'door-opener' called *boka*, the response to which was called *talaci*, a 'send-off.' In theory, the *talaci* could be merely a bowl of *yaqona*, but in the competitive spirit of the game, that would shame the hosts. In the example given (Informant W), generated by the marriage of a Vatulelean woman of the Nahalia clan to the paramount of Serua, the Nahalia took 1 *kumi* + 1 *tabua* as the *boka*, and in return the Serua people gave them 7 drums of kerosene, 7 *tabua*, 9 sleeping mats and 1 very large floormat, and treated the Vatuleleans to a feast. That event occurred

⁸ The use in this thesis of the term 'social value' draws on Radcliffe-Brown ((1952)1979). Though the inclusion of 'utility' expands its application from Radcliffe-Brown's examples, which relate to sign-function alone (a term he did not use), the usage is quite consistent with his statement that

... social relations... require the existence of common interests and social values. When two or more people have a common interest in the same object and are aware of their community of interest, a social relation is established. They form, whether for a moment or for a long period, an association, and the object may be said to have a social value ((1952)1979: 40)

It is clear that functional utility is capable of generating such an interest, but it is argued that the *amount* of interest it generates is relative to its sign-function. He went on to extend this meaning to people, while here it is restricted to objects.

during the 1930s, and still in 1995 had never been reciprocated, but the Takala stated that when he dies, Taunovo will 'bring a *boka* here [from Serua].'

While this is an unusual and extreme variation on the ritual template, the whole process of ritual interaction is always demanding in material, physical and emotional terms, a stressful situation called *ogaoga*. For this reason, simply as a means of obtaining goods, the non-ritual *vihā* is considered preferable because it is a straight exchange — predictable and not burdensome. If protocol is breached, if there is an uneven exchange in a *vihā*, the offended party can complain, whereas the kinship relationship and the complicated rules of the game would make this impossible in a ritual exchange (Informant W).

Thomas (1991: 67-8) makes the important point that for Fijians indebtedness relates to actions rather than objects, from the very personal level of favours done through to participation in rituals. As can be seen from the discussion above, the symmetry of the relationship in prestation rituals has more in common with symmetrical joking relationships, also a strong feature of Fijian culture, than with 'exchange' in an economic sense. The relationship between joking, kinship and exchange has in fact been considerably debated, explored for Fiji (e.g. Hocart 1913; Arno 1976), and recently reviewed generally (Parkin 1993).

However, the disposition of the gift objects (including food) is not incidental. They are desirable acquisitions for at least three reasons:

- 1 . They are essential to the ritual process, as the designated carriers of meaning;
- 2 . They are desired as wealth, some of which can be 'given-on' in future rituals, the 'central tokens of value' as Appadurai puts it;
- 3 . Alternately, most are utilitarian items that may be taken out of the ritual cycle and put to daily use — a potential category-change which has perhaps been responsible for the confusion of ritual with non-ritual exchange in many accounts of Fijian culture, as will be elaborated shortly.

Malinowski ((1922)1961), whose theorisation of the '*kula* ring' has so long fed much of the Western anthropological debate about collective exchange, described the valuables travelling in either direction in the *kula* as being special-purpose symbolic goods of no practical utility, whereas the non-ritual *gimwali* system dealt with the exchange of utilitarian items. In Fiji, however, most ritual goods possess (or used to possess) utilitarian functions in other contexts (the exception being the *tabua* whale-tooth, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). The variable ranges of meaning of these objects, both assigned and inscribed, are most significant when they operate in ritual, but are variably more or less significant

when their role is utilitarian. Because prestation goods are also utilitarian, both ritual and non-ritual exchange perforce engage with both the economic and social aspects of the goods, with context determining which aspect is to the fore.

Gift-exchange vs trade

Confusion over this matter has taken anthropological accounts of Fijian exchange to extremes on both swings of a theoretical pendulum:

1. Functional explanations have over-emphasised the utilitarian aspect of prestation rituals. Thompson's statement that in Lau ritual exchanges 'provide for local deficiencies in natural resources and supplement local industries,' has been echoed by other observers. But apparently contradicting this, she went on to say that ritual 'provides a means by which the spirit of rivalry may be expressed and prestige may be gained' and that 'Interclan *solevu* [major ritual exchange events] are usually affinal exchanges in which the underlying motive is social rather than economic' ((1940)1971: 208). Nayacakalou emphasised this point, not the first: 'Formalised exchanges [may] take place not because of any need to obtain the products of others ... but because there is social meaning in them' (1978: 112).

Certainly in Vatulele, from the accounts of elders, *hōlevu* were far less common formerly than they are today (Informants A, B, E, I), particularly large inter-*vanua* *hōlevu* which would yield significant quantities of goods. They could not possibly have satisfied what are significant 'local deficiencies,' and intra-island rituals merely circulate the same goods, and cannot redress local shortages.

2. The other difficulty is 'the notion that trade in nonmoneteized (*sic*), preindustrial economies is ... antisocial ... [and that] gift exchange and commodity exchange are fundamentally contrastive and mutually exclusive ... remain ... marked feature[s] of anthropological discourse' (Appadurai 1986a: 11). Vatuleleans assert that there was always regular small-scale barter with respondents on the mainland, with occasional large trade expeditions. Neither was a ritual contact, but the accounts make it clear that the same paths within their production/distribution network members were generally travelled in both *hōlevu* and non-ritual trade.

In short, Western accounts appear to have either conflated non-ritual trade with ritual gift-giving, or polarised them in ways Fijians did not, as will be seen in the discussion of non-ritual trade in Chapter Eight. In colonial views, both misapprehensions jostled for precedence:

With the arrival of the trader ... all need for the *solevu* vanished. ...
Nothing shows the extraordinary conservatism of the Fijians better than

the fact that they did not at once abandon the *solevu* in favour of an informal sale of native products to one another. The two systems continued to flourish side by side, the native carried his produce to the trader and took cash or groceries in exchange on the spot, but he continued to manufacture large quantities of goods intended for ceremonial presentations and to trust to receiving the equivalent at some time in the uncertain future (Thomson (1908)1968: 286, my emphasis).

Ritual prestation and social solidarity

A simple example of the manner in which ritual prestation on every scale invokes the relationships of the groups to which the giver(s) and receiver(s) belong, is seen in the 'grass-roots' matter of seeking of the hand of a woman in marriage.

Betrothal

To western eyes an intensely personal matter, in Vatulele this is normatively conducted as a small ritual between clan representatives. Although today the suitor and woman will probably have already agreed the matter between themselves, properly the hopeful groom may not play any personal role.⁹ The first 'sounding out' (*na i-rogo*) occurs with a whale-tooth *tabua* (called the *vinono*) taken by the applicant's all-important maternal uncle (*gwazi*), perhaps accompanied by his father, to the oldest brother of the woman (even if he is younger than she), who transmits the request to her father for a final ruling (he will be approached direct if the woman has no brothers). If the answer is negative, the *tabua* will be returned by the brother (or father) to the man's *gwazi*. If the answer is positive, the father tells the man's *gwazi*, who performs the formal presentation of the *tabua* at that time.

The conjunction of the *gwazi* and the *tabua* in this context is replete with meaning. The whale-tooth is not in an economic sense a 'bride-purchase,' since its market value today would only be in the order of F\$100-150. However, as elaborated in Chapter Seven, it is a sign for the female principle, while the *gwazi* is representative of the prospective groom's female side. Together, they signify the

⁹ Teckle (1984: 243-52) gave a detailed description of arranging a marriage. The 1995 informant's account given here is a 'bare bones' account, though in light of what will be shown to be occurring in actuality, it is an ideal-type model only. The bride and groom having *any* volition in the matter is a concession to modern practice. The fact that the woman must today be consulted may actually be used by her father to 'buy time' before giving his decision. Formerly, the power of the clans was final: 'Neither the bride nor the groom-to-be are supposed to know what is going on, though they may well guess. They are powerless to do anything in the matter, nor may the subject be discussed by them' (Lester 1939-40: 275-6).

reproductive capacity of the groom's people (both his maternal and paternal clans), being offered in union with that of the woman's clans through her embodied reproductive capacity. What is at stake is thus the ongoing connection, far beyond that man and that woman, of every person in the four clans and their descendants, each of whom will henceforth have a range of rights and obligations in respect of members of the other clans. It is a profound undertaking, and the contract is ritualised with formal prestation of the *tabua*, answered by a small feast of cooked food (*magiji buta*).¹⁰

Rituals associated with death also make the interrelationship of the male and female sides abundantly clear. Perhaps the simplest example to illustrate is the *luvabenu* (lifting of mourning) ritual,¹¹ in which the two clans of the deceased, and most particularly the bereaved's own two clans, come together to help the bereaved effect their transition from a state of mourning back to normal life.

Luvabenu — Lifting of mourning in Vatulele

Though this is a ritual that has been introduced post-WW2 from elsewhere in Fiji, it employs Vatulele's ritual template. This shows the considerable flexibility in tailoring variations to meet requirements, provided gender-symmetry is observed,

¹⁰ Clans are, however, having to come to terms with the fact that the overwhelming majority of marriages occurring on Vatulele are now elopements or *vītubataki* ('marriage outside,' effectively theft). Informants suggest this is increasing Fiji-wide (see also Bakker 1992). Sahlins, writing of Moala in the 1950s, noted that 90% of marriages were 'proper' (Sahlins 1962: 92). Yet Teckle already noted that in the two years she spent on Vatulele (1977-9) there was one 'proper' wedding and six bride-thefts (1984: 258). In the first seven months of 1995 there were 13 weddings in Ekubu-Taunovo, three chiefly 'proper' weddings (though all three were precipitated by pregnancies), and ten *vītubataki* involving commoners.

The chiefs are reluctant to discuss this collapse of norms, but commoners are matter-of-fact about it. The society has moved to develop coping strategies in the form of 'compensatory' rituals, in which the man's womenfolk present domestic necessities and some ritual goods to the young woman (Plate 6), and a church or registry wedding follows. But the ruling élite clearly still find it an affront, and it does have serious implications for the social order. Sanctions relating to virginity have long been relaxed (though actual pregnancy is still stigmatised), but here proper rules of inter-clan negotiation had also been abrogated in the three chiefly weddings cited. Nevertheless, they went through 'proper' rituals and associated inter-group undertakings, since the consequential ongoing obligations remain particularly great for the nobility, requiring public acknowledgement.

¹¹ *Luvabenu* means the 'shedding of mourning rags.' The term *vakataraisulu* or 'presenting of [new] clothing,' used in Lau and some other parts of Fiji, is also occasionally used here. The event follows (sometimes soon after, sometimes months after) the presentations to the maternal family that are made in the *bogidrau* or '100 nights' rituals notionally about 3 months after death.



Plate 5a. Lifting of mourning (*luvabenu*) ritual.

- (a) **Women in full regalia** to perform the lifting of mourning. The deceased was their clanswoman in Nalimolevu. The central woman, Bulou Vaulini, as cross-cousin of the paramount, wears a red-stained (chiefly) overskirt. She and the woman on her right hold *tabua* to present to mourners.
- (b) **Chief mourners** enter, with black garments or sashes, and extra cloth to present.
- (c) **Bolting cloth** is brought in by their supporters and piled next to their drums of kerosene.
- (d) **Sitting opposite each other**, mourners & 'lifters' (nearest). Foreground: Nalimolevu elders.
- (e) ***Tabua* presentation** by mourners' spokesman, reciprocated by the Nalimolevu herald.



Plate 5b. Lifting of mourning (*luvabenu*) ritual.

- (f) **Exchange of clothes.** Mourners having already passed over their outer clothing, here 'lifter' women remove their *masi* to give to mourners. This done, both sides take away their spoils.
- (g) **Laying out the *kumi*.** These Nalimolevu women will process with this and give it to mourners.
- (h) **Women processing with *kumi*** held aloft and other types of *masi* in their free hands. They are beside *Cakaulekaleka*, Nalimolevu's second clan house.
- (i) **Piling up the prestation *masi*.**
- (j) **Mourners dismantling the pile of *masi*** (in a different *luvabenu*).



Plate 6. *Masi* in marriages, traditional and modern

a) Salote Vinakacoko in 1985, aged 22, dressed in ceremonial *masi* such as brides wear.

(b) A 'stolen bride,' Viti Marawa, at her *vamamaca*, 1993. She was stolen from Bouwaqa by a young Taunovo man. The man's female kin on both sides gave the household goods, *taunamu* and mats for the young woman, and the men sent a *tabua* to her family to atone for her 'theft.' There would be considerably more wealth in a 'proper' wedding.

as do the variations between large and small affairs.

Example A (see Plate 5).

I have observed two large *luvabenu*, one intra-island, the other inter-island, with a large party travelling to Vatulele for the occasion. They were virtually identical in their detail, and are therefore generalised here as an ideal-type. The deceased was an important man (A) with 4 mourners (B), his wife and 3 children. During mourning they have not cut their hair, and for the ritual wear a black over-garment. Each mourner (*benu*) has one person to lift their mourning. In both large rituals observed the community spread the burden evenly by involving all clans from both sides, as is shown here, though the procedure for smaller rituals is provided as Notes.

	A's Male clan	A's Female clan	B's Male clan	B's Female clan	B <i>Benu</i> (mourners)
1.	Beat the <i>lali</i> (wooden gong) to commence proceedings.				Present a chiefly <i>yaqona</i> ceremony. The highest-ranked chief of A's side receives the first bowl, his herald the next, then the highest-ranked chief of F's side, finally his herald.
2.					Place <i>i-yau</i> in a heap on the common— kerosene + bolting cloth. Their chief presents one <i>tabua</i> from each mourner. <i>I-yau</i> + <i>tabua</i> are called the <i>boka</i> .
3.			Spread one or more <i>kumi</i> to sit on (<i>i-tadrataadra</i>)		Sit facing <i>kumi</i> on <i>i-tadrataadra</i> of mats. Wearing street clothes with a black garment over them, swathed in <i>masi</i> or bolting cloth.
4.	One woman from each clan, dressed in <i>masi</i> , sits on <i>kumi</i> facing one of <i>benu</i> . She will lift the mourning from one mourner. NOTE: If there are fewer than 4 <i>benu</i> , normatively it will fall to the mourner's own clans (paternal and maternal) to provide the woman to lift the mourning. In practice the 4 clans will decide which of them will do what, provided all feel that an appropriate balance is maintained.				
5a					Each <i>benu</i> presents a <i>tabua</i> to the woman facing him/her
5b	Each <i>masi</i> -clad 'mourning-lifter' presents a (different) <i>tabua</i> to 'her' <i>benu</i> .				
6	Each <i>masi</i> -clad woman cuts the hair of 'her' <i>benu</i> .				
7a	Garments are exchanged (<i>luvaluva</i>)				Each <i>benu</i> removes black clothing, and a length of cloth worn with it, and gives both to <i>masi</i> -clad woman facing
7b	Each <i>masi</i> -clad woman removes her <i>masi</i> and presents it to 'her' <i>benu</i> .				<i>I-tadrataadra</i> (<i>kumi</i> and mats on which they sat) are exchanged

8.	Men of each ‘lifting’ clan remove <i>i-yau</i> to their clan house for later division.	
9.	A number of women of each ‘lifting’ clan (normatively, the mourner’s own clans) now form a long line and process onto the common, carrying aloft a long <i>kumi</i> (or a number of shorter ones in line). Each woman holds the edge of the <i>kumi</i> with one hand, and in the other carries pieces of figured <i>mahi kolikoli</i> . The whole lot are taken and placed in a heap in front of the <i>benu</i> .	
10	One man from each lifting clan gives a <i>tabua</i> , presented by a designated <i>guhunivanua</i> to his opposite number speaking for the <i>benu</i> .	
11	The men of the lifting clans (normatively the deceased’s kin) provide present the food or <i>magiji</i> (see above)—men of the male side providing the oven-baked <i>magiji buta</i> , the female side the uncooked <i>buru</i> .	
12	All disperse to drink <i>yaqona</i> in different places and divide up (<i>vīwase</i>) the spoils.	

Notes:

1. Though he is crucial to wedding and funerary rituals, the *gwazi* has no role in the *luvabenu*, but the maternal clan of the deceased always presents the *buru*, just as in death it is always they who lay out the body, and are the pallbearers and gravediggers (see Chapter Seven for the underlying female cosmology).

2. *Masi* (or bolting cloth as a surrogate) and *tabua* travel back and forth throughout the ritual, as also occurs in slightly different form in weddings and funerals. The implications are discussed in Chapter Seven. In this example each of the *benu* have presented two *tabua* and received two back, but this numerical balance does not apply to all rituals — what is necessary is symbolic, not numerical, symmetry.

3. Note finally the integration of Western cloth in the ritual —*masi* could be used instead for the mourner’s *i-yau*, but though it reportedly was formerly, no black *masi* is made today so woven cloth is universally used for the ‘widow’s weeds.’

Example B (Plate 7)

In the one *luvabenu* I have attended where the widow alone had gone into mourning, the whole ‘lifting’ ritual was correspondingly low-key. It took place not on the common but in the mourner’s own home, with something over a dozen clan representatives present. She had assembled a small pile of *masi* including a *kumi*, and 18 drums of kerosene, and two *tabua*. Due to the kinship and roles adopted, *tabua* circulated within the one extended family on this occasion, 3 *tabua* being given by the lifters in response to the mourner’s two. A woman of her paternal clan lifted her mourning, wearing street clothes, and in exchange for the black widow’s



Plate 7. In-house *luvabenu*

(a) **Haircutting of Susana Yalovi** at the in-house lifting of her mourning for her husband, June 1995. Note her black overgarment, which was removed as soon as the haircutting was over, and given to the woman lifting her mourning. She in return gave Susana a street-dress.

(b) & (c) **Roman Catholic religious icons** are used unselfconsciously to adorn the walls of many Wesleyan Methodist homes in Vatulele. The tapestry of the Last Supper is a particular favourite throughout Fiji, brought back from Lebanon by soldiers on leave from their tour with the United Nations peacekeeping forces. The other picture has been pasted carefully into a piece of purpose-printed *masi*, providing a handsome and personal frame.

weeds gave the mourner a new cotton dress. However, the cutting of her hair in this instance was more thorough than the token snip of a few strands which was normal in larger events, and was followed by singing and dancing. Her husband's clans (mostly his paternal clan, but supported by his maternal clan) presented the *butaniyau*, in this case a small amount of cooked food, some kept in her household and the remainder taken away by her clansmen.

The efflorescence of ritual

Informants repeatedly testified to a great change in both the scale and number of *hōlevu* today compared with formerly, and indeed the number of rituals in a given period dramatically increased over the nearly two decades of my own fieldwork. The standard rationalisation for this is that there is now plenty of money, transport is easy, and so on, as the following accounts make clear. In many long discussions over the years with one of the oldest and most senior women in Ekubu/Taunovo, she elucidated so many important issues with such clarity and perceptiveness, that the following extensive account has been edited together from those conversations:

When I was young [1920s-30s], weddings were much as they are today. The man's family in particular had to get together a lot of *i-yau*. Formerly only the man's family would make *mahi* for the *hōlevu*, but today both sides make it. There was a church wedding as well as a *vāvanua* wedding, the same as today. In the gifts to the couple there were mats and *mahi*. If the groom was a prominent man there might be 3 or 4 witnesses (*loloku*) all of whom would be dressed in *mahi* as he was. The bride might have 2 or 3 witnesses dressed similarly to her. The 'red carpet' (*i-butubutu*) and the witnesses' clothing (*mataihulu*) went to the minister.

The weddings of the chiefs and the commoners were very different because of the *kawa* [kinship] of the chiefs. But it was only a matter of scale, not of form. In weddings, for instance, commoners would have *taunamu* and mats, but fewer, a feast, but smaller.

There is much more stuff given at the *tevutevu* today than there was formerly [the 'spreading out' of wedding gifts — see Chapter Seven]. Before there wasn't a great deal, because there was less *mahi* being made, and it was just made by the mothers and grandmothers of the people being married. Today people think a lot more about it. A lot of others help — often the whole island is involved. Also many of the commoners are now connected to the chiefly clans anyway, and they must give like chiefs, regardless of the status of the people being married. For instance in X's wedding this year [a chief] there were seven or eight *taunamu*, but some may have only two, one from each side.

Before we didn't make such a big fuss about *hōlevu*. We could only have *hōlevu* when there was plenty of food. The gardens were small, and

only in times of plenty was it possible to think about having feasts. When a wedding was planned, the food for it would be planted — bananas, yams and sweet potatoes — and when the food was mature it was possible to go ahead with the ceremony. But today there is always lots of *tavioka*. The feasts are able to be based around that. Today it's all very easy, a lot of *mahi* is being made, there is a lot of money about because of it, and it is possible for people to buy in *dalo*, sweet potatoes and so on from more fertile areas like Nadrog ā, and the animals for the presentations and feasts. Even fishing was not so easy then, as there weren't as many boats and it was very expensive to hire them.

It was after the War [WW2] that all this changed. Up until the War, it was a difficult business. Just getting hold of a pig for the ceremony was difficult. Because there weren't many pigs on the island, if we needed one for a feast, we would have to give *i-yau* to ask for it from whoever owned one — we didn't have much cash. So we would take *tabua* or mats or *mahi* to ask for the use of the pig for the feast, and we would receive it. After the ceremony was finished, there had to be further gifts to the owner of the pig to thank him for the use of his pig, and those gifts were called *na ulunivor ē* [the pig's head]. Often there were none available and they had to be bought from Nadrog ā. Today many people raise their own pigs, so there are many more available for feasts. People also have cattle. The first cattle came here in the late 1960s, and there were only 3 or 4 houses that owned cattle then. Today, a beast is slaughtered for nearly every ceremony, sometimes more than one. There is a lot of money about. (Informant A, b.1917).

There is no doubt that both the great increase in the amount of bark-cloth made (and thus available for presentation), and simultaneous increase in the amount of money available, both initially resulted directly from the tourist sales, since as the same lady pointed out:

Before the War, we only planted a little *mahi*. The young men were told by their parents to plant enough *mahi* for their mothers' use, and when they married, they planted *mahi* for their wives. Then, as people realised they could make money from it, they started planting a lot.¹²

Before that the women did beat *mahi* weekly, but not for money. They just made it to keep against the time they might need it for a ritual, or if they wanted to get mats they could take it to Kadavu, or Beqa, or Rewa,

¹² In the 1995 survey (Appendix 5, Q.12 & 13), it was evident that in the sample group, vegetable gardens which must provide the bulk of the 'proper' starch food for the entire family for the whole year, are generally still larger than *masi* plantations. What is more remarkable is that in 18% of cases, *masi* plantations are now two to three times larger than vegetable gardens.

and bring mats back for it. It wasn't sold (Informant A).

This certainly explains *how* more frequent and more lavish rituals could be mounted, and the increased involvement of the wider group can in part be explained by the increased marriage between commoners and nobles. But it does not explain *why* they would wish to have ever increasing numbers of rituals. Their former poverty was certainly inhibiting: 'where the goods valued at feasts may be needed for everyday consumption, exchanges are seriously crippled; the desire to give has been qualified by the need to consume' (Quain 1948: 430). Also, during the period of colonial 'hyphenation' the population was small and almost static (varying only from 371 in 1921 to 392 in 1946) and there was relatively little threat to their colonially-modified identity, either from modernising forces which were hardly felt in their isolation, or within the wider Fijian domain. This helps explain why rituals decreased during that time. Quain observed in 1936 that the colonial bureaucratic organisation of relationships in Fijian society had removed the need for large affinal exchanges, so that 'Today most occasions of birth, death, and marriage are marked only by a small family feast which serves as a public acknowledgment of a change in family organization' (1948: 430).

As Informant A makes clear, that situation did, but no longer does, apply in Vatulele. But that still leaves the question open as to why rituals and the associated displays of generosity have always been so important. That they simply like doing so and do so more when the means are available, the rationale given by earlier Western observers and even by Vatuleleans, seems to beg the question. What are they deriving from the rituals, that makes them want to have them more than, for instance, buying new clothes, better houses, or travelling more (in which they certainly delight greatly)?

Individual advancement no doubt plays a part, particularly with those whose personal qualities of imagination, industry and ambition have distinguished them:

- 1 . Those who are gaining status in other forums (on the mainland, as hotel workers, or as successful capitalists) have a strong motive for attempting to translate that into status within their parent community, and see the personal prestige attached to underwriting rituals as a device for achieving that.
- 2 . The system of social obligation obtaining in Vatulele (see Chapter Eight) is so inescapable that many feel that accumulated wealth is better invested in rituals, with high prestige resulting, than dissipated via trifling requests with no tangible result.

However, the limits on social mobility discussed in Chapter Three are still holding (to date at least), so while the aspirations may be similar to the embourgeoisement

identified in Western society (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969; Abercrombie & Urry 1983), they are socially constrained. But in the absence of access to acquired *formal* status, community respect is still keenly pursued, and that *is* able to be publicly displayed and acknowledged by mounting rituals. Nor is the efflorescence directly comparable with the ritual status-competitions among the Kwakiutl *nouveau riche*, since these were provoked by population depletion and resultant status ‘vacancies’ in the late 19th Century (Codere (1950)1966).

The most persuasive answers, however, as has been maintained in this thesis from the beginning, relate not to personal advancement, but to solidarity and identity. The great benefit they receive is the feeling of wellbeing which comes from joining together with one’s kith and kin, feeling absolutely secure in one’s place in the scheme of things. These are feelings that are today threatened by all of the intrusive forces discussed in Chapter Two which challenge the *status quo*, leading those who feel insecure (especially but not only the traditional élite) to access all of those group and individual reaffirmative and supportive aspects of ritual discussed in Chapter Three. And to reinforce such positive outcomes there is the innate belief that ‘He who is negligent in fulfilling ceremonial obligations ... violates the “rules of the land” [*lew ā*]; this is sin, and ancestors punish the offenders with quick wrath’ (Quain 1948: 422).

Rituals’ re-emergent importance means that not only their number and complexity, but also new pretexts for, and types of, ritual become part of the repertoire:

There used to only be *hōlevu* for marriage and death. The many other ceremonies are new. Even *niji* [circumcision] was a quiet affair here — the boy was taken to the sea, cut, then came and stayed quietly in the house for 4 days, until he was ‘dry,’ and could come out. These days it is far more elaborate. He stays behind a *taunamu* screen in his parents’ house. After the four days he bathes, his *vādreji* [*masi* bandage] is changed, and he is dressed in formal multi-layered *mahi kolikoli* [see Appendix 4] and sits in the house on a *kumi* (*na i-tadrataadra*) to await his maternal relatives. They bring *i-yau* in the form of *mahi*, soap, mats and scented oil, which comprise the *vāmamaca* [ritual to close the whole process] for the parents, and in return the parents provide a *magiji* [feast].

The feasting at the time of the *luvabenu* is also new, and so is allowing the hair to grow, and not shaving during the period of mourning, then cutting/shaving during the *luvabenu*. To lift mourning here formerly, the mourner would just present some *waka* [*yaqona* roots] to the dead person’s family, then remove the mourning clothes. These changes were all imported from Lau in the late 1950s. There were many intermarriages

after the war, and when the Lauan women died, the Vatuleleans saw the *soqo* they performed, and copied them. There is a lot of copycat behaviour these days! The people are weak-willed! (Informant A)

The paramount chief confirmed the old lady's conclusions, as have others:

Oh yes, it's increasing every day. It's not like past times. When I came back [from school on the mainland, in the 1950s], the only *soqo* were the *sōmate* [funerals] and the weddings. Not the *luvabenu* or other things. These are all new. Because in the old times, they didn't have much money. They only got money from copra. They didn't get money from the sea, they just got fish for food. And not much from *masi*. *Masi* was only for exchange, to take to the mainland to get some tea, or exchanging for mats, like that. Nowadays, *masi* is big money, added to by the riches from the sea, and our hotel workers. So people have money in their pockets. In the old days there was barely enough food and little money.

Also nowadays, when even somebody from the *lewenikoro* [commoners] has a wedding or a funeral, everybody goes, even the mothers bring their children. Before, children couldn't come. Nowadays there are so many people going along and eating and drinking *yaqona*. So the relatives have to prepare very big affairs for all the people. Before it was not like nowadays, only chiefly ones were so big (Racava 1995).

Today, full rituals are not only being restored where their observance had become obsolete within the memory of even the oldest people (or perhaps had never been observed here), but the ritual template is being applied to Western rites of passage such as church weddings, baptisms and birthday parties — I have attended the latter within the paramount's extended family, for a one-year old and a three-year-old girl, and for a young woman of 29 who had thrown herself a birthday party. They followed the normal ritual template, starting with a prayer delivered by the minister, a *yaqona* ceremony for the chief and men present, followed by a feast first for the men, then the women and children (Plate 8). Finally gifts (traditional *i-yau* in both cases) were presented to the 'birthday girl,' further food was given by her family for the guests to take home, and the party ended.

The extent of this expansion of ritual pretexts was most forcefully exemplified by an account of a young chief of relatively minor rank for whom a ritual was held in early 1995. It involved all four villages on the island, and much *i-yau* was presented. His father purchased a cow and a pig to be slaughtered for the occasion. Such preparations would have been appropriate for his *tevutevu* — the ceremony held to acknowledge his chiefly status. But it was in fact held to observe his having shaved for the first time! The informant recounting this story laughed heartily at

Vatuleans' foolishness (*lialia*) in having a *hōlevu* on such a pretext, but despite the cost in goods, money and time that was involved, everyone (from the paramount down) went along with it, because however silly they may have felt it to be, it was a pretext for a ritual and all of the affirmatory things that entails.

Finally, the leaders of the community use Durkheim's ((1912)1965) 'collective effervescence' of ritual quite consciously, not for any personal advancement, but as sugar-coating for the otherwise unpalatable responsibilities of collecting money for community projects such as paying taxes, providing scholarships for children to attend high-school on the mainland, providing some Christmas cheer for the elderly, and special enterprises like making interest-earning investments on the community's behalf elsewhere. For these and a score of other contingencies, islanders are randomly co-opted into competing fund-raising groups, their efforts culminating in major festival-days (Vatulele Day, Taunovo Day etc.), when distinguished kin are invited to the island to become recipients of prestations so that the ritual template may be fulfilled (Plates 9a & b). The culmination is the announcement of the 'winning' group, which brings jubilation to that group and determination on the part of non-members that whatever group they are assigned to next time, will win. All of which is very much in the spirit of the 'ritual game,' and draws the entire community very close.

The inalienability of the gift?

The importance of prestation rituals has been argued to reside in the *totality* of the ritual performance, with the prestation objects being neither the focus of the ritual nor merely inert counters, but transporting meaning of various sorts (history, identity, value) as active 'participants.' The tension sustained by the 'game's' competitiveness has also been stressed. This places the emphasis quite differently than does the ongoing debate on the alienability or inalienability of prestation objects themselves, which followed from Mauss's stipulation (following Malinowski) that it is the inalienable nature of gifts which binds the contracting parties 'in perpetual interdependence' ((1925)1969: 62).

Weiner, a prominent exponent of the 'inalienable object' position (1977; 1992), while she rejected Mauss's concomitant requirement of reciprocity, insisted that prestation gifts, because they symbolically transmit the history and values of the originating individual or group, *are* inalienable, always and forever retaining that association. She located the motivation for this in 'the need to secure permanence in a serial world that is always subject to loss and decay' (1992: 7).



Plate 8. Birthdays ritualised

(a) Third birthday of Bulou Weka Koula (L), here with her grandmother Bulou Asinate Toge, wife of the paramount, and a cousin. Note the sanctioned gifts (oil, *masi*, and mats. The pink dog came from me!

(b) Baptism of 3-month-old Vesirua Tuirotuma, here with aunt Merewalesi Vabalemata. The *i-roqo* baby 'rug' of *masi* was specially made for her.

(c) The 'party' at Weka's birthday. The food was traditional starch etc.

(d) Her clansmen attended Weka's 'party' and ritualised it with prayers and *yaqona*. Near right is her grandfather, the paramount Ratu Apenisa Racava. Near left is the pastor.

(e) Bulou Vaulini's granddaughter's first birthday. This is traditionally an important event, hence baby's *masi*. Events were a hybrid of old and new.





Plate 9a. 1995 Vatulele Day

(i) *Ogaoga* or pre-ritual anxious busy-ness

- (a) Decorating the *covacova* lean-to with *masi*.
- (b) Adding crotons for decoration, and sweeping up mown grass.
- (c) Fish caught by the men for the feasting (not for presentation)
- (d) Placing the *kakana zina* starch vegetables in the *revo* earth oven to cook for the *magiji buta* presentation.

The pig that was presented as the other part of the *magiji buta* was partially cooked in the same oven prior to presentation, and was taken away whole by the guests for final cooking later.



Plate 9b. 1995 Vatulele Day

(ii) The rituals

(a) Presenting *vuzi* bananas (sanctioned food)

(b) Presenting the pig & men's cooked food

(c) Presenting *yaqona* in full (red) chiefly regalia

(d) Two elderly women clowning. The one facing the camera is Bulou Iva, highest-ranked lady on the island, reversing her normally dignified role.

Thomas (1991: 65), on the other hand, points out that in Fiji the issue of inalienability, like that of 'debt,' is not cut and dried — indeed he arrives at the conclusion that gifts there carry with them little or no residual memory of the donor. Many current prestation events do appear to support that view, but *masi* can be an exception under certain circumstances:

- 1 . clearly Weiner is correct insofar as a piece of *masi* is physically inscribed with figuration which is particular to the maker-group, whether or not anyone takes any notice of that;
- 2 . the art objects involved in the ritual process all have biographies, and cannot exist ahistorically, and as will be described here, one type of *masi* can carry residual memory of not only the maker/presenter, but of successive owners;
- 3 . the current situation may have changed from the historical situation as a result of changes in the requirements of identity-definition.

The first and third issues will be expanded on in Chapter Seven. The second is discussed here.

While the identity of the *masi*'s makers (who may or may not be the presenters) is clearly inscribed in Weiner's terms both through form and figuration, it would be fanciful to imagine that everything ever presented by any group in the Pacific forever sits in an aura of its 'permanent history.' But 'routine' prestation goods should be distinguished from the awesomely powerful goods, loaded with both meaning and history, which are normally discussed in relation to inalienability. For example, Weiner (on ample evidence) attributed permanent histories to Hawai'ian feather cloaks or feathered *kahili* staffs of rank (1992: 84). Certain Maori *taoga* (valuables) and particular Tongan and Samoan fine mats are also often-cited examples. These objects not only comprise a very small proportion of the total prestation goods circulating, but they passed around a very limited élite, and the history of that circulation is (or was at the time of their alienation) indeed known.

Thus Queen Salote of Tonga could say that 'Our history is written in our mats' (quoted in Thomas 1995: 165). She was clearly not referring to utilitarian floor-mats, sleeping-mats etc., though these do have a role as prestation goods, nor even the several categories of fine mats which form part of the *koloa* textile wealth made by, and for, commoners. Nor could her remarks be taken to imply a universal history, since like élites everywhere, Tongan royalty and Fijian high chiefs tend to define history in terms of themselves and their nobles, and not accord the commoners an autonomous history or identity. What she was referring to, therefore, is those mats which are carefully made for, and kept in, noble circles, signifying power and wealth and over time developing lengthy 'biographies.'

The nobility in Fiji also possesses such ‘autobiographical’ objects, in the form of some very old heirloom ‘great cloths’ (large sheets of *masi*, in Vatulele, Cakaudrove and elsewhere called *taunamu*, but in Lau called *gatu vakaviti*). Like the cloaks of Hawai’i and Aotearoa, and the heirloom mats and cloths of Tonga and Samoa, these are prestigious items whose lives have been spent in elite circles. Frequently scores of years old, they have been passed on a mere handful of times, and their histories are indeed known. They have become what Parmentier (1987: 11) has called ‘signs of history,’ deriving their aura from their ‘contiguity with the original ritual context,’ which includes the prestigious people associated with the rituals, and, Peirce observed, carrying something of the feeling associated with the events (cited in Parmentier 1987: 11). They become ‘signs *in* history,’ Parmentier maintains, when they themselves become involved ‘in social life as loci of intentionality’ (1987: 12), providing constants which, layered by each new association, provide people with physical and symbolic reassurance of cultural continuity. That continuity relates particularly to the elite — their kinship, authority, and control of the symbolic world, as discussed in Chapter Three.

I saw two such cloths (Plate 10) presented in 1981 at the *tevutevu* (wedding gift-ceremony) of Adi Koila, daughter of Rātū Sir Kamisese Mara, one of Fiji’s highest-ranking chiefs (then Prime Minister and now President), when she married the scion of another of Fiji’s most powerful families, directly descended from Cakobau. The first cloth, of Lauan manufacture and clearly very old, was presented by the bride’s female kin, and there was an audible intake of breath among those assembled as it was hung across the room with obvious reverence, pride and appropriate flourish. In accordance with protocol,¹³ the groom’s kinswomen then hung beside it the second *taunamu*, a very beautiful Cakaudrove cloth. This had been commissioned a few years earlier by Adi Davila, a very high-ranking lady of Bau but also wife of Rātū Penaia Ganilau, the paramount of Cakaudrove and soon-to-be Governor and then first President of Fiji.¹⁴ Also a masterpiece of its genre, it

¹³ One *taunamu* is provided by the women of the groom’s family, one by the women of the bride’s family, and for the four days following a wedding conceal the sleeping chamber. They are then usually put away and re-used, rather than being cut up and divided among the families. As a result they can remain gift-valuable, associated only with ceremonial and never with daily utility, and are able to become heirlooms.

¹⁴ Adi Davila recounted commissioning the women of her husband’s region to make the huge cloth in absolutely traditional fashion since it was destined for such a ritual prestation. She paid no money but provided feasts and entertainment for the women throughout the process of its manufacture — the traditional procedure which cost many times what a ‘regular’ cloth might be expected to fetch, but which also imbued it with meaning for all concerned. She admitted feeling a



Plate 10. Heirloom *taunamu*.

- (a) Heirloom *taunamu* being hung up by Lauan women who presented it at the *tevutevu* of Adi Koila, the daughter of their paramount, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Veiuto (Suva) 1981.
- (b) Adi Davila Ganilau (far right) at her home before the same event, with the Cakaudrove *taunamu* she later presented as a high-ranking lady of Bau (on behalf of the groom). She presented a Cakaudrove piece, from the confederation of which her husband was paramount, because Bau does not now (and possibly never did) make *masi*. All of the other goods in the foreground, including the several Tongan *ngatu* and fine mats visible, were also presented.

was just beginning its biographical journey. It was greatly admired but not (yet) regarded with the awe accorded the older one. The cloths could not be separated in terms of form or aesthetic merit, both were imbued with meaning, and carried the weight of their equally prestigious donor families. But several old women present affirmed that the biography of the older cloth, who had presented it to whom and on what occasions, was known. It was that history that made the difference.

Few categories of objects have this capacity in Fiji, indeed *masi* appears to be unique among female goods, while among male goods, such status appears to have been limited to weapons, to which histories of ownership and context (in this case of battles or particular victims) do appear to have previously attached, in a manner similar to Japanese swords and armour.¹⁵ As might be expected from their powerful symbolic role, *tabua* can also on occasion function as ‘signs of/in history,’¹⁶ in such cases being clear examples of Weiner’s ‘possessions that are imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners ... inalienable possessions ... [kept within the] family, descent group or dynasty’ (1992: 6). *Tabua* are also not infrequently incised with one or more names, perhaps owners’ attempts to attach themselves to the biographies of the *tabua* in the way successive collectors appended their seals to Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints.

Fijians are not a museological or archival people, and an object’s age is not of itself a virtue as it can be in Western culture, most old objects being discarded with no

wrench in giving it on, but felt obliged to do so for such an important wedding. It is now no doubt also destined to remain in very limited circulation for decades to come, with its deeply inscribed myth, specific regional identity and serial history all firmly attached.

¹⁵ There are mentions in the literature of war-clubs which had killed being hung in the temples as offerings to the gods (Fison 1904: xx; Clunie 1977: 34; Capell (1941)1973: 67). However, since clubs have long since ceased being made, and have been almost totally alienated from Fijian ownership, they are no longer ‘active’ heirlooms as the ‘great cloths’ are.

¹⁶ Quain (1948: 208, 221) detailed a *tabua* which was held in perpetuity and carried the ‘sacred power’ of the Lekutu kingdom in SW Vanualevu, handed on rather like a Royal Seal to successive paramounts, together with all of the chiefly obligations to the people. He further noted ‘title-bearing whale-teeth ... [for each of the] subsidiary units of the kingdom’ (1948: 222). Similarly, a *tabua* in Matailobau (Tailevu, Vitilevu), called *Radi ni Waimarō* (Queen, or Lady, of Waimarō), is kept wrapped in cloth and carried between villages on special occasions (personal communication, Diane Turner, 1997). Perhaps related in intention and gender if not in form, a small wooden goddess figure from the Vitilevu interior was kept for profound ritual use by the last hereditary priest in the area, until the early 1980s when he felt the spirit of the ‘old religion’ had become so weak that he had no-one to pass the mantle on to. Sensing his own impending death, he finally relinquished it to the Fiji Museum (personal communication, Fergus Clunie, 1984).

thought for their biographies.¹⁷ Undoubtedly much *masi* goes the same way, even that which has been presented, though it was pointed out in Chapter Three that ritual *masi* may be cut up and distributed to participants, and the purpose is not to destroy it, and certainly not to forget it — such small pieces may be kept for many years. Are they ‘consuming’ pieces of the myth, like a Christian receiving the sacrament? Are they taking away the meaning assigned to, or inscribed in the figuration of, the cloth? Or is it just a keepsake, a reminder, and if so is it the identity of those from who presented it, or the occasion itself, that is ‘inalienably’ carried? The answer to all of these questions seems to be ‘yes,’ for such issues seem to be inseparable in people’s minds.

The value of ritual *masi* is precisely in its capacity to carry that totality of meaning. Form, figuration, cultural inscription, ritually-affirmed social relationships, and historical biography are all aspects of its composite identity, and it is ultimately that which is carried away triumphantly in the form of a fragment of *masi*. It is the *transfer* of goods that embodies the social transitions at the heart of the ritual, and in turn the ritual activates the spiritual force of the goods. Even those goods which never achieve heirloom status play their part in the bonding that prestation rituals create — the memory of ‘who gave what and where’ lives on, even if the objects do not. Old men and women in Vatulele can detail the exact number of mats or fathoms of bolting cloth they received, numbers and particular types of *masi* they presented, even the food presented and eaten, in rituals fifty years ago.

Wittgenstein highlighted the futility of attempting to draw boundaries between the linguistic and extra-linguistic in human interaction, holding that what is actually involved is a totality which produces meaning (cited in du Gay 1996: 46). In a similar way, it would appear futile to try to attach inalienability to goods alone, even heirloom goods, and ignore all of the words and actions to which the ritual event attaches them, and together with which they define, share, and adjust identities. In Fiji, at least, inalienability lies in remembering such rituals and how relationships were strengthened by them, long after the food has been eaten, and the goods have worn out or been ‘presented on.’

¹⁷ Hunter (1997) notes a similar differential attitude in Indonesia, where revered cloths are carefully conserved to protect their ‘brilliance’ on the ceremonial occasions in which they feature, but an antique Chinese four-poster bed that would be highly valued in the West could be chopped up for firewood because ‘it was old and faded.’ He uses the term ‘death’ for utilitarian items no longer useful, and precisely that term — *mate* — is used in Vatulele of such items. As well as being lost or destroyed, such objects are apt to be recycled (e.g. *masi*-beaters being cut down for cane-knife handles or destroyed by being used to pound laundry on rocks).

Summary

This chapter has explored the manner in which Vatulele's ritual functions in the configuring of group and individual identity. The template according to which ritual operates has been described as involving competitive prestations of sanctioned goods and foods between groups, the structure of which prestations is configured in terms of kinship and gender. Rather than using the more common economic focus on debt and repayment, the theoretically perpetual sequence of presentations is defined here as a form of glide-symmetry between successive social transactions, and the relationship between kin-groups and males/females toward which ritual is directed is also one of symmetry. The argument has been illustrated with two examples of the principal groups of rites of passage (marriage and death) traditionally celebrated in Vatulele, those of betrothal and the lifting of mourning. In each case the transactions have been shown to carefully negotiate the relationship between the male and female lineage groups of the principals, and facilitating the transition of the individuals in terms of their new state of marriage or bereavement.

Whale-teeth (*tabua*) and *masi* reappear constantly in these transactions as key signs of both gender and inter-group relationships. As well, particular forms of *masi* associated with élites have been shown to be able to become heirloom objects, carrying known biographies which connect the people and events with which they have been associated with current donors and recipients, and potentially with others yet to come. Thus *masi*, like ritual, can have a capacity to act as a bridge between past, present and future, and through its associations to configure the identities of those to whom it is presented. However, it has been consistently argued that it is the totality of social structure, ritual and art, that transmits histories and negotiates identities, rather than merely 'inalienable goods.'

Within ritual, whale-teeth and bark-cloth operate in the context of other gendered goods and foods, and the next chapter will explore the manner in which networks of production and distribution were historically, and to a degree still are, organised to provide these necessary signifiers while at the same time maintaining paths for the distribution of practical necessities.

Chapter Six

GOODS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The reproduction of the authority invested in ancestors, gods, myths, and magical properties plays a fundamental role in how production, exchange and kinship are organized (Weiner 1992: 4).

In Chapter Five the term *i-yau* was introduced when referring to the prestation goods whose circulation is an invariable part of the ritual template in Fiji. This chapter explores the subtleties of that term and the category of objects it defines. It looks at the manner in which goods defined as *i-yau*, a term which has often been represented as defining ritual-gift items, are also routinely offered by their makers in barter exchanges and the free market. Finally, the category relates flexibly to the broader concept of property and commodities covered by the term *i-yaya*, with goods not altered but merely ‘re-imagined’ as they move from one conceptual category to the other. This multiple-role aspect of goods such as *masi* is contrasted with traditional anthropological models placing gifts and commodities in opposition, and economic models which have proposed ‘gift-economies’ and ‘barter trade’ as sequential in evolution.

The other related focus of this chapter is the ordering and maintenance of the networks of production and distribution which have been developed to ensure the access to necessities within socio-political groupings, and these are argued to have largely determined the circulation of goods not only through ritual gift-exchanges, but also through non-ritual trade. Since the networks develop on the basis of kinship and quasi-kinship relationships between members, the validity for Fijian goods circulation of concepts of ‘personal’ gift-giving vs. ‘impersonal’ trade is questioned.

Finally, Vatulele’s present prosperity is related to the variable persistence or loss of production centres, and to current levels of indigenous demand.

‘Official valuables’

It was earlier pointed out that artforms such as bark-cloth are made and function within specific parameters of meaning which are configured by the social group and not by individuals. Fijians have always had two words for their material culture which distinguish between objects in terms of their social roles. Those words are *i-*

yau and *i-yaya*. Little light was cast on the distinctions by an early translation of the two terms as ‘property and gear’ (Beauchlerc, translating Tonganivalu 1917), as both fit *i-yaya*. *I-yaya* is the broader term for objects and possessions. Thus the Fiji Museum, which contains a vast array of items of various meaning and function, is known as *na vale ni i-yaya mararoi* — roughly ‘the house for the keeping of objects’ — but *i-yau* would have been too specific. Hooper’s (1982: 52) term ‘official valuables’ to describe *i-yau* is more useful, and is borrowed here.¹

The term *i-yau* has proven confusing to Western commentators, because it can have two related but distinct meanings dependent on context, the first categorising ritual prestation goods as a class of object, the second relating to regional and group ‘license’ to produce certain of those goods. Attempting to explain the etymology, a Fijian authority stated: ‘[The term *i-yau*] derives from the word *yau* [verb “to carry, to bring”] as it does not stay in one place, but is taken about from place to place. When a great gathering is held such goods are taken along, and [others] brought back again [as ritual prestation goods]’ (Tonganivalu 1917). The *Vunih ālevu* similarly commented:

Up to now, I didn’t have any *tabua* left. Then yesterday I came back with another two small ones I got from a funeral of some relatives on the mainland. You know, we call that *i-yau* in Fijian, which means that it goes back and forth, like that (Racava 1995).

The etymology may be straightforward, but the statement requires considerable further exegesis. It is not their transportation back and forth *per se* that determines which goods are *i-yau*, but the social relationships which control their manufacture and determine their sign-functions, and the nature of the social transactions in which they play a part. One important role is as wealth for prestation or trade — *vutu ni i-yau* means wealth, relating to the possession of *i-yau* (*vutu* = having plenty, see Capell (1941) 1973: 274). In this context, a wide range of manufactures may qualify as *i-yau* when forming part of the mass of prestation goods, which may include items not made by the presenting group — today including a number of shop-goods.

The degree to which any individual engages in producing or generating such *i-yau* depends on the urgency of demand, on his/her group’s need, and his/her relationship (and thus level of obligation) to the individuals around whom the rituals are centred. As pointed out in Chapter Five, the perimeter of social

¹ Hooper’s PhD thesis (1982) and paper on bark-cloth (1995) are both concerned with *i-yau* in Lau.

obligation has today actually not been reduced, but extended considerably. The ongoing state of obligation and expiation is referred to as *oga*, so the term is sometimes used as a synonym for *hōlevu*, and the associated stresses and anxieties of preparation and responsibility are called *ogaoga* (Plate 9a, f.p. 178).²

Today, if *i-yau* are needed for an individual's ceremony (such as a wedding), all people of whatever status who are related to that person will be drawn in to help obtain or make what is needed. The demand on them is heavy, and their effort correspondingly so. A large ceremony will be anticipated for months, perhaps a year or more. Acres of *masi* will be cultivated and then beaten into cloth, pigs fattened, money saved to buy cattle, and close to the event preparations will reach a fever-pitch of activity. As mentioned by Informant A above, in Vatulele today even those who are not immediate family will probably have an affinal relationship, however distant, and though not obliged to do so they will produce some *i-yau* and/or provide some food, though not in the quantities required of close relatives. For this reason, all but small 'in-family' affairs on Vatulele tend to involve all four villages. If the *i-yau* are needed for a major ceremonial in which the entire *vanua* is to make the presentation, everyone will be expected to contribute, and following custom, those of chiefly rank will be expected to show exemplary generosity, irrespective of their actual means.

As mentioned previously, this can be a real problem for many chiefs who do not have any fixed source of income, and in many cases are actually poorer than many commoners in both cash and property, but are still expected to contribute largesse befitting their status. Their frequent inability to do so is the cause of an acute sense of humiliation. I saw a high chief in Ekubu, who considered his contribution to a particularly important inter-island *hōlevu* had been inadequate, silently leave the village and absent himself from the whole of the proceedings (although he should have played a prominent role) and not return to his house until night, when all was well and truly over.

This sense of obligation to participate in the ritual gift-cycle was most forcefully expressed to me by one 38-year old woman from Taunovo, who is virtually the

² Bakker (1986: 207-8) describes the concept of *oga* fully and perceptively. She also explores its role in expiation of guilt or obligation, and in restoring the cultural order these threaten. 'By this state of constant activity, Fijians acquire a sense of identity: in ever-enduring *oga* they reinforce social relations and give meaning to ... existence.' In the same volume, Vusoniwailala (1986) mounts a compelling argument that the burdens associated with the system of social obligation are relatively far more burdensome for modern Fijians than for their pre-Western-contact ancestors, and that this generates considerable stress.

sole breadwinner for a household of seven, four adults and three small children. Having just detailed to me the prodigious contributions she had made to everything from church offertory to village project fund to funerals and weddings over the preceding six months, all of which she had effectively earned from her *masi*-making, she said, 'If I could not give to all of these, I would be better to die!' (Survey Interviewee 2T).

***I-yau ni vanua* — regional copyright and obligation**

The second sense of the term *i-yau* relates to proprietorship. There were certain goods for which particular islands or districts became famous, called the *i-cavu ni vanua*. Consequently, it was these goods that the people were able to offer in exchanges, and over time they became rigidly fixed by custom as 'belonging to' the group. The system of proprietorship covered most (though not all) manufactured goods, as well as some natural products (e.g. foods of land and sea, utilitarian plants, red ochres). Areas were organised (principally on the basis of kinship and other formal alliances) into networks of manufacture and distribution which were carefully regulated, as will be discussed shortly. The more natural products they possessed, and male and female manufactures they produced, the more fully those people could participate in ritual exchanges and non-ritual trade with the widest number of fellow network members, and thus command greater prestige and wealth.

These 'specialist manufactures of the place' are referred to as *na i-yau ni vanua*. This extends the concept of *i-yau* beyond a functional category, to describing goods bearing a particular identity, both in terms of their authorship and their social role. Sometimes the objects are made by exclusive groups (Ewins 1982a: 70-72; 1986), rather resembling guilds except that skills are considered to be 'in the blood', a function of the person's *vū* (fundamental being) operating through them. Their identity is extended further by the fact that all *i-yau* are gendered in terms of their makers, users and sign-functions. They also occupy positions of assigned status in a hierarchy of social value (matters which will be explored in detail in Chapters Seven and Eight). They are therefore critically important components of the total social identity of the maker-group. Vatulele never possessed the large array still found, for example, in some of the islands of Lau, but their 'licensed' food was and is *vuzi* (plantain bananas)³ and their manufacture was and is *masi*. For these

³ Yams and plantains were the principal starch vegetables grown in Vatulele until cassava came to predominate post-WW2 (see Chapter Seven). The old men can identify 33 distinct varieties of *vuzi*, and indeed only 3 of these are no longer grown.

two goods their eminence as producers, and their copyright within their network, was unquestioned.

Hocart asserted that 'All property other than land is called either food (*kakana*) or manufactured articles (*i-yau*). These two categories are continually opposed to one another' ((1929)1971: 98-9). The complementarity of *kakana* and *i-yau* is indeed an important aspect of the ritual template, but asserting that all property other than land or food is *i-yau* is misleading — not even all of an individual Fijian's *manufactures* would be referred to by him/her or anyone else as their *i-yau*, let alone other elements of his/her property, and keen observer though he was, Hocart has in this brief definition conflated both meanings of *i-yau* plus those of *i-yaya*.

Clearly, however, deprived areas, such as small and relatively unproductive islands like Vatulele, would keenly seek membership of production/distribution networks, even tributary or vassal status, if they lacked goods or food important or essential to their existence. Achieving 'specialist-producer' recognition was therefore of great importance, since their artifacts could be exchanged for food and agricultural products which were in precarious supply on their own islands. Thompson (1940: 23) noted that in Lau there was 'a lively inter-island trade' in which *i-yau* were exchanged one for another and for food and other necessities, but she proceeded to speak of their passage 'through a system of ceremonial exchange,' without making it sufficiently clear that the bulk of the 'lively trade' was non-ritual, and that *i-yau ni vanua* were critically important as stock-in-trade for that trade as well as for ritual. Sahlins (1962: 419-33) similarly failed to highlight the importance of non-ritual trade.

Notwithstanding the conceptual distinction made above between the two categories of *i-yau* and *i-yaya*, a wide variety of objects can, and constantly do, alternate between them depending on context, a capacity first noted in Fiji by Tippet (1968: 27) and independently theorised by Godelier (1973: 128) and Simmel (1978: 97-8), and more recently, Kopytoff (1986) and Appadurai (1986a), who see the commodity state as one phase in the 'cultural [and social] biography of things': 'things can move in *and* out of the commodity state, [and] such movements can be slow or fast, reversible or terminal, normative or deviant' (Appadurai 1986a: 13).⁴

⁴ To exemplify: a woman whose *i-yau ni vanua* are mats, may weave a sleeping mat for use on her own bed (i.e. as her *i-yaya*), but changes her mind and exchanges it for some cutlery in a *vihā* with a woman in Suva. The Suva woman in turn presents it as *i-yau* in a wedding ceremony. The final recipient (this may or may not be the bride, in the nature of ritual gift division) may in turn use it as part of their domestic *i-yaya*. Or alternately, even though it is not their *i-yau ni vanua*, indeed has been twice removed, they may store it away as a valuable, to be 'gifted-on' as *i-yau* in a future

Similarly, Gregory (1982: 116) remarked of PNG: 'The essence of the ... economy today is ambiguity. A thing is now a gift, now a commodity, depending on the social context of the transaction. A pig may be bought as a commodity today so that it may be used in a gift exchange tomorrow.'

Just so in Fiji, in different contexts the same piece of *masi* may function as a domestic decoration, prestation object, gift, barter item, or commodity to be sold for cash. The process is wholly reversible — after being bought as a cash commodity by another Fijian, it may become a ritual object once more simply through their intentional act of ritually presenting it. As in English, each type of action is clearly and separately conceptualised: the Fijian verb 'to present' (*vakacabora*) is distinct from 'to give' (*solia*), 'to (ex)change' (*vakaveisautaka*) and 'to sell' (*volitaka*). Yet a single artifact may be involved in each action at different stages in its social life.

The fact that this mutability works in both directions also helps explain how certain shop goods may be added to the stack of ritual goods, as long as they are able to be conceived of in terms of traditional categories of *i-yau*, but they lack the embedded myths and signs, so as mentioned in Chapter Five, they are assigned low social value and greater quantity is needed for exchange-equivalence. In Chapter Three it was argued that the clear but inappropriate inscribed meaning of tourist-*tapa* inhibits its *candidacy*, as Appadurai puts it, to function as ritual art, whereas the more neutral commercial bolting cloth may be used, but assigned less *mana* (effectiveness) than culturally-embedded *masi*.⁵

Gendered goods

It has been noted that Vatulele ritual is configured by, and is constitutive of, gender

ritual. In that case, it may gradually assume heirloom status as discussed in Chapter Five, after which it will be highly unlikely to ever be used as *i-yaya*. On-giving does not appear to sustain any backward responsibility, either spiritual or economic, toward the original giver, such as Mauss suggested existed for Maori prestations (Sahlins 1972: 160). Obligation is finite, each separate act of onward presentation entailing a single response.

- ⁵ An example of analogous mutability of status in contemporary Western society might be a bottle of fine port wine, which is produced according to long traditions, then may be sold as a commodity, given as a gift, kept as appreciating wealth, exchanged between connoisseurs, or consecrated as communion wine for Christian ritual, and at any stage of its biography until it is opened and drunk ('cut up') it may move freely from one state to any of the others. Port wine that is packaged in plastic and cardboard wine-casks is also reminiscent of tourist-*tapa*. However well-made, it will not be acceptable in many of the above roles. It functions solely as a commodity, and is so lacking in connotations and aura as to be arguably, in important respects, a simulacrum of 'proper' port.

relations. It is not possible to have a ritual with either solely male or solely female *i-yau*. Thomas pointed out that ‘the separateness of male and female goods ... is a precondition of the image of collectivity created at the moment of presentation’ (1991: 55), consistent with gender being ‘the most significant principle of differentiation’ in Pacific societies (Thomas 1995: 33). Natural and manufactured items are all divided into male and female domains. Sahlins pointed out that personal possessions are divided into ‘men’s goods,’ *i-yaya vakatagane*, and ‘women’s goods,’ *i-yaya vakayalewa* (1962: 137), and *i-yau* are similarly categorised, by virtue of who makes and/or controls them. In Chapter Six it will be shown that they can (and *masi* does) embody further layers of ‘gender symmetry.’

Men’s valuables — *i-yau vakatagane*

In Vatulele as throughout Fiji, the male *i-yau* which are indispensable to any ritual are *tabua* whale-teeth, the principal male goods, and *vu ni yaqona* or *waka ni yaqona* (root-bole or secondary roots of *yaqona* or *kava*, the pepper plant *Piper methysticum*) which are presentation goods and also make the ritual drink which is essential to most ceremony. Both *tabua* and *yaqona* must be obtained from outside the island, the former normally through ritual prestations and the latter by cash purchase. The other two important classes of male *i-yau* in Fiji (see Hooper 1982: 243) are carved wooden objects (everything from canoes through weapons to drums and bowls for food and *yaqona*) and cordage, both *magimagi* — sinnet or plaited coconut fibre — and *wavau* — string made from *Hibiscus tileaceus* bast. However, there is no tradition of either having ever been made in Vatulele; there has apparently always been a paucity of male *i-yau ni vanua* in Vatulele, placing even greater importance on their principal female valuable — *masi* — as a definer of their group identity.

Most Vatulelean men can still make sinnet⁶ (though not as their *i-yau ni vanua*), but they have no traditions of having ever made wooden goods as do Lauans. They reportedly traded *masi* for wooden *i-vutu* food-pounders and troughs from inland Vitilevu, for use as male presentation goods, but these have not been made in the source areas for decades, because with the widespread change in diet, the labour-intensive starch puddings, formerly the delicacy of choice, have been largely abandoned in favour of store-bought foods.

⁶ When the paramount’s large meeting-house *Werelevu* was to be re-built in Ekubu in 1984 following its destruction in 1983 by Hurricane Oscar, every adult male in Vatulele was assigned the task of making a quantity of sinnet for use as binding. While not all men achieved their assigned quota, the total made was sufficient for the task.

Today the only male *i-yau* in Vatulele are drums of kerosene. Since they cost \$14 a drum (1995), and often dozens are presented in a ritual, it is mostly women's *masi* money that buys them. Demonstrating the mutability of signs in the Fijian ritual system, these had already been integrated as male *i-yau* in some parts of Fiji before 1900 (Thomson (1908)1968: 287), but were not used in Vatulele until the mid-1950s, when they replaced the large pots of coconut oil (*waiwai*) which were reportedly formerly the main male *i-yau* here (Informants E, Q). Becoming sanctioned *i-yau* by this imagined transmutation, in ritual prestation speeches kerosene is still called *waiwai*, whereas in every other context it is called *karasini*. Today normally purchased with money from the sale of female *masi*, this in no way alters its gender-base. Having been thus 'decommissioned' as male *i-yau*, but still a necessary commodity, coconut oil was transformed into 'supporting' female *i-yau*, mainly as bottles of scented cosmetic.

Women's valuables — *i-yau vakayalewa*

Among indigenous-production women's valuables, *i-yau vakayalewa*, the most important are bark-cloth and mats, then follow other woven articles (fans and baskets), pottery and scented coconut-oil. Today to these have been added: Western bolting-cloth; manchester items such as towels, pillowcases, and mosquito-nets; toiletries (soap and powder); cutlery and cooking/eating utensils. In Vatulele ritual, all or any combination of these objects may be found among the female *i-yau* being presented. But for Vatuleleans *masi* is, in all ritual situations, essential.

While there are always some women who excel, the production of female *i-yau* has seldom been specific to particular groups of women within a *vanua*.⁷ *Masi* production has apparently never been exclusively made by a designated specialist group, even status-group, as chiefly women have always engaged in it as well as commoners (Gordon-Cumming (1888)1901: 200; Im Thurn (1925)1982: 11). In fact it is likely that chiefly women formerly led the making of *masi* as a group undertaking, but in Vatulele today it is normally a solitary or small group activity (normally with kin). Though certain commoners may well be the most experienced and/or skilled, questions about who are the most skilled *masi*-makers inevitably result in women of high status being named, their social position making such acknowledgement mandatory.

⁷ The only obvious exception is pottery, in many places the exclusive domain of women of the sea-people (*Kaiwai*). Like the (male) woodcraftsmen, these women believe a founding deity (in their case a goddess) gave them the art of pottery (legend recounted to me in Yawe, Kadavu).



Fig.10. Ekubu work-group: Laniana (aged 14), Ulamila and Salote.

gifts, the reverse of the case in most Western countries. Even so, the exogamous marriage is a loan rather than a gift — on the death of her husband, a woman is given gifts to thank her for her service to her husband's clan (called *na lea ni yalewa*),¹⁰ and is then free to return to her own clan, though depending on her age this may be for ritual purposes only, if for example she remains living with a

¹⁰ Thomas (1992a; 1997: Ch.9) describes 'bride purchase' in the Vitilevu Highlands rather differently from compensation as explained in Vatulele, though the men there would also refer to their contribution as '*na i-sau ni yalewa*' — 'the cost of the woman.' He notes (1997) the difference in perception between the men, who spoke of having alienated the woman's services and loyalties, and the women, who still held strong bonds with their natal village. Male swagger, as strong in Fijian society as anywhere, may provide part of the explanation. The men certainly know that a woman's links to her natal clans (both paternal and maternal) do indeed remain very strong throughout her life, and are reasserted on the death of her husband and on her own death. The discussion of kinship in Chapter Four and Appendix Three makes clear the force of her clan in the lives of her children, and this does not bespeak a renunciation on her part. At a very practical level, in a small place like Vatulele, where that clan is probably within the same village, or at most a hour's walk away, she will return to it if her husband mistreats or neglects her. She will also be given land 'for her children' by her natal clan if her husband's clan is land-poor, but this will never pass to their paternal clan, or even to their children, always reverting, when they have no further need for it, to their maternal clan. Lester (1946: 126-7) wrote that in Ba the woman's natal clan made gifts to 'buy her back' from her husband's clan. This is the reverse of the emphasis in Vatulele.

daughter's family.

Exogamy and virilocality are normative in Fiji, and the same story is told throughout Fiji: when a woman marries out of her own village and/or *vanua*, she abandons the *i-yau* -skills learned in her youth in her origin-place, and learns the skills of her new location from the women of her husband's immediate family.¹¹ It should be pointed out that though normative, neither exogamy nor virilocality are necessarily the actuality in Vatulele today. With a small community isolated on a tiny island, and intermarriages on the island still greatly outnumbering marriage to 'outsiders,' even in exogamous unions affinal relationships will commonly exist. On the other hand, cross-cousin marriages, stated as an ideal, are today less common, as mentioned in Chapter Four.

For economic reasons, virilocality is also frequently not the case for Vatulele women today, since their guaranteed ability to make money from their *masi* is often far more lucrative and more secure than their husbands' ability to earn a cash income even in town, let alone in their home village. So 'outsider' men marrying Vatulele women frequently move to Vatulele, where their wives continue their lives as though their husbands were locals. Conversely, however, the commercial viability of *masi* provides strong incentive for 'outsider' women who marry Vatulele men to come to the island, where they are taught by their husbands' female kin.¹² Typical is the story one 57-year-old woman (Survey Interviewee E4, 1995):

I come from Yawe [District, in Kadavu, see Map 5, p.197]. My people are land-people from *koro* Yakita. The *i-yau* of Yakita is mats, and I knew how to weave all sorts. When I was 19 I was married in Kadavu to a man from Ekubu, and came straight to his home. My mother-in-law taught me to make *masi*. It is much easier than mat-weaving, and I learned very fast — in about a month, I could do the lot. I have not woven mats since, the

¹¹ Exogamy in this context means preferential marriage outside the kinship group, endogamy marriage within the kinship group. Virilocality is the married pair living in the husband's home and village.

¹² Thomas (1991: 225 fn. 65) writes of a village in Colo, Vitilevu, where only married women are permitted to make *i-yau*, advancing this as a rational model in light of Fijian female exogamy. Elsewhere, he has observed that 'Women only begin to weave mats after marriage, so they never produce *iyau* for their natal group' (1997: 215). While I agree that there would certainly be *logic* to this, it is directly contrary to my observation and the accounts women have given me in the many parts of Fiji where I have worked, including matweaving areas in Lomaiviti, Cakaudrove and Lau. The village he cites therefore does not follow the norm, but is an aberrant case. Perhaps it instituted this embargo in response to some bad experiences where the convention was not honoured, and their daughters took their skills into other villages where they should not have.

Sanctioned and gendered food

Though sanctioned food items (*kakana*) are a different category, they are presented in response to, or in conjunction with, *i-yau*. Food is sectioned according to gender, and also according to type:

1. *Kakana zina* or 'true food' consisting of the bulky starch vegetables including yams, taro, sweet potatoes, plantain bananas, breadfruit, and today *kasava*. These are counted as male produce, despite the fact that traditionally women did most of the work in the gardens, and play a role for both domestic consumption and ritual prestation.
2. *I-coi* or supplementary food (sometimes translated, quite inadequately, as 'relish'), produced largely by women. It includes greens of various sorts, shellfish, octopi and reef flora, and the small fish caught by women on lines or in net-drives along the coast, or larger fish men spear or net on the reef.
3. *Magiji* or sanctioned male prestation food. Only 'men's food' should be used for the *i-cabocabo* (prestation goods) in *hōlevu*, pigs and, if the chiefly Nalimolevu clan is involved, turtles. Today, though Western foods are generally unacceptable, goats and cattle are included since they are now raised by Fijians. In Vatulele formerly, no fish of any description were acceptable, but today large fish are sometimes cooked and presented in a pot (Informants A & B). As noted in Chapter Five, food is presented in two forms:
 - (a) the *buru* of uncooked starch vegetables and live animals, to take home for later consumption;
 - (b) the *magiji buta* of cooked animals and starch vegetables, to be taken away and feasted on by the recipients. Preparation of this food is by men. Finally, for the feasts associated with very important rituals, men catch large numbers of fish in great *yavirau* fish-drives. While these fish are not sanctioned prestation goods, *yavirau* tend to be performed only for rituals.

The *magiji* feasts that are always the final act of ceremonial events of all sorts include both men's and women's foods. These are prepared by men in the *revo*, and by women by steaming in earthenware pots, boiling or baking in the coals, and today frying with cooking oil. Domestically, women usually prepare whatever food is available, though they almost never use the *revo*, and when that is occasionally used as a family treat, the men see to it, rather like Western men's proprietorship of barbecues (see Hooper 1982: 250; Toren 1990: 62-3).⁸

⁸ Attempting to relate Lévi-Strauss's 'culinary triangle' of boiling/culture vs. baking/nature (Leach (1970)1989: 27-32) to Fiji immediately conflicts with his other schema of men/culture and women/nature, since men bake food, women boil it.

Mediating the ‘mode of production’ of *i-yau*

The following account is for female *i-yau*, since it is all that is manufactured in Vatulele today, but the principles apply to all *i-yau*. Girls normally start learning the



Fig 9. 12-month old learner. Taunovo, 1984

skills associated with making female *i-yau ni vanua* at their mother's knee. In Vatulele as in Moce and other *masi*-making places, toddlers are given *masi*-mallets (*ike*) and scraps of bark to tap away at, and in Gau and other matweaving *vanua* they receive pieces of prepared pandanus leaf to start weaving little sections, and similarly for basket- and/or fan-weaving and pottery-making

vanua.⁹ By her early teens a girl will be expert at most, if not all, stages of the process, and by her mid-teens in all of them. Typical is the comment by one woman that her 10-year-old daughter could now do the heavy initial beating and folding/beating/widening stages of *masi*-making, but had yet to learn the final felting and finishing stages, as well as printing (Survey Interviewee E9, 1995).

Just as the teenage boys and young men are often referred to as the ‘workhorses of the village’ in terms of gardening, building and other male tasks, so teenage girls and young women have always assisted other women as the need arises (being paid for this assistance, formerly only with meals, today in cash or kind), as well as being very major producers of *i-yau* in their own right. In a ‘factory’ situation such as Vatulele's, their output is even more important, but my observations in significant *i-yau* producing villages in Lau, Cakaudrove, Lomaiviti and Vitilevu all tell the same story.

Indeed the loss of this productivity is one of the things that Vatuleleans cite as requiring ‘compensation’ to be paid to a girl's clan and family by a prospective husband's clan/family. The ‘payment’ in this case is indirect — an expectation that the man's family will contribute substantially more to wedding celebrations and

⁹ It was the custom on Vatulele, as elsewhere in Fiji, for little girls to be given scaled-down *ike* to develop their skills with. A few of these survive on the island, though they are not used today — even quite small girls start ‘proper’ production with full-sized *ike*. Examples also exist in many museum collections, including the Fiji Museum.



Fig.10. Ekubu work-group: Laniana (aged 14), Ulamila and Salote.

gifts, the reverse of the case in most Western countries. Even so, the exogamous marriage is a loan rather than a gift — on the death of her husband, a woman is given gifts to thank her for her service to her husband's clan (called *na lea ni yalewa*),¹⁰ and is then free to return to her own clan, though depending on her age this may be for ritual purposes only, if for example she remains living with a

¹⁰ Thomas (1992a; 1997: Ch.9) describes 'bride purchase' in the Vitilevu Highlands rather differently from compensation as explained in Vatulele, though the men there would also refer to their contribution as '*na i-sau ni yalewa*' — 'the cost of the woman.' He notes (1997) the difference in perception between the men, who spoke of having alienated the woman's services and loyalties, and the women, who still held strong bonds with their natal village. Male swagger, as strong in Fijian society as anywhere, may provide part of the explanation. The men certainly know that a woman's links to her natal clans (both paternal and maternal) do indeed remain very strong throughout her life, and are reasserted on the death of her husband and on her own death. The discussion of kinship in Chapter Four and Appendix Three makes clear the force of her clan in the lives of her children, and this does not bespeak a renunciation on her part. At a very practical level, in a small place like Vatulele, where that clan is probably within the same village, or at most a hour's walk away, she will return to it if her husband mistreats or neglects her. She will also be given land 'for her children' by her natal clan if her husband's clan is land-poor, but this will never pass to their paternal clan, or even to their children, always reverting, when they have no further need for it, to their maternal clan. Lester (1946: 126-7) wrote that in Ba the woman's natal clan made gifts to 'buy her back' from her husband's clan. This is the reverse of the emphasis in Vatulele.

daughter's family.

Exogamy and virilocality are normative in Fiji, and the same story is told throughout Fiji: when a woman marries out of her own village and/or *vanua*, she abandons the *i-yau* -skills learned in her youth in her origin-place, and learns the skills of her new location from the women of her husband's immediate family.¹¹ It should be pointed out that though normative, neither exogamy nor virilocality are necessarily the actuality in Vatulele today. With a small community isolated on a tiny island, and intermarriages on the island still greatly outnumbering marriage to 'outsiders,' even in exogamous unions affinal relationships will commonly exist. On the other hand, cross-cousin marriages, stated as an ideal, are today less common, as mentioned in Chapter Four.

For economic reasons, virilocality is also frequently not the case for Vatulele women today, since their guaranteed ability to make money from their *masi* is often far more lucrative and more secure than their husbands' ability to earn a cash income even in town, let alone in their home village. So 'outsider' men marrying Vatulele women frequently move to Vatulele, where their wives continue their lives as though their husbands were locals. Conversely, however, the commercial viability of *masi* provides strong incentive for 'outsider' women who marry Vatulele men to come to the island, where they are taught by their husbands' female kin.¹² Typical is the story one 57-year-old woman (Survey Interviewee E4, 1995):

I come from Yawe [District, in Kadavu, see Map 5, p.197]. My people are land-people from *koro* Yakita. The *i-yau* of Yakita is mats, and I knew how to weave all sorts. When I was 19 I was married in Kadavu to a man from Ekubu, and came straight to his home. My mother-in-law taught me to make *masi*. It is much easier than mat-weaving, and I learned very fast — in about a month, I could do the lot. I have not woven mats since, the

¹¹ Exogamy in this context means preferential marriage outside the kinship group, endogamy marriage within the kinship group. Virilocality is the married pair living in the husband's home and village.

¹² Thomas (1991: 225 fn. 65) writes of a village in Colo, Vitilevu, where only married women are permitted to make *i-yau*, advancing this as a rational model in light of Fijian female exogamy. Elsewhere, he has observed that 'Women only begin to weave mats after marriage, so they never produce *iyau* for their natal group' (1997: 215). While I agree that there would certainly be *logic* to this, it is directly contrary to my observation and the accounts women have given me in the many parts of Fiji where I have worked, including matweaving areas in Lomaiviti, Cakaudrove and Lau. The village he cites therefore does not follow the norm, but is an aberrant case. Perhaps it instituted this embargo in response to some bad experiences where the convention was not honoured, and their daughters took their skills into other villages where they should not have.

only other *i-yau* I make is a bit of oil — I do this mostly to teach my daughters.

As well as maintaining the ‘copyright’ of the *i-yau ni vanua* of her origin-place, this practice has great social significance as neophyte indoctrination, since in the process of working with the other women she rapidly recapitulates the sort of experience a girl assimilates while growing up in the village, observing relationships and being party to gossip (including discussions about the events for which *i-yau* is prepared), painlessly receiving the ritual and kinship information necessary to the mechanical solidarity of the group. She comes to contribute fully to the *i-yau* wealth, and resultant visible prestige, of her new kin-group. Historically, her productivity helped the élite to purchase strategic alliances and expand influence (see also Sahlins 1962; Gordon-Cumming (1888)1901). As well, she becomes socially-informed and -entrenched. Accordingly, on leaving the village and/or *vanua* of their birth, women were sworn to secrecy about all aspects of their *i-yau*, with the social group information perhaps as important as the technical data.

Although the practices and constraints of such customs are now less binding than hitherto in many places, Vatulele continues to take them very seriously. In 1984 in Southwestern Kadavu I met two Vatulele women married into villages there. They revealed that before they married, the elders of their home village (Ekubu) had made each swear an oath (accompanied by a *yaqona* ceremony to lend it weight) neither to make nor teach others how to make *masi*. The older of these women was then 52, but the younger was only 34 and married as recently as 1970.¹³

This account has another important dimension. *Masi* was formerly one of the female *i-yau* of that part of Kadavu, but early this century, in recognition of developing affinal links between them and Vatulele, they agreed to stop making *masi* and concentrate only on mats, thereby providing the potential for reciprocal ritual prestations and barter exchanges between the two places. All of the paraphernalia for making *masi* were collected and taken away by the grand-

¹³ I learned of this accidentally. The younger of these women was using a stick to beat octopus with on a rock, and a man I was with joked: ‘Her octopus is always the most tender in the village because of her strong right arm — she was a *masi*-maker on her island of Vatulele before she married into our village!’ I then spoke to the woman and she told me of the other. There was another instance cited to me by Kiti Makasiale, who had been an Agriculture Officer in the 1970s: ‘I ran a workshop on *masi* -making in Daku, Kadavu ... there was a lady from Vatulele married to the Tui Jioma, in the Naceva district, and I asked her if she could help me with the workshop, and she said “No, I can’t, but my daughters can” (Makasiale 1993). This woman’s daughters, being Kadavuan by birth, were not subject to the same injunction and though not skilled, could assist the project.

daughter of one of the women married into Vatulele (Informant B).¹⁴

The corollary, of course, is that those women who have married into Vatulele from Kadavu, along with the number of skilled weavers from Rewa, Lau and other mat-weaving areas, may no longer weave mats, although the raw material *voivoi* (*Pandanus caricosus*) grows on the island. To do so, they say, 'would bring misfortune on our families.'¹⁵ Mats are therefore keenly sought in both ritual and non-ritual exchanges.

Another agreement of this sort formerly existed with Vatulele's import from Serua, about 50 miles east of normal landfall on Vitilevu, of blocks of red ochre clay (*buli ni qwele*) for use as paint colourant for their bark-cloth. What is singular about this fact is that over much of Vatulele itself there are copious deposits of iron-bearing red clay ideally suited for this purpose. But an important marriage had been effected between the paramount of Serua and a Vatulelean woman, and to generate a ritual exchange relationship between the two places, Vatulele contracted to exchange completed printed *masi* for it, as this was needed by the people of Serua who did not make it. The relationship is said to have ceased when the Vatuleleans changed from using very pale candlenut-bark extract as a paint base, to using strongly-coloured mangrove-bark extract which did not need added colourant.

To sum up: the system of exchange between those connected by descent or by marriage has required for its function the establishing of relationships of production

¹⁴ This woman enjoyed a *limatabu* (second-level *vahu*) relationship to the district through her grandmother (see Chapter Four), and no-one would have had greater licence to carry through the terms of the demarcation agreement. I have visited her grandmother's village in Kadavu. Two old ladies said that they used to make *masi* as young women, but confirmed that since the agreement they had made none, and several elders recall their *vahu* coming to the village and completely cleaning it out of beaters, anvils, and Tonga-style rubbing-tablets.

¹⁵ On observing a number of coils of pandanus in a house in a village on Koro island, I asked the woman whether she wove mats, to which she modestly replied that she did not know how, and that only the women of Gau, Nairai and Batiki were good at that. Her husband laughed loudly at this, and when I asked why, he pointed out that his wife was herself from Nairai, and was a very skilful weaver, but 'we don't do that on Koro, it is not our *i-yau*.' She was permitted to grow pandanus and prepare it for exchange and sale, but not to weave it.

The level of copyright goes even further, where for example only certain *types* of pots or mats are made in certain locations. For example, though mats are the female *i-yau* of both Ono-i-Lau and of Gau, there is a highly valued small mat called *tabukaisi* made exclusively in Ono. One Ono woman, a gifted weaver, married into Gau. She did not need to be shown how to weave, but told me that she had been under pressure ever since her marriage (i.e. for over twenty years) to show the women of her new village how to weave *tabukaisi*. She vowed she would never do so.

which ensured that partners within a specific exchange network did not duplicate artifacts or sanctioned foods. The matrix of specialisations covered was organised to provide all of the goods needed by each member group for their survival and for the maintenance of their ceremonial functions. The capacities and deficiencies of the various islands or districts undoubtedly played a role in the ‘licensing’ process, but the above examples show that where similar productive capacity existed within equal-status partner groups, or where the situation changed over time with new affinal linkages, need would be artificially generated and ‘deficiency’ created, in the interests of satisfying the greater need of all, that for social bonding.¹⁶ The system, therefore, was not merely a compensatory strategy, but a cultural construction to sustain and regulate social structures, a form of *social contract* controlling need and supply. Since there were mutual obligations attached to the exchange network, neither party was free to abandon a supplier or buyer, nor to ‘shop around’ for a better deal, though a given area may be supplied with the particular goods in question by more than one exchange partner, and vice versa. Under such a system, neither monopoly nor monopsony had any particular force — it was anything but a ‘free’ market.

It was inevitable that not every network would produce every commodity in optimal quantity or quality. Lacking any significant male *i-yau* of their own, Vatuleleans express regret that they lack strong kinship links with the woodcraft islands of Lau (particularly Kabara, Namuka and Fulaga), and that they are therefore not in a position to acquire wooden bowls (including *dave* kava bowls and *takona* troughs and *i-vutu* pounders for making coconut puddings) or village drums, except by purchase from shops. While these objects were formerly contributed to the network by Navosā in the interior of Vatulele, the quality was nowhere near that of Lau, and they ceased making them decades ago. Vatuleleans say that they would gladly exchange *masi* for such items if the opportunity presented itself, but currently the connections through which this might occur are lacking. This could change, if there was intermarriage at an appropriately influential level in the future.

Access to store-bought items and government emergency relief have both further diminished need for mutual support for survival, and toward dependency on cash from various sources or assistance from government. Commenting on the manner in which natural disasters like hurricanes are dealt with in Lau, Macnaught wrote

¹⁶ There may also have been a degree of coercion involved where vassal/tribute relationships existed, reminiscent of the coercive exchange system (*temazlayt*) in the Sahel of Niger between warrior cameleers and subordinate goatherders (Agnew 1983: 20). The breakdown of such relationships would no doubt have been a mixed blessing in Fiji as it was in Niger.

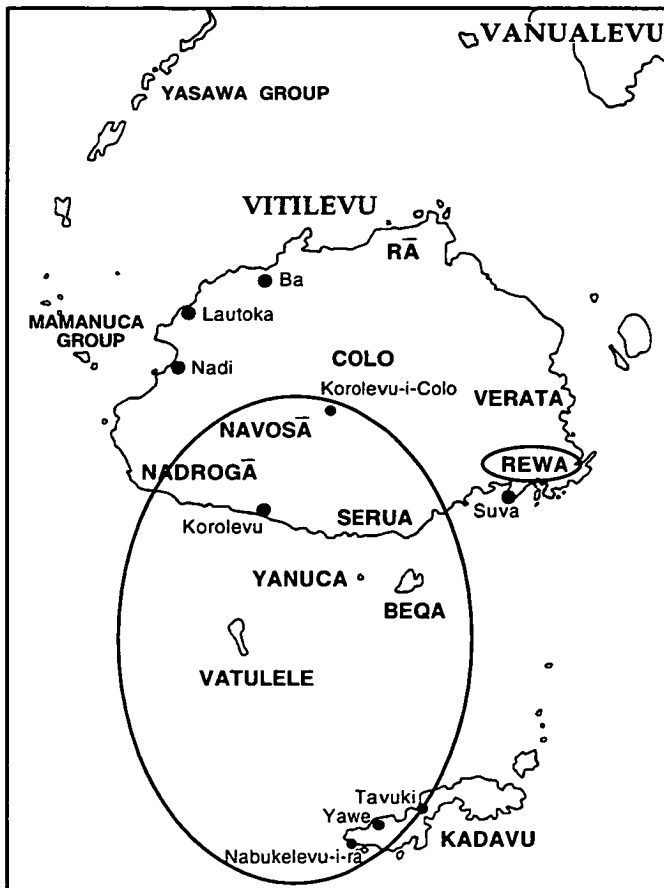
succinctly: 'Suva sends American food and relief workers where once Moala may have sent seed-yams and kinsmen' (Macnaught 1982: 161).

But the people still require *i-yau* for the accoutrements and prestation-objects of their rituals, and as pointed out in Chapter One, for places like Vatulele their *i-yau ni vanua* have become the strongest component of their public identity, essential to all 'identity performances,' not merely rituals. This must be seen as the strongest incentive for continued production, and also, as explored in Chapter Two increasing art production is itself a mitigatory response to social stress. These two factors help explain the fact that despite the passive pressure of an imposed Western cash economy, the active interference of successive administrations, and the easing of practical needs by shops and regular transport, *i-yau* continue to be made and to traverse traditional paths, generally with the addition of cash or Western goods. That not all producing areas have been able to sustain their

traditional *i-yau* production as Vatulele has, will be discussed shortly.

Vatulele's exchange partners

Exchange networks such as Vatulele's invariably relate to kinship connections, and therefore they are all (at least theoretically) still in place, though today many of the paths are not traversed. Not everyone with whom they had kinship links was historically part of the contract for production/distribution, geographical remoteness and being separated by hostile groups making interaction very difficult. In such cases, though



Map 5. Production/distribution network

[Note: Rewa was also an exchange partner, but the areas between were not]

strong kinship links have long existed (e.g. Mamanuca and Yasawa Groups, and Ra), there has probably been far more ritual and non-ritual interaction since WW2 than was possible before. Informant A listed the following exchange links:

- Mats: traditionally from Kadavu, Serua, Beqa, Tailevu and even Lau.
- From Serua came the blocks of red ochre used to make *masi* paint, and taro that does not grow well on Vatulele.
- Taro and yams: from Kadavu and Beqa (though yams do prosper on Vatulele).
- From Beqa also came the yaqona so indispensable for all important ceremonies.
- The gardens of Vatulele yield many potsherds, and old folk remember that the original cooking pots, drinking cups, small dishes or fingerbowls, and large bowls) all came from the coastal area of Nadrogā (Palmer 1968; Ewins 1987b).
- This important trading area also supplied Vatulele with salt in woven containers.

For all of these commodities they have traditionally traded their *masi*, a fact which is borne out by their own traditions and those of their exchange partners. This does not necessarily mean that Vatulele was the sole source of *masi* for a given partner, since they may belong to more than one exchange group. But none of Vatulele's partners were themselves producers of *masi*. The exchange partnerships remain, since the kinship connections remain, though some items (such as containers of salt and bars of red-ochre clay) are no longer made in the other areas, since they are no longer in use. Those partners must find substitutes.

Masi as the i-yau ni vanua of Vatulele

Basic production of *masi* probably formerly occurred, if not in every village, at least in one or more villages in every *vanua*. Its use as male clothing would have demanded this, since in Fiji's hot humid climate loincloths would in a short time become too soiled to wear, and bark-cloth cannot be washed, so manufacture would need to be constant.¹⁷ This contention is supported by the fact that throughout Fiji, *masi* plants (paper-mulberry — *Broussonetia papyrifera*) are apt to volunteer when land is cleared and/or burnt off near many villages which today have no memory of any *masi*-making there. In fact basic manufacture of most essential items was widespread, such as clubs and spears, women's short fibre girdles and men's longer ceremonial fibre skirts, and of course house-building. But while all of these except houses could be presented as *i-yau*, the fact that a group manufactured them for its own use did not automatically confer the right to consider them *i-yau ni vanua*, as explained above.

¹⁷ Though made by women, it was forbidden for them to wear *masi*. They wore short kilts ('grass skirts') called *liku*, made of various plants (see Ewins 1982a: 5, 76-7 for discussion of this specificity and details of *liku*).

However, in Vatulele '*masi* is our *i-yau* and always has been' as one elder stated categorically (Informant C, 1980), and it is a claim supported by all of their oral history. Independent support for it came in 1984 from the then Daulakeba of Lau, Rātū Josaia Tareguci (1909-85).¹⁸ He described how, when he was about six (1915), a great trading-trip was made to Vatulele, led by the Tui Nayau (paramount of all of Lau), to get Vatulele *masi* in exchange for Lauan mats. Rātū Josaia suggested that Lakeban women already produced very little *masi* by that time, but several female informants on Lakeba suggested that they continued to produce it until more recently. In any case the Tui Nayau's traditional 'by appointment' *masi*-makers were less than a day's sail away at Oneata,¹⁹ and other parts of his domain — Moce, Namuka, Kabara, Ono-i-Lau, and the Moala Group — were (and still are to varying degrees) *masi*-producers. So the fact that they took only mats suggests that this was a *veis ā* exchange, not a *sōlevu*, in which event they might have been expected to take *masi* as well, and probably some sinnet and other male *i-yau*.

However, the fact that *masi* was readily available locally also makes it clear that need alone could not have provided the incentive to mount such a difficult journey, and suggests that a wish to reaffirm an existing affinal connection between Lau and Vatulele was the reason, and in the absence of a wedding or death, a trading mission could provide the pretext for such a visit.²⁰

Three other points emerge from the story:

- 1 . It confirms that Vatulele already enjoyed well-established status as a respected specialist *masi*-producer.
- 2 . It reinforces the point that commodity need was not the only driver of exchanges, and that ritual *or* non-ritual contacts could serve to reaffirm links.
- 3 . Producing both mats and *masi*, Lau was clearly not limited by any mutual arrangement with Vatulele like those described above for Kadavu and Serua, but their mats would be recognised as being more useful to Vatulele which made none.

¹⁸ The Daulakeba is chief of the politically important *gonedau* — fishermen-clan — at Levuka, Lakeba Island, Lau Group

¹⁹ The women of Oneata still identify a group of their motifs as *draudrau tabu* ('forbidden motifs') because they are to be used exclusively for making *masi* for the Tui Nayau.

²⁰ I have been unable on either Lakeba or Vatulele to confirm which marriage or death it may have been, since a date is not a useful datum point for elderly Fijians, and no-one else I have spoken to recalls the specific *solevu*.

Survival and loss in the regional manufacture of *i-yau*

Aristotle distinguished between essential and non-essential (or accidental) properties (Brody 1980: 81-2). If essential properties were lost, he proposed, an entity would go out of existence, but non-essential properties might be lost without causing the entity to go out of existence. The most sustainable essential property of *i-yau* appears to be what Bourdieu ((1979)1992: 231) called the 'symbolic imposition' exerted by certain cultural products, giving them a 'legitimising, reinforcing capacity.' Where sign-function has become myth, with sustained ongoing relevance to the changing socio-cultural reality, *i-yau* like *masi* are those which have proved most resistant to abandonment.

This goes beyond whether or not goods are able to function as 'official valuables' within ritual. They need to be 'both an object of use in a social system with a generative history and social context, and also a component in a system of signification' (Gottdiener 1995: 29). Many formerly important official valuables are no longer made, and others survive in a few centres but are made only sporadically, and their use as prestation objects is limited to the maker group. Functional utility has proven to be, while obviously not irrelevant, a less sustaining essential property than meaning, and an even less important non-essential property. Of itself, it has been unable to sustain the ongoing cultural importance of objects.

In their initial adoption of Western goods, Fijians displayed similar selectivity to that noted of other Pacific islanders — technological change was embraced where the foreign goods fitted the indigenous cultural system, but there was reluctance to change that system itself (Shineberg 1967: 158-9). Once accepted, however, 'the substitution ... of the new article for the old purpose appears to have been both rapid and extensive.' In Fiji, very soon after first Western contact many utilitarian goods such as steel knives, axes and digging tools, and cooking pots of iron (and later aluminium) had extensively replaced indigenous manufactures. None of the articles replaced had profound sign-function, so the only real obstacle was cost. The lack of access to cash has certainly been a strong force on the side of tradition, but as access to cash has become easier, the manufacture of many utilitarian *i-yau* has lapsed as Western goods have replaced them.

Ceramic wares are a case in point. In pre-European times most important utilitarian articles, ceramics have always been *i-yau* items for their maker groups. However, though they are still made and presented as *i-yau ni vanua* by a few manufacturing areas such as Noikoro (Vitilevu highlands) and Yawe (Kadavu), they are having great difficulty maintaining relevance for their parent culture. In utilitarian terms

almost completely replaced by Western cookware, it may be that be that ceramic wares never had meaning beyond utilitarian *i-yau* status — in many interviews in six separate pottery-producing villages I have been unable to detect any. If there was such meaning, it does not appear to have been sufficiently generalisable to sustain relevance during profound socio-cultural change, and apart from ceramic *yaqona* bowls or *dare*, traditional ceramics appear to have little potential for ongoing social value.²¹

In Chapter Four the overall decline in indigenous Fijian artistic production during the colonial century (including that of *masi*) was related to Kavolis's model of artistic activity declining in times of both severe social disruption and social torpor. It cannot be denied that utilitarian displacement played a part, but with hindsight it can be seen to have not been ultimately decisive. Right through into the early colonial period *masi* served in such diverse roles as male hair-scarves and loin-cloths, mosquito curtains, house-partitions, flags and banners, down to such humble uses as bandages and swabs. Over time, all of these roles either disappeared or were usurped by Western cloth and paper, and the ethnocentric view that Western technology must inevitably prevail over 'primitive' technologies led to a widespread conviction that it would be totally replaced by British cloth within a few years. But what Western observers had assumed to be *masi*'s essential property, its utilitarian role, was shown to be its non-essential property in Artistotle's terms. The sign function, ultimately the myth, of *masi* was sufficiently strong to ensure its continuing socio-cultural role, and therefore its manufacture in Vatulele and a number of other areas. In similar vein, Weiner reflected:

An informant whom I was questioning once stopped and challenged me: "Why do you think Samoans attribute so much significance to strips of pandanus [fine mats]? They have no use at all." It was then he told me "A fine mat is protection for life." This sacred value associated with cloth [is] also seen elsewhere in Polynesia [her footnote: 'including Fijian bark-cloth'] (1989: 44).

While a Marxist class model is far from an exact fit, there is no question that

²¹ A recent researcher concluded that there is no 'evidence of present vitality' in the industry,' that although new market systems have evolved (making tourist-market wares that simulate traditional forms), the makers 'do not understand their pottery and cannot express any meaning or value through their work [my emphasis], which consequently becomes useless or superficial' (Rossitto 1992: 185-7). She adds that 'if [it] is to survive ... it needs to acquire a new role ... value, meaning or use which is feasible and relevant to the existing society.' If their social relevance was never more than their utility, however, once that is gone, it would appear almost impossible to imbue them with the new social value that Rossitto points out is needed.

ownership of the means of production of sanctioned *i-yau* did empower the social group and give them access to wealth, as long as their product had valued currency within the ritual and non-ritual networks. But as Bourdieu pointed out, ‘the field of production ... clearly could not function if it could not count on ... more or less strong propensities to consume more or less clearly defined goods’ ((1979)1992: 230), and as pointed out above, by no means all *i-yau* have been able to maintain their cultural validity, with or without functional validity. In Marxist terms, what has ensured longterm survival of culturally-embedded products is the *fetishism* attaching to them, their ‘capacity to organize meaning and to make us want [them] for reasons that go beyond ... material needs’ (MacCannell 1976: 20).

But though it was this social significance which ensured the survival of *i-yau* like *masi* and mats, the specialists like Vatuleleans who have maintained their production have reaped an economic reward as well as socio-cultural reinforcement. Their *i-yau* formerly merely permitted them to function adequately in the ritual-exchange network, but there has emerged an increasing indigenous capitalist commodity market for their *i-yau*. This has arisen because those who have abandoned their production of their *i-yau ni vanua* due to declining demand for their products, or changes in their personal circumstances (such as migration to urban centres where it may be difficult or impossible to continue their *i-yau* production) find that they must purchase certain objects for ritual prestations.

Just as the essential property of ‘sustainable’ *i-yau* has been their sign-function, the essential properties of rituals have been their identity functions, and as discussed above, their capacity to distribute goods and products has been an associated but not primary role. The loss of numerous *i-yau* has thus not spelt the doom of the system of ritual — paradoxically the loss has constituted one of the perceived threats to identity which have caused a greater mobilisation of ritual, with Fijians still requiring those very *i-yau* with which to play their part, both within their own *vanua* and across to other *vanua* that are connected to them in their own networks of kinship and identity.

Therefore the loss of their *i-yau ni vanua* forces the erstwhile makers to either use Western substitutes, or obtain *i-yau* from others. Maker-skills and knowledge of meaning cannot skip a generation in a non-literate society, and in many cases the losses occurred during the period of colonial cultural ossification when the need for identity re-negotiation did not appear so pressing, or later when developmentalists saw the old ways as impediments to progress, and pressed for their abandonment. Retrieval is now impossible. Nor can they simply start making some other *i-yau*; first because they lack the expertise, second because the system of ‘licensing’ still

obtains to at least some extent.²² Since the goods they might choose to make would obviously be selected from the relatively small array of still-culturally-valid *i-yau*, there is a strong likelihood that this would put them in direct competition with one of their traditional kin-linked trading partners, an unacceptable situation. But above all, for the increasing ranks of urban Fijians, even those who possess the skills, it is logistically very difficult to continue production.

This new 'customer class,' of course, no longer have *i-yau* to use in non-ritual exchanges to obtain the items they need, so they must substitute cash earned from other sources. For urbanites this comes from wages, for other villagers from sources such as copra, or land-lease money, or money sent home by urban emigré workers. Sometimes, in traditional exchange arrangements (see Chapter Eight), *i-yaya* items which are not official valuables will be exchanged for the *masi* (items of furniture, manchester, crockery and cutlery rank very high). But these must also be purchased for cash. This diminishes the cash they have available for other purposes such as food, clothing, schooling, church demands etc.

Continuing producers like Vatuleans therefore benefit three times, first in not having to outlay cash for the purchase of *i-yau*, second in a relative improvement in their ritual wealth and thus their social status relative to formerly far wealthier areas, and finally in their capacity to generate cash income. They owe this windfall to four things:

- 1 . to good luck, in so far as their *i-yau* product does not happen to have been among those rendered obsolete;
- 2 . to persistence, in so far as they steadfastly continued to make their *i-yau*, which not every previously 'licensed' group of makers of still-valid *i-yau* has done;
- 3 . to timing, since there was a happy coincidence of many separate events and social developments of which they were able to take advantage (see Chapter Eight);
- 4 . to their unusual degree of entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen.

Summary

The discussion so far has been establishing the discrete but coextensive and interactive identity functions of art, myth and ritual, and showing how these figure

²² There are cases where non-traditional goods are today produced for particular markets. The island of Ono-i-Kadavu, for instance, receives visits from the *Fairsky* and other cruise-ships, and reportedly they imported Lauan experts to show them how to make tourist-*tapa* to sell to the visitors, though *masi* was never their *i-yau ni vanua*. However, unless they extended their manufacture beyond the tourist commodity, and gained approval from their exchange-network partners, this would be irrelevant to their *i-yau* obligations for ritual prestations.

in the sustained vigour of Vatulele's *masi* industry. The art which is associated with ritual in Vatulele is termed *i-yau*, a noun which does not define function, but rather ascribes a particular identity to objects. Like all identity, this is not a single or immutable state but changes according to context and biography.

The fixed component of identity is the specificity of particular products to certain places and maker-groups 'licensed' to manufacture them in a social contract which controls all aspects of manufacture and distribution in largely kinship-based networks. It has been argued by contemporary theorists that when categorising goods as 'gifts' and 'commodities' it is essential to recognise their capacity to move between those categories. In just this way, artifacts have the capacity to move between the category of *i-yau* and the broader category of *i-yaya* or utilitarian goods, and also to move between the mechanisms of ritual exchange, non-ritual trade, and the free market. Bloch's (1977b) concept of ritual and non-ritual communication, therefore, provides the most useful way of considering the different phases in the social lives of *i-yau*.

The effectiveness of art in mitigating social stress was earlier related to those artforms which are consistent with group aspirations and myths, and this is borne out by the relative persistence of different *i-yau* in indigenous use or manufacture. Those for which their 'essential property' was functional utility have historically have been most affected by the incursion of substitute Western utility items, leaving the 'licensed' maker-groups devoid of cultural currency at the very time when ritual, which requires *i-yau*, has increased in response to perceived threats to identity. Conversely, *i-yau* whose sign-function is their 'essential property,' like *masi* and mats, play an increasingly important social and cultural role in Fijian society as levels of social stress increase because of their capacity to reinforce identity.

It has been shown that many former producer-groups, which were 'nodes' in those networks, have ceased making their traditional goods, but since the ritual system is still in place, the resulting 'ritual goods vacuums,' plus the increasing urbanisation of the Fijian population, have been factors in generating indigenous demand for the *i-yau* which are still made, such as Vatulele's *masi*, and that demand is met primarily via the same traditional channels. This will be further elaborated in Chapter Eight.

All of the argument in the thesis so far has been based on the premise, often reiterated, that *masi* carries ascribed and inscribed meaning which has been so significant that the society has mythified it as a sign of Fijian identity, and in turn

this quality has secured *masi* a central role in ritual, and ensured its survival as an essential instrument of identity re-inscription. The next chapter therefore examines the nature of the meaning assigned to *masi* historically and today, the evolution of the methods of inscribing that meaning, and finally the relationship between meaning and aesthetics in Vatulele's *masi*.

Chapter Seven

THE ASCRIPTION AND INSCRIPTION OF MEANING

Intricate symbolic meanings semantically encode sexuality, biological reproduction, and nurturance so that ... possessions, as they are exchanged between people, act as the material agents in the reproduction of social relations (Weiner 1992: 3).

Previous chapters have developed the case that *masi*'s importance for defining, sustaining and reconstructing identity, and thus contributing to social solidarity (particularly, though not exclusively, through its role in ritual), depends upon its sign-functions, elevated to the level of a myth of Fijian identity. The purpose of this chapter is to examine which of *masi*'s sign-functions were powerful enough to generate this ongoing process of mythification, the 'content' embedded in *masi*; the contexts of its past and present operation, and how it interacts with other *i-yau*.

Thibault (1991: 234) points out that 'meanings [are not] simply contained "in" texts, waiting for the reader to extract them during a purportedly asocial reading process ... [but] are made in and through specifically socially and historically contingent meaning-making practices.' This chapter therefore sets out to examine some of those practices and meanings. It is a project not so much of '*re-enchantment*' (to use Gablik's (1991) term), as of attempting to draw out the 'mythic and archetypal sources of spiritual life' (1991: cover note) that have been submerged but continue to inhere in the form and figuration of *masi*. Early accounts of *masi*'s role are combined with research evidence to provide a basis for understanding the manner in which meaning was assigned and embedded, and for plotting the trajectories of change which have resulted in *masi*'s present-day roles and meanings.

Masi's spiritual denotation, colour symbolism, and group identity-marking functions are explored, and related to the fact that Vatuleleans contend that *masi* and *tabua* are their two principal *i-yau*. Historical evidence of the apparent interaction of these two goods in most weighty rituals is discussed in terms of the gender associations of both the objects themselves and their ritual roles, and this is discussed as a possible expression of the gender symmetry discussed in previous chapters. The use of alternative female *i-yau* in many rituals today is considered both functionally and semiotically in this context.

The effects of social change on form, sign-function and aesthetics, particularly the observable reductionism in Fijian art generally, including the 'standardisation' of *masi* -figuration across different maker-groups, are discussed both in terms of tourism commercialisation and changes in perceptions of identity.

The principal ritual signs

The signs of *i-yau* are engaged both individually and in various combinations, in principle being added incrementally as the weight of the occasion increases.

Yaqona

The first level of ritual engagement is the shared drinking of *yaqona* (*kava*), a mild narcotic infusion of the pulverised root of a species of pepper (*Piper methysticum*). A stand-alone ritual in its own right, this shared bowl of *yaqona* also precedes most other rituals. Even non-ritual encounters (such as elders gathering together to discuss village business) are accompanied by moderately formal *yaqona* -drinking. Women still seldom drink it in ritual, but today they may drink it socially. Its increasingly casual and excessive use can lead to social problems (Lester 1941; McCall & Prescott 1988).

A bundle of roots (or even pre-pulverised root) is a supplicatory offering (*i-sevusevu*), and a whole dried plant or root-bole may be a male ritual prestation good, but its role as drink is unlike that of either *i-yau* goods or *magiji* food. Ravuvu wrote: 'It is through the medium of *yaqona* that direct communication with the spirit world can be achieved,' then went on: 'the ceremonial importance is second only to the whale's tooth, but its spiritual significance is equal [to] or greater than the whale's tooth at times' (1987: 25).

Drinking together facilitates a three-way interaction between the preparer, the receiver, and the supernatural powers they are symbolically invoking and involving in the business at hand (see Lipp 1999). It commits both parties to full cooperation, on pain of insulting the spirits they have engaged. Even social drinking frequently involves some level of 'form,' but any ritual *yaqona* drinking employs a range of signs which operate both paradigmatically and syntagmatically:

- 1 . if a wooden bowl (*dave* or *tanoa*) is used, its 'eye' (*mata*) a small triangulate lug carved on one side, 'looks' toward the ranking chief;
- 2 . the sinnet cord (*wa*) attached to this lug, often embellished with the further spiritual signs of white cowry shells, is stretched out toward this chief, and is coiled away before serving commences, since it constitutes a metaphorical path between him as intermediary and the spirit world, and may not be stepped over;

3. following elaborately ritualised preparations and presentation procedures carried out by men of appropriate status (not women in Fiji, though elsewhere in Polynesia they do officiate), the second bowl goes to his herald, if present, then to others in order of rank, rehearsing the hierarchy which commences in the spirit world and continues seamlessly into the human domain;
4. the manner in which the bowl is received, drunk, and returned by each drinker is similarly ritualised in terms of movement, speech and attitude.

Whale-teeth (*tabua*)

The value placed on *tabua*, though not their denotation, has been recognised since earliest contact. A seaman shipwrecked in southern Lau in 1825 wrote of 'whale's teeth, which is (*sic*) the most valuable article they have among them' (Cary (1887)1972: 22). A century and a half later Ravuvu writes: 'The whale's tooth ... possesses a mystical power that makes it much more sacred than any other object of ceremonial offering' (1987: 23).

Today 'mystical' = 'mythical' in the terms discussed in Chapter Three, revered despite its referent and denotation no longer being understood. However, a 'female equivalence' has been cautiously proposed by both Hooper (1982: 133-4) and Clunie (1986: 160-1). They present persuasive evidence that the *tabua* was itself originally a substitute for 'woman.'¹ Clunie illustrates one example, and describes others, of *tabua* carved in the form of a breast with nipple on one end, and vulva on the other (1986: 68, 160-1). Genitalia are among humanity's longest-used signs, widely denoting gender, reproduction and fertility, the biological continuity and inter-group connection women afford in such kinship-based societies. But the *tabua* transcends this, becoming a sign also for cosmic generativity. Such simultaneous engagement of the spiritual and temporal worlds was also a feature of the colour symbolism of *masi*, as we shall see shortly.

At a functional level, it can be argued that the development of such a sign was very important since social groups will attempt to conserve and protect their women as a matter of survival of the group (the basis for Lévi-Strauss's view of the exchange of women as the ultimate gift exchange). The presentation of *tabua* may in this context be seen as surrogacy, obviating the exchange of living women yet establishing an imaginary kinship between donor and recipient. Importantly, this 'joining' is without issue. As Routledge (1985: 40) points out, the 'sister's child' privileges of *vasu* which prevailed throughout Fiji (discussed in Chapter Four) are

¹ Recall too that the *tabua* from Tailevu mentioned in Chapter Five was named 'Lady of Waimarō'

perilous — to give *actual* women to other groups is indeed to give hostages to fortune. Perhaps it was the need for an intermediate symbolic connection, without such weighty potential consequences, that gave rise to the *tabua*. Adding further weight to the belief that they are female surrogates is the insistence that when *tabua* travel back and forth as is usual in rituals, that they must be *different* ones — the same *tabua* cannot travel in two directions. It may be inferred that a clan would not present ‘their’ woman merely to have her promptly returned to them.

The kinship linkage symbolism is extended by the cord (*wa*) always attached to *tabua*. This has functionality only when several *tabua* are being carried at once, or when they are strung on a bride (usually off her shoulders) during her wedding ceremony.² But it is constantly referred to in the metaphorical language of ritual (see Ravuvu 1987: Section 3), with references to the *cord* as a connection and path between the two groups, themselves referred to as parents/children or siblings. Women, of course, function as ‘paths’ between groups in exogamous marriages. Unlike the *wa ni tanoa*, this cord does not stretch out from the object but is attached to it at both ends, creating a closed circle of connection through the ‘woman.’

In Chapter Five the kinship affirmation signified by the *tabua* was seen in the ‘lifting of mourning’ (see Plate 5a), as in other funerary rituals (with *masi*, the male principle, being controlled by the ‘female side’), and in formal marriage ceremonies the female and male principles travel backward and forward as *tabua* presentations and *masi* exchanges alternate between the two groups, while the bride’s female *mana*, or productive effectiveness, is enhanced by festooning her in *tabua*. Teckle (1984: 265) listed ten separate occasions of *tabua* prestation in a formal chiefly wedding in Vatulele, 49 from the bride’s side and 45 from the groom’s side. The final act is a *tabua* given by the woman’s family ‘as reminder of their concern that their woman be well looked after’ (Informant E), and as described in Chapter Six, ultimately returned to them. At that time, many *tabua* will accompany her.

This suggested female surrogacy of *tabua* is resonant with Kahn’s explanations of symbolism among the Wamira of Milne Bay, PNG. She suggests that men ‘solve’ the problem of being unable to control women’s reproductive capacity, by exchanging and symbolically manipulating pigs as ‘female surrogates.’ They thus ‘become independent of women’ (Kahn 1986: 74-5; cited in Thomas 1992b: 75). Similarly, the ‘female surrogate’ *tabua* is controlled by men, and is regarded as the

² While whole *tabua* were not worn as breast ornaments, necklets of small teeth and of split whale-teeth were (Ewins 1982a: 90; Clunie 1986: 65-7, 159), and most notably composite ivory breast-plates (Clunie 1986: 70-78, 161-5). All presumably carried the numinous denotation of *tabua*.

ultimate male *i-yau*.

Mats (*ibe*)

Mats are a vitally important female *i-yau*, but the social value (and resultant cash price) of *masi* is greater (see Chapter Eight). Today mats are far more widely made than *masi*, and for this ubiquity there are some logistical reasons. Processed pandanus is readily available in the markets, no special equipment is required, and weaving is a silent process. Mats are thus able to be made even by city-dwellers on the floor of one-room apartments,³ an impossibility for *masi*, for which bark is less commonly available, bulky tools are needed, and noise-levels are comparable with automobile panel-beating.

The ongoing utility of handsome, functional floor-mats (*cōcō*), and of finer sleeping mats (*kotokoto*, *davodavo*) which are cool and comfortable on hot nights, may have been sufficient to sustain some mat-weaving. But the more elaborate fringed mats (*vābati*) have no other role than as ritual prestation objects. These still appear in great profusion, on them the women exercise their greatest skill and devotion (Ewins 1982b), and like ritual *masi* they are virtually never sold in the Western market.

In Vatulele mats often act together with *kumi*. While *masi* and *tabua*, as always, move back and forth at various stages, in marriages and funerals mats play a critical role:

- 1 . there are *kumi* among the *i-tevutevu* wedding gifts, but even more mats, and not merely functional household items, but mostly ritual wool-fringed *vābati*;
- 2 . three different types of mats are indispensable in funerals.⁴ The diagram (Fig. 11) shows how mats and *masi* are used in the burial, and how their use has been adapted to the introduction of Western coffins (*kisinimate*). *Kumi*, the most

³ This assertion is based on my observation of a friend in Suva, an old lady from Tailevu who lives in a tiny caretaker's billet attached to her employer's house. There are four decorative pandani in the garden which she harvests regularly, boiling the leaves in a large kitchen pot and drying them on the concrete driveway. She weaves various types of mats and takes them on the bus to her village whenever there are rituals, thus maintaining her participation in the community. She also swaps her mats with other women in the village for baskets and mats she needs but cannot make, such as those with extensive black *somo* figuration which require dye-plants she has no access to.

⁴ Kiti Makasiale, for 10 years the manager of the Fiji Government Handicraft Shop, remarked: When there's a wedding, or a death or something, urban Fijians have to run to the curio markets to buy mats to make up their *solesole* [bundles] — the *coco*, the *vakabati*, the *kotokoto*, often at very high prices. You'll be lucky if you can get a *vakabati* for less than \$100. But you need it, so you buy it. When a Fijian says "Oh, let's just take money to this *somate*" [funeral], they don't. They take money plus mats (1993).

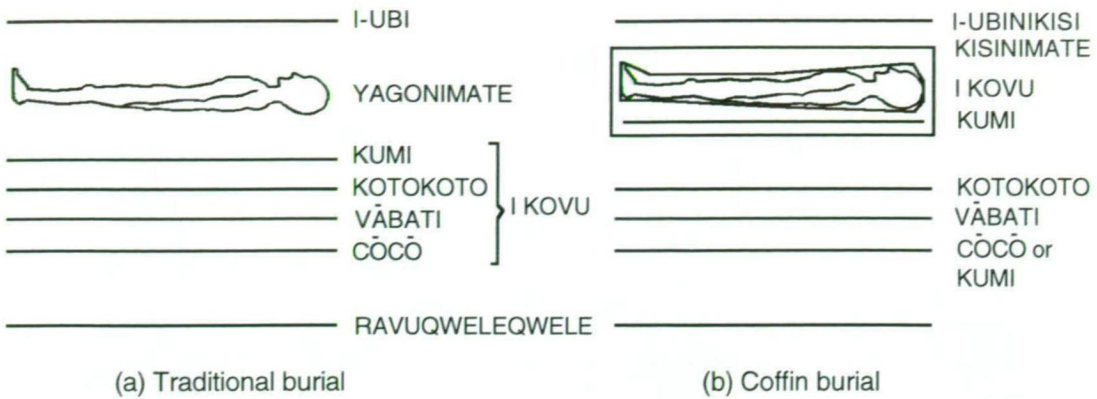


Fig.11. Use of mats and bark-cloth in Vatulele burial

sacred *masi*, wraps the body itself (*yagonimate*). If a *kumi* is not available, a *taunamu*, white *masi*, or even bolting cloth may be used, but *not* figured *mahi kolikoli*, which carries the wrong meaning. It is then laid on first a fine sleeping mat (*kotokoto*), then a wool-fringed ritual mat (*vābati*), and finally a floormat (*cōcō*), all folded around as shrouds (*i-kovu*). A large mat is used to lower the body into the grave (*ravuqweleqwele* — ‘earth-excluder’), and finally a *kumi* is placed over the closed grave as a cover (*i-ubi* — Fig.12). In coffin burials, a Western cloth body-wrapping is used, the *kumi* lines the coffin, and it is placed on all the other mats in normal order. The covering cloth is first draped over the coffin



Fig.12. *Kumi* covering grave (*i-ubi*)

(Grave of Samu Bureicegu, d. March 1984. Permission to take and reproduce photo from his son Levani Bureicegu)

(*i-ubinikisi*), then removed and placed over the grave.

***Masi* — the ‘special’ sign in Vatulele**

One senior male elder (Informant C) stated unequivocally: ‘*Mahi and tabua* are the two *uluniyau* [principal official valuables] in this place. They go together, and always have.’ This is a strong statement, since throughout most of Fiji today, the term *uluniyau* is used for *tabua* alone, but one of the oldest and most senior of female elders (Informant A) confirmed his view, adding, ‘One must never omit the *mahi*.’ This raises two questions:

- 1 . Is it only in specialist *masi*-producing places such as Vatulele, Moce, Oneata, Namuka and Cakaudrove that bark-cloth has this elevated ritual status?
- 2 . Are Vatuleleans emphasising the role of *masi* because it is theirs, while that role can just as well be played elsewhere by mats, pots, salt, or other female *i-yau*?

The answer to both is probably ‘Today, yes.’ But a study of the many historical accounts of rituals, and even lists of ‘typical’ prestation objects, suggests that *tabua* and *masi* were formerly equally prominent, and possibly complementary. If so, the Vatulele relationship may actually perpetuate traditional norms.

Early accounts of ritual prestation of *masi*

19th Century observers regularly documented the ‘innumerable rolls of plain white and patterned tapa’ (Gardère & Routledge 1991: 57) presented in rituals. One piece nearly a kilometre long was made in Somosomo in 1872 for presentation to the Bau paramount Cakobau. When folded it was a solid mass over 9m long and 2.5m high. Being too large to carry away, it was left on the beach, a roof built over it for protection (Forbes 1875; cited in Derrick 1946: 20). In the face of such evidence, the insistence of Western observers that *masi* was inferior utilitarian cloth which would cease being made as ‘superior’ western fabrics became widely available, seems stubbornly obtuse — their own cultures had nothing even remotely comparable. Few examples better demonstrate how blinkered they were by their certainty of European universalism.

But however deficient their interpretation, the facts they noted in rituals as early as 1825 (Cary (1887)1972: 22) leave no doubt that *masi* was a sign of great potency. The response of the assembly to the *masi* in these accounts of archetypal ‘identifying performances’ was not duplicated for *any* other goods presentations, and makes it clear that the weight of this *i-yau* was not only reckoned in material or

economic, but in spiritual and social terms.⁵ Its function, like that of the ritual which transported it, was of gaining power over the supernatural realm, and exhibiting/confirming power within that realm by demonstrating the great amount of both temporal wealth and spiritual potency. To enhance its identity authentication, the *masi* was carried on the person of highly ranked nobles, frequently wound around the presenter (e.g. Eagleston & Osborne 1833-6: 133; Coffin (1859)1941: 100; Lockerby (1925)1982: 29) in up to hundred-fathom lengths (*katudrau*), which would form 'so cumbersome a cincture ... that his arms stuck out horizontally, and a man had to walk beside him on either side supporting its weight' (Thomson (1908)1968: 283).

The spirituality of *masi*

The people here certainly carry their religion into everything (Rev.Dr.Lyth 1840s: 49, August 20, 1840)

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- ⁵ There are few more dramatic accounts of such responses to the presentation of *masi* than that of missionary Waterhouse, describing an event in Somosomo (Taveuni) forging the allegiance of Cakaudrove and Bau:

About forty huge bales of native cloth, and hundreds of head-dresses, are ready to excite the strangers to deeds of valour. ... After the food was set in order, a large bale of cloth was brought and placed opposite, leaving a space of two hundred yards between. This was followed by twenty others laid side by side, which elicited from the warriors a shout truly deafening. After a space, a Somosomo chief came to the fence with a train of native printed [*masi*], sixty yards in length [*ai tini yara*]. A stout man had brought a marked dress thus far for him, and then assisted in placing it upon his shoulders. After being thus equipped, the lad marched manfully across the open space to the place where the Bau chiefs sat, when he tossed off his dress, and marched back again amid the shouts of the multitude. He repeated this ceremony five times, leaving a dress each time. ... [Finally] followed by one hundred men bearing bales of cloth, who took their seats on and about the cloth, and were joined by one hundred and fifty men, all bearing cloth (Waterhouse (1866)1976: 131-3).

Seeing the same event through different but equally dazzled eyes, his colleague Williams wrote:

As [the bales of *masi*] were placed the shouts of the warriors were as thunder, and trumpet shells were blown ... Ratu Vaalolo, the King's son, came ... under a load of stained cloth hanging from his shoulders to his knees in folds, his train 20 fathoms long. On reaching the Bau chiefs he threw down the heap of cloth, and returned by the way he had come. This he repeated five times. Each time he threw down the cloth the warriors shouted amain ... Ratu na Vu (cheers!) appeared at the more southerly entrance. His train could not be less than 100 yards long, and his "esquire" bore his huge *masi* for him. He was followed by 200 men with large *masis* (*sic*) from their shoulders. Then came two men carrying a long bamboo with four large *masis* tied up and hung on it. These again were followed by 100 men with large *masis*. Having seated themselves on and about the bales of cloth, they were joined by 250 other men, similarly attired. ... [More *masi* and many other goods were presented] ... When the shouts had subsided the bales of cloth were moved up toward the *bure* [temple], with renewed shouting. Tuilaila took about 100 whales' teeth on his shoulders toward Thakombau; stooped, kneeled and made his speech (Henderson 1931: 347-8).

Each type of *masi* shares a paradigmatic relationship with all other *masi*, through commonality of materials, methods of manufacture and of generic category as textile. Syntagmatically, as with textiles in many other cultures, relationships between types of *masi* vary according to context, transforming meaning back and forth between functional clothing, ritual costume, group identity marker, religious sign, prestation object, exchange item, gift, and today open market commodity. *Masi* exemplifies the spiritual significance that has been attached to textiles, and their use in mediating social transformation, in a great diversity of cultures across time and geographical boundaries (see Ewins 1987; Gittinger 1989; Weiner & Schneider 1989; Barber 1994).

Inadequately understood is the fact that the denotation of spirituality is born by the substance *masi* itself, distinct from any figuration or other modification, as evidenced by the fact that by far the greatest amount of *masi* made historically was always left white (Seemann 1862: 350; Williams & Calvert (1858)1982: 65). For some purposes white *masi* has always been preferred, like papal vestments or bridal gowns in the West.

Thus, though there have been significant changes in the cultivation, preparation and processing of the bast into cloth, particularly during the half-century of commercialisation, and even greater changes in the materials and processes associated with printing, the basic materials have not been, I would argue *cannot* be, changed without losing *masi*'s most fundamental denotation. When listing roles of different types of cloth, Vatuleleans often identify a particular cloth, then add 'or *mahi bucobuco* [white *masi*].' It is apparently a *tabula rasa* to which signification can be assigned 'on the spot' according to context, its use in any capacity in ritual *never* inappropriate. The greater specificity of particularly shaped or figured cloth, while it enhances certain significations, proscribes others (see Appendix 4).

Masi was critical to Fijian religion, as shown in an anecdote of the missionary Williams:

Conversing one day with an old Somosomo priest, I mentioned ... [that] the natives of the New Hebrides ... had many gods. The priest could not conceal his displeasure at the latter part of my remark. "Not possessed of *masi*, and pretend to have gods!" he muttered repeatedly with contempt, evidently thinking that the few yards of *masi* round his own loins gave him immense superiority over those poor creatures ... ((1858)1982: 120).

It is doubtful that his comments were related, as Williams assumed, to the

functionality of his *malo* loincloth, rather to the specific spiritual force of *masi*.⁶ He was a priest whose role was controlling mysterious cosmological forces, and this is what ‘having gods’ meant. This demanded the assistance of all of the religious trappings and rituals available, and he obviously considered *masi*, with all of its sign functions, indispensable.

Williams himself had observed that in temples ‘a long piece of white *masi*, fixed to the top, and carried down the angle of the roof so as to hang before the corner-post and lie on the floor, forms the path down which the god passes to enter the priest, and marks the holy place which few but he dare approach’ (Williams & Calvert (1858)1982: 222-3). This capacity for divine transmission by both *masi* and, as discussed above, *yaqona*, was supported by the observation by Macdonald (1857: 239) that in a temple in Rewa ‘The principal end was hung with black *masi* from the roof to the floor, and four remarkable roots of *yanggona* [*yaqona*], about 14 feet in length, were lashed to the upright, in front of the *masi*.’⁷

However, this denial of spirituality in *masi* still persists, extended to all female products. Ravuvu wrote: ‘*Tabua* and *yaqona* are considered men’s goods ... [and] men and their ceremonial objects of value occupy the position between the supernatural and the temporal, whereas women and their valued goods ... [which] include barkcloth, mats, bolts of factory manufactured cloth and cooking pots, are relegated to the temporal, secular sector’ (1987: 261, my emphasis).

Throughout Polynesia, however, association of women with the temporal world does not exclude them from the supernatural world, they are inter-permeable, and female elements abound in the spiritual domain. Ravuvu’s description appears to derive from Lévi-Strauss’s compartmentalised, implicitly chauvinistic, model of male/culture vs. female/nature, which is categorised in the writing of some feminists as a key to understanding female denigration (Ortner 1974), and simply

⁶ It is also unlikely that he would automatically assume New Hebrideans (Vanuatuans) had no bark-cloth, since Tongans, Samoans, Rotumans and Wallis Islanders were all known in Fiji and all wore bark-cloth, but his ethnocentric view would be that theirs lacked the denotation of *masi*.

⁷ The Yankee trader Eagleston also recorded a connection between *masi* and religion (remembering that religion to Fijians entailed war and killing):

[Rewa, May 1834] When the two boats came on shore they marched to the Boorie [*bure* — temple] singing and brandishing their clubs, muskets &c., they presented a large bale of tapper stuff [*masi*] to the Boorie over which there was a good deal of yelling and long speeches. When they had got through, the chiefs took off their tappers and gave them to the priests of the Boorie, I measured one of the shortest and found it 23 fathoms [42.5m] in length ... They killed a SomoSomo man which was the occasion of all the marching, yelling, and gift to the Boorie (Eagleston & Osborne 1833-6: 273).

rejected outright by others (Mathieu 1978; MacCormack & Strathern 1980).

Weiner denounced this roundly: 'The ethnographic literature abounds with classifications in which men's actions are privileged because they are connected with the sacred domain whereas women's similar activities are relegated to a profane category' (Weiner 1992: 3). In actuality, as various authors have pointed out (Strathern 1988; MacKenzie 1991; Thomas 1995) the gender signification of goods in Pacific culture is generally neither uniform nor constant, but in a dynamic association, where apparently clear male or female gender signs may encode subtle alternations, sharings and symmetries. As we shall see, *tabua* and *masi* are archetypes of this.

As the Hansons (1983) document, in Polynesian belief women themselves through their bodies are considered active in mediating the interaction between 'sacred' and 'profane,' in so far as those concepts are applicable. Both women and their *i-yau* perform critical roles in rituals that are predicated on the assumption of intercourse with supernatural forces,⁸ and historically, in the spiritually-mediated definition of male life-transitions.

***Masi* as male 'badge of virility'**

Masi's utilitarian role as clothing at the time of Western contact was inseparable from its sign-functions, foremost of which was its role in defining manhood, both as gender, achieved status, and spiritual 'state of being.' Although manufactured by women, *masi* was forbidden for their personal use (see Eagleston & Osborne 1833-6: 561; Williams & Calvert (1858)1982: 156) other than when, like men, they were swaddled in it at birth and wrapped in a shroud of it at death (in both cases by their female-side kin).

But *masi* was indispensable for the most significant male rites of passage: at puberty, following their circumcision (a symbolic casting-off of a 'childish' component), males were clothed in a loincloth (*malo*) by their *female* relatives, and achieved admission to manhood. Then, in the warrior re-birth rituals after they had first killed, they were anointed and clothed (again by the women) in new *masi*.

Perhaps most telling of all, *masi* is tied onto the arms of chiefs during investiture, which is another form of re-birth (described to Teckle (1984: 49-50) as 'something like our birth custom'). Chiefly installation is called 'giving the *masi*,' following

⁸ Also, as Battaglia (1990) has shown, wealth objects such as *masi* are also signs which stand for the body. They thus reinforce and enhance the body's agency in ritual (Shilling 1997).

which the chief bears the title of, and may be referred to both personally and objectively as, *Masi*. *Masi* has been explained to me as embodying *i-tovo vakavanua* (the traditions, values, and aspirations of the people) and the land itself, together with all of the plants, animals and people on it.⁹ Two of the three *hauturaga* — the elders empowered to install the chief — agreed on the wording they would use in the ritual. The chief is addressed by his full given name, but without the titles *R ātū* or *R ō*. The following passage is critical:

We hope that you will take the responsibility of leading us while we are here [conflating, they explained, ‘in this place’ and ‘throughout our lives’]. Our wellbeing, our prosperity, we are now presenting to you, wholeheartedly. Everything on this land is now being given to you — people, animals and birds, the trees and everything else (Informants C and T, my emphasis).¹⁰

Masi is thus located at the highest level of signification, serving as both linguistic and objectified marker for the people’s temporal and spatial journey, through which they identify themselves most fundamentally.

Early missionaries well understood the use of *masi* as a ‘*toga virilis*,’ but never indicated any understanding of the implications of the gender symmetry this involved, invariably depicting Fijian women as totally impotent relative to their lords and masters. They found the simple and functional *malo* affronting, frequently writing of Fijian men being ‘naked’ or ‘near naked.’ They imposed on converts the wearing of the garment currently worn in Tonga, the wrap-around sarong-style ‘*sulu*’: ‘Christianity has done its proper work; and where there are Christians, the naked are clothed: with these the native cloth serves’ (Lawry 1850: 68). Thus ‘wearing the cloth’ was used to describe conversion to Christianity (Diapea 1928: 158; Brewster (1922)1967: 25-6). For the men, having to set aside

⁹ The only one of these crucial male rites of passage in which it is normally used today is chiefly investiture, though in 1981 I was guest at a ceremony which was clearly a modern form of the ‘warrior re-birth,’ welcoming home a soldier from a tour of duty with UNIFIL in Lebanon. He stripped to his underclothes, and the women of his maternal family ceremonially libated him with scented coconut oil, and dressed him from head to foot in brand-new *masi* obtained specifically for the purpose. In return, he presented a *tabua* to the highest-ranked chief present, a government minister who is also a relative. This is an urban family from an area whose *i-yau* is mat-weaving. The *masi* was therefore obtained with some difficulty and considerable cash outlay, but his uncle (the host) asserted me that nothing else would do.

¹⁰ Though the *hauturaga* have learned these words by rote as part of the responsibilities of their hereditary office, there has not been a ‘proper’ installation for four generations, as discussed in Chapter Four.

their *malo*, their ‘badge of virility’ (Cargill 1841: 115), and ‘condescend to be clothed in a petticoat and be made a woman of’ (Diapea 1928: 161), was a cause of considerable stress.

There followed the introduction of tailored worsted formal kilts, complete with pockets and waistbands, and worn with a shirt, often a tie, and for ultimate formality, a suit coat. The modern Fijian man’s *sulu* was born, to become as proud a sign of identity as the English-invented tartan kilt is for Scotsmen (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). While they thought the *malo* inadequate, the skimpy *liku*, or female fringed girdle (Ewins 1982a: 76-8) outraged missionary sensibilities. Ignoring the injunction against women wearing *masi*, the loins of female converts were



Fig.13. Hybrid female dress c.1900

Two young women wearing a layer of *masi*, one short, the other long, over their Western-style wrap-around skirts. Photo: Arnold (n.d. c.1900) .

promptly swathed in *i-sulu*, while the *i-oro* waist-band (Fig.3, p.84, and Appendix 4) was appropriated as a camisole, ignoring its warrior connotations (Ewins 1982a: 25, 43). Women were also enveloped in handed-down Mother-Hubbard dresses, and in time they assumed other female Western dress. Early photographs show dresses and skirts either worn over the top of longer *i-sulu*, or wrapped around with *masi* to further ‘dress them up’ (Fig.13). Thus evolved the now-ubiquitous two-layered skirt (Plate 6(b)), like the male tailored *sulu*, a clear ethnic identity-sign.¹¹ The neo-traditional ‘unisex’ *masi* outfit now common in ceremonial apparently arose in a reverse transformation, substituting a second (and sometimes third) layer of *masi* for the Western skirt (Plates 5a (a) & 6(a)). The reversal is thus

¹¹ From the beginning of the 20th century *masi* was seldom worn by either sex except in dance or ritual. Men wore shirts with either lengths of cloth as *sulu*, or shorts, while women generally abandoned the ‘Mother Hubbard’ for a Western ‘pinafore’ (*vinivoo*) or a blouse (mistakenly called a ‘jumper’ or *jaba*) worn with the same wrap-around skirt, the outfit called *jaba i-hulu*.

complete: from women being forbidden the use of the *masi* in pre-European Viti, it has evolved into its present form through women's use, and men, having been detached from their *malo*, now use a slightly-modified form of this female-derived costume. Perhaps it is as well that the men remain oblivious of the reversal! Its sign for manhood has been forever subsumed in the larger myth of Fijian identity, which has also, as will be discussed shortly, made it less indispensable in ritual.

***Masi* as status-sign**

To this day the right to wear certain types of *masi*, and the manner of wearing them, can signify noble status (for physical descriptions of cloth types, see Appendix 4 for fuller descriptions):

- 1 . a sash (*wābale*) across the torso from one shoulder to the other hip;
- 2 . a trailing train (*masi yara, i-tini yara*) of *masi* — the longer the train, the higher the status — originally one end of the loincloth,¹² today a separate trailing piece pinned to the waistband or sash;
- 3 . any garments smoked to a uniform red-brown colour (*masi kuvui*);
- 4 . one of the proudest symbols of chieftainship, the now-obsolete male hairscarf or turban (called *i-zinu* in Vatulele, elsewhere *i-sala, i-uso, or paupau*).¹³

The relationship of *masi* and *tabua*

The gender ambiguities described above for both *tabua* and *masi* are not explored in 'male dominant' accounts of Fijian ritual, so the ritual interrelationship of *tabua* and *masi* insisted upon by Vatuleleans has been little explored.¹⁴ But the meanings proposed above suggest the existence between *tabua* and *masi* of what may be termed resonance, or schematised as two-dimensional symmetry. Thus in a *sōlevu*, when *tabua* (male *i-yau*, embodying the female element) are presented first as they invariably are, men symbolically control female power and fertility, its presentation affirming real or virtual kinship and the agency of ancestral spirits. Then the *masi*

¹² In a journal entry, Williams wrote: 'Measured a *masi* dress which was being bleached in the road opposite my house — length 540 feet!' (Henderson 1931: 297). The train(s) that would have resulted from this would even then have been exceptional.

¹³ *I-sala* have virtually disappeared from use in Fiji during this century, and are long obsolete in Vatulele. However, in Natewa, one of the most traditional of *masi*-producing areas (see Map 1), I was shown photographs to prove that their high chiefs still proudly wear *paupau* of smoked red *masi* for some rituals, and in Lakeba the wife of the aged Daulakeba showed me his smoked *i-sala*, carefully wrapped into the form of a turban and stored that way.

¹⁴ The symbolic significance of this mediatory use of 'female' *masi* in male rites of passage was first highlighted by Sahlins (1976: 26 and fn.19; 1981:117-9,121).

(female *i-yau*, embodying the male element) is presented, metaphorically giving the land and all of its traditions. In such a conceptualisation *masi* and *tabua* are far more profoundly interrelated than being merely unspecified male and female goods going forward together.

Whereas once the exchange networks would have ensured that every village possessed a range of *i-yau* for presentations, including *yaqona*, mats, *masi* and *tabua*, and very possibly other goods such as pots and wooden articles, today the possession of such articles is apt to be at best patchy, or limited to the particular *i-yau* they make, or at worst limited to store-bought substitutes. Because of their relatively widespread manufacture and functional use as described above, mats will often be the only 'weighty' female *i-yau* available, and therefore are frequently presented without *masi*. Nonetheless, for certain rituals (weddings in particular) *masi* is still considered so critical that people will go to great lengths to obtain it, a fact on which Vatulele's economic prosperity depends. Lester (1939-40; 1946) provides a full description of the manner in which *masi* and *tabua* each travel back and forth in traditional wedding ceremonies, and the *luvabenu* ritual described in Chapter Five also demonstrates this.

Mats and other female *i-yau* do not have within themselves the gender alternation imparted by *masi*'s role in the definition of male identity. But the blurring caused by the missionary-prompted female use of *masi*, and the sublimation of the female surrogacy of *tabua*, mean that male/female 'symmetry' is today carried in ritual by the less 'layered' generic going forward of male and female *i-yau*, and by prestations alternating between opposite-gendered 'sides' (Chapter Five). But *masi* remains sought after in particularly weighty rituals because its denotation is still today *responded to* as myth rather than *understood* as specific signification.

Colour as cosmological sign

It is proposed here that cosmological allusions are also conveyed by colour symbolism. Like many other cultural symbols, in Fiji these have long ago moved beyond connotation and into the realm of myth. The 'reconstruction' that follows is therefore acknowledged as a hypothesis, but it is based on the considerable amount known about the manner in which colour was used in Oceania, in particular Polynesia and even specifically Fiji, so this is not unsupported speculation. All Fijian *masi* is either plain white, dyed yellow or red-ochre colour, or printed in black and/or red-ochre. In fact white, black, and red/brown/golden-yellow

predominate in the figuration of bark-cloth throughout Polynesia.¹⁵

As Teilhet said, 'the act of embellishing objects with colour is, in most Oceanic cultures, a magico-symbolic process ... utilized by both men and women' (1983: 49). Barrow elaborates that in Polynesia, red was 'regarded as the chosen colour of the gods ... and of chiefs of the highest rank [their earthly incarnations]. ... [Thus] iron-bearing clays, oxidised to red, were used widely in powder or paint form to rub on the bones of ancestors and on objects of special value' (1972: 55). Geraghty (1993: 363-4) describes the association of red with Burotu, the spirit world of Fiji and Polynesia. Clunie describes warriors after their first 'kill' being coated in red supplied, and often applied, by women, in the 're-birth' rituals described above (1977: 33). And Quain was told by a shaman attempting contact with ancestral spirits that 'red calico ... is especially pleasing to spirits' (1948: 234).

Sayes (1982:5) asserted that in Cakaudrove red is associated with chiefly rank and specifically with the paramount's line, *I-sokula*, translatable as a flock of red *kula* parakeets, whose feathers were such potent signs that they were exported as far as Eastern Polynesia. *Kula* derives from words meaning gold, yellow and turmeric (Geraghty 1995b: 7), and in Fiji yellow and reddish turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is an powerful sign in the main rites of passage: birth (Thomson (1908)1968: 213), marriage (Williams & Calvert (1858)1982: 168) and death (De Ricci 1875: 32).¹⁶

It is not, therefore, surprising that *masi* which was rubbed with coconut oil mixed with orange turmeric (*vakarerega*), oiled and then smoked (*kuvui*) to a red-brown colour, or sometimes, to achieve the best colour, rubbed with turmeric-oil *and* smoked, was and is reserved for chiefs, and Vatulele's most sacred ritual cloth, the *kumi*, essential in birth and death, is totally and exclusively rubbed with red paint (Plates 1, 5b, 11a and Appendix 4). The *taunamu* is the second most ritually important cloth, utilised particularly in marriage. Half of it is rubbed with red in the manner of *kumi*, but the other half is stencil-printed, defining group identity (Plates 1, 6, 11a & b, and Appendix 4).

¹⁵ The use of Polynesian norms is based on the clear evidence that 'all of Polynesia ... developed out of the Fijian hearth and everywhere retains the traces' (Sahlins 1976: 46). Conversely, in that Fijian hearth the embers of proto-Polynesian culture still glow brightly.

¹⁶ In Fijian no distinction is generally made between red and brown — both are called *damu*. Fair-skinned (light brown) Fijians or Caucasians are referred to as *damu*, whereas dark-skinned people are *loaloa* or black. And while there is a word for the yellow of certain flowers — *dromodromo*, it is not used of turmeric-dyed *masi*, which is called *damu*. Thus there is a conceptual continuity between the golden dye of turmeric, the red of vermilion, and the red-brown of haematitic clay.

The *taunamu* features during the *tevutevu*, described as follows:

After the church wedding, the couple return to their own homes and change their *mahi* clothing. A message is sent to the groom's house to say when the bride is ready. She comes, dressed in new *mahi*, her family bringing *i-yau* including a number of *tabua* which she carries in her hands or hangs on her shoulders, 10-20 *kumi*, kerosene, mats and *taunamu*. The groom's parents have prepared the *magiji*, but before that is presented, the *tevutevu* is done. The groom's womenfolk hang a *taunamu* in front of the bedchamber, and spread mats, mosquito nets and bedding in front of it. Then the bride's womenfolk do the same, hanging her *taunamu* beside his. Together they screen off the sleeping chamber (Informant A).¹⁷

The bedchamber is located at the sacrosanct, chiefly, 'top' end of the house (Toren 1990: 29-39), and the 'spiritual' half of each of the two *taunamu* faces into that space. The stencilled half of each cloth, which as will be described shortly carries the identifying figuration of the maker-group, faces into the public space or 'body'



Fig.14. Stencilling a *taunamu* in Taunovo in 1950.

This photograph shows clearly that the manner of laying out the design in this important embedded ritual cloth has changed little in 50 years, though the motifs have. The side to the printer's left would next have been rubbed in the manner of *kumi*. The 16-year-old printer, Salote Sagosago, identified herself in the Fiji Museum photograph in 1984. (cf. Plate 11a, and also Plates 1 & 11b).

¹⁷ Teckle (1984) provides an eyewitness account of an actual Vatulele wedding, and Geddes (1978) had Ekubu villagers enact a wedding to make a film which they say was generally accurate.

of the house, and the couple, dressed in a *kumi* and other articles of *masi* apparel, sit in front of their *taunamu*, together with which they face the guests. Thus the people being joined, the groups being joined, the signs of the ancestral spirits, and the group identity markers (with further significations as we shall see shortly), are brought together in a highly charged moment of transition. The feasting can then proceed to cement the new union.

Thomson ((1908)1968: 149) highlighted the significance of yellow and black in the Naga sect, and Hocart says that ‘the two patron deities of the Blacks and the Reds are found all over Fiji’ (1952: 50).¹⁸ As red signifies the *mana* of the gods and chiefs, black is the colour of the temporal world, thus also of night and death, and of women who are its custodians (it will be recalled that it is one’s female side (maternal kin) who perform one’s funerary rites). And finally white, the overall colour of *masi*, is the male colour, associated with day, light and life (Hanson & Hanson 1983: 20). It is also described as the colour of *tapu* (Barrow 1972: 55), which is perhaps best defined as ‘the [divine] rules governing human conduct’ (Hanson & Hanson 1983: 49), conveyed in Fijian by the word *lew ā*.

Thus in terms of the colour symbolism of the figuration of printed *masi kesa*, the red and black figures on a white ground integrate male/female symmetry, the hierarchy of gods/chiefs/people, the *lew ā* of the land. The association of colours with the overall form of the cloth, the design layout and the motifs in the figuration of printed cloth, all combine syntagmatically to convey group identity. Thus colour, form and figuration integrate to signify the fundamental principles on which the Fijian world is organised.

Red (gold, brown)	Gods, chiefs	Virility, power	<i>Mana</i> , Burotu, spiritual realm
Black	Women	Fecundity, kin-connection	<i>Vanua</i> , temporal realm, nature, death
White	Men, priests	Light, life	<i>Lew ā</i> , custom, status

Table 1: Colour symbolism

¹⁸ ‘Both sexes paint themselves, the men smears (*sic*) their faces with black and red paint and a woman does not think she is beautiful until she has her face smeared with vermilion’ (Eagleston & Osborne 1833-6: 552). Cary reported of the same period: ‘Before landing [at Bau] all the young chiefs who had killed some of the enemy [at Koro] for the first time, painted themselves red and black and each one had a staff with as many strips of white cloth attached to the end as he had killed enemies’ ((1887)1972: 32).



Plate 11a. The great cloths of Vatulele

- (a) **Kumi.** Three senior men of Nalimolevu with a *kumi* made specifically for a *luvabenu* procession (see Plate 5b).
- (b) **Taunamu.** Printing the stencilled face of a *taunamu* (the rubbed half is still blank, in the lower right of the picture). The woman on the left is cutting out a stencil with scissors, the other is using a foam plastic swab to print with (while her daughter 'helps'). In the foreground is the pot of red *kesa* paint. The name 'Sanaila N. Tawake,' is that of the woman whose wedding *tevutevu* this will be used in. Her husband-to-be will have a *taunamu* with his name on it. This name-panel (*yaca*) is a recent introduction, and only occurs on wedding-*taunamu* (cf. Plate 1).

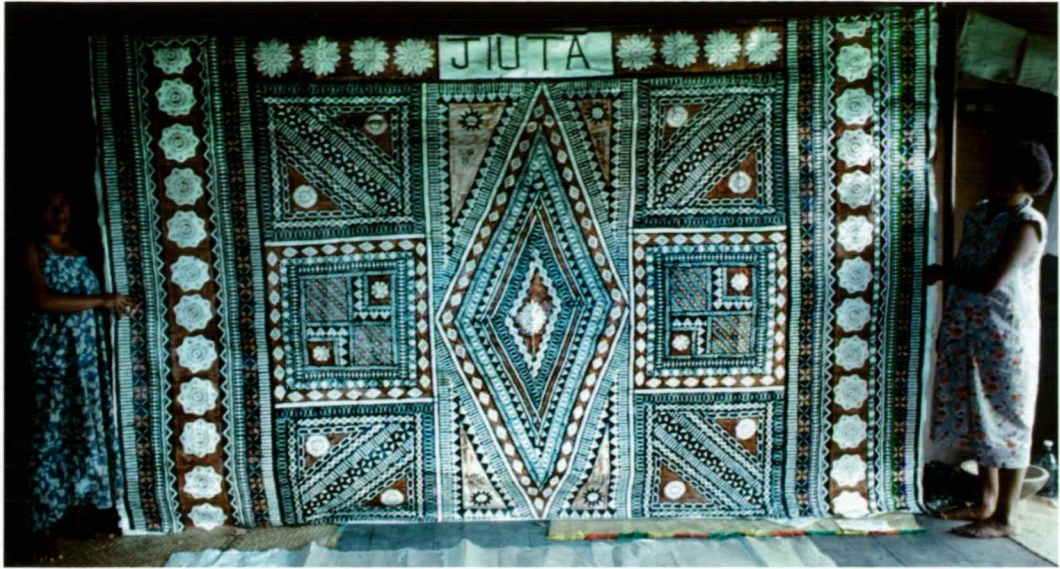


Plate 11b. The great cloths of Vatulele

- (a) The figured 'public' half of a 'small' 12' x 12' (approximately 4m square) *taunamu*, Taunovo 1980. This side faces out into the main building, and during rituals, participants sit in front of it, as in Plates 1 and 6.
- (b) The predominantly red-rubbed 'private' half of the cloth. As argued in this thesis, this is the spiritually-sanctified component, which faces into the sacred top end of the house, containing the sleeping chamber.

Finally, there is the matter of taboos associated with figuring cloth, indicators of spiritual significance. While there are no prohibitions placed on any aspect of the making or figuring of *masi* itself, the making of the paint for *masi* carries at least one traditional *tabu*.¹⁹ This is resonant with Teilhet's comment that 'in both Polynesia and Melanesia there is a ritual process ... in the making of dyes' (1983: 50), including the black for bark-cloth. Similarly, Kooijman (1972: 306) related that in Tonga women preparing black pigment had a two day prohibition on sexual intercourse prior to burning the candlenuts (*Aleurites triloba*), and that the pot for catching the soot was venerated. In Moce island I was shown a small cave where the burning of candlenuts for this purpose was formerly carried out, since, I was told, this should not be done in the village or the house. As their name indicates, candlenuts were certainly formerly burned as a source of light inside houses and elsewhere in the village, so the *tabu* does not relate to burning candlenuts indoors, and must relate to the spiritual potency attached to preparing pigment for painting *masi*.

Figured *masi* as group identity marker

What was being accessed in the great *masi* gift-displays described above were not only the denotation of spiritual weight born by the *masi* itself, and as I have now argued, cosmology, but it has long been recognised that the different highly stylised geometric 'designs' on figured *masi* were group-identity markers (Waterhouse (1866)1976: 37; Lazarus 1913: 2).²⁰ Thus *masi* affirmed their shared

¹⁹ I have encountered this rather strange *tabu* in relation to artforms elsewhere in Fiji. A woman who is pregnant (*bukete*) but does not yet know she is (a condition called *tāwaiwai*), is considered very potent and such a woman must not even 'look at' *kesa* during its preparation, or it will be 'no good,' though just how is never specified. The potency of her condition relates also to fishdrives (fish will flee) and even choir-practice, when the singing will be off-key! (Informants E & L). Since the damage done depends on ignorance, it is clearly impossible to observe the *tabu*, but it provides an ideal explanation in retrospect for inexplicable mishaps! Once her pregnancy 'shows' (the condition of *kunekune*) she is not dangerous. For other sexual taboos see Hanson (1982).

²⁰ Waterhouse described a chief's wife feeling able to refuse a request by the son of a rival wife for some *masi* to wear, on the grounds that, coming from a different area than his mother, she had none bearing the figuration of his lineage. The strength of the identity-marker was apparently a sufficient pretext for the studied insult of her refusal.

Lazarus noted that in 1881 on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales 'between twelve and fifteen thousand Fijians were arrayed as they are fond of being in their beautifully designed *masi kesa* (each tribe wore differently designed printed loin-cloths).' This short statement revealed that printed *masi* was a group-identity marker of deep significance, figuring prominently on a profoundly important occasion when each group would have been intent on proudly proclaiming their identity.

belief system and simultaneously, as a key identity-marker, highlighted boundaries between them. Then by throwing overwhelming quantities of both signs down at the feet of the Others, they symbolically laid waste those boundaries.

The early commentators did not specify how *masi* figuration transmitted group identity. The figures, like those on mats and pots, are non-representational geometric motifs (predominantly elaborations on the triangle) generally organised in grids and panels. McEvelly describes such formal abstraction as depicting 'a mathematical universe ordered from within by a small plurality of eternal forces' (McEvelly 1992: 61) which is consistent with the types of meaning suggested here for *masi*. Despite the cautions sounded by Boas, most researchers have compiled lists of motifs and names, assuming they might reveal associations with the group in a 'this equals that' type of relationship.²¹ I also initially thought totems might be symbolised, following Durkheim's line that the totem 'is the emblem of the clan ... the most easily identifiable symbol of the group ... [which] explains why the representation of the totem is more sacred than the totem itself' (Giddens 1971: 110, my emphasis). But my research has failed to yield a single case where a motif's name led to a plant, animal or object of *any* special significance to the group, let alone totemic.

In Natewa (north-eastern Fiji) each of the three superclans in their particular social/geographical area (*vanua*) reportedly had subtly different design templates for *each* of the different types of cloth they make. The motif 'pool' was the same for all, and was hardly different from those used by other *vanua* in the confederation, so merely cataloguing the motifs could only suggest that the cloth possibly came from the Cakaudrove confederation. But the overall design was so distinctive that to an initiate, a quick perusal would indicate not only Cakaudrove, but the particular *vanua* and the wearer's superclan. This, my informant said, was the way it was throughout Fiji 'in the old days,' but now 'no-one can tell these things.'²²

²¹ Lowie noted that, unlike most of his contemporaries, Boas suggested that 'Possibly the geometric forms arose automatically from technical processes, as Holmes suggested, or from a craftsman's craving to play with his technique — another recognition of non-rational factors. On this assumption, the name or symbolic meaning may be simply a secondary feature, an afterthought which bars conventionalisation' (Lowie 1960: 139).

²² An old woman at the time of our conversation, sadly she was already quite blind, and was unable to show me which designs related to which clans. A group of villagers and I tried for several hours to reconstruct what they might have been, as she gave us verbal descriptions, but none of us was very confident of our results. She died the following year. What *did* result from our contact was (1) her clear and unequivocal confirmation of Lazarus's claim regarding the level of specificity of the group-identification function of *masi*, and (2) her clarification of the fact that this was located in

All of the above led me to three conclusions:

1. that motif names are convenient 'nicknames' appended afterwards by the artists, much as Boas suggested, perhaps as *aides memoires* to classify abstract forms (Ewins 1982b: 16);
2. that motifs developed as purely abstract forms which do not represent, or even symbolise, real objects or convey other literal meaning of that sort, but function metonymically (Ewins 1982a: 11-12);
3. that though Fijian bark-cloth does carry the 'group identity mythification' (which is what Durkheim identified in images of clan totems), it does so not paradigmatically, by likeness or analogy, but syntagmatically, by the contiguities of design elements.

To elaborate:

1. 'Nicknames' may be related to Goodman's discussion of systems of 'notation' to provide 'authoritative identification' from one usage to the next (1976: 128). He suggested that it was not possible to develop such a system for fine art, which relies on the originality of its invention, and thus requires a system of specific and/or explanatory naming. But as discussed previously, *masi* does not operate in the manner of Western 'fine art.' In Goodman's terminology, it is 'allographic' rather than 'autographic' — the social value of the art lies in truth-to-type, not uniqueness. A finite number of motifs are found within the totality of each group's *masi*, used in specific sequences and combinations depending on type, with the totality conveying meaning syntagmatically, as I will elaborate shortly. This may be compared with music, which rearranges a finite number of sounds and structures within a particular context, and for such a system all that is required is a notation. Provided in Fijian art, I suggest, by the nicknames.²³
2. On the second matter, I conclude that while motifs often share names with objects, this is because the object bears an imagined likeness to what are abstract geometrically-based motifs, and not because the motifs are intended to represent or symbolise those, or any, objects. As will be discussed below, Fijian art is very seldom representational in any sense.
3. Schapiro (1969) defined the totality of internal elements of an image, relative to the boundaries and to one another and structured so as to convey intention, as 'the field.' I propose that in all two-dimensional Fijian art, historical and current, the

the field, and was not inherent in motifs.

²³ Washburn and Crowe (1988) and other analysts of allographic art systems (in their case studying these for their symmetries) use systems of notation with letters and numerals to identify the visual components or 'motifs.' I suggest that Fijians (and, I would surmise, other Pacific bark-cloth makers using abstract forms) do very much the same with their motif 'nicknames.'

field is pre-eminent in the transmission of meaning, though one must avoid the 'literary fallacy' of expecting meaning to be specific, literal, or even constant (see Chapter Two).

The relationships which carry information are the particularity of motifs specific to the group *and* how they are arranged spatially in the overall design of the cloth. Sperber, though he argued against a semiotic approach to meaning, acknowledged this when he wrote: 'the interpretation [of symbols] bears not on the elements but on their configuration' (1975: 48), and Douglas had earlier stated:

A symbol only has meaning from its relation to other symbols in a pattern. The pattern gives the meaning. Therefore, no one item in the pattern can carry meaning by itself (1973: 11).

It appears likely, from apparent conjunctions between oral histories and motifs and designs, that as groups migrated they took some of the motifs they had previously used, developed others, and incorporated yet more from the lexicon of the groups with whom they intermarried — hence the recurrence of some motifs in the *masi* of many groups. These were also reorganised spatially over time, so that while revealing something of their origins, the altered overall design/motif combination is particular to each maker group at the time of making the specific cloth.

This 'relational' aspect is consistent with the contextually-specific relationships of kinship and hierarchy that have long been understood as fundamental determinants of individual and group identity. Such relationships are manifested spatially in the layout of the village, orientation of dwellings, interior space of dwellings, and seating positions in rituals and in church (see Toren 1990). It is consistent that dress, as the other significant marker of identity and status, should, in embedding meaning in its figuration, also utilise syntagmatic spatial organisation rather than paradigmatic analogies of motifs.

Representation vs. abstraction

Representational works of art (functioning paradigmatically through likeness), were always quite rare in Fiji. They were limited to: a tiny number (only four examples of each apparently surviving) of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic wooden bowls (e.g. Ewins 1982a, cover; and Clunie 1986: 85-6); some heads (including Janus-heads) carved on the handles of walking staffs and chiefs' food-forks; and a small number of ancestor figures (e.g. Clunie 1986: 82-4). Whether Fijians actually made these figurative works may be open to conjecture — some small 'Fijian' whale-ivory god-figures were certainly carved by Tongans from the Ha'apai Group

(Clunie 1986: 81, 165-6; St Cartmail 1997: 58-60). But it appears safe to say that they were made by men, conforming to the widely-accepted generalisation stated by Teilhet (1983: 47) that Pacific 'women's art, excluding tourist art, rarely portrayed animal or human forms ... [which] are usually reserved for the more important or sacred religio-political manifestations of deities, ancestors, benevolent and malevolent spirits of divine personages ... almost exclusively in the hands of men.'²⁴ Teilhet went on to suggest that originally, perhaps, women made important religio-political forms. As the foregoing should already have made clear, I maintain that in Fiji they still do, with their *masi* and to some extent with their mats.

Vatulele's figured *masi*

The specific regional identity of the figuration on Vatulele *masi* has an unexpectedly recent origin. It is said that during the 19th century, the cloth of Vatulele was of three types only, white *mahi bucobuco* and smoked red-brown cloth (*mahi kuvui*), worn only ceremonially by chiefs, and the ritually-important Samoa/Tonga-style red-rubbed *kumi* (see Appendix 4 for details).

Vatuleleans did not then make the stencil-printed cloth which constitutes most of the *masi* they sell today in both indigenous and Western markets. Knowledge of the designs, motifs and making techniques related to this type of cloth was introduced by Adi Arieta Tegei, wife of Vatulele's first resident Wesleyan pastor, between 1909 and 1914. She was a noblewoman from the island of Gau, a skilled *masi*-maker who used stencil-printing techniques and designs and motifs quite unknown to Vatuleleans.²⁵ When she left Vatulele, she bequeathed the women her secrets, and the printed cloth (*mahi kolikoli*) of Vatulele all dates from that time. While this did not change what they made as their *i-yau ni vanua*, it probably enhanced the

²⁴ There is an exception to this male exclusivity, however, in the ceramic water-bottles in the form of turtles, and one in the National Museum in Wellington of a human, apparently bearded, figure. These would certainly have been made by women. What is unclear is whether they represented a long tradition or were a post-Western innovation, possibly even made to interest potential Western buyers. If such forms could be shown to pre-date Western incursion, however, it would upset the thesis of male/figurative-art female/abstract-art so long accepted in Pacific ethnological theory.

Note, however, Teilhet's exclusion of tourist art. Tourists will often ask why there are no palm-trees or canoes on the bark-cloth, and some women will obligingly produce such motifs for them. I have recently even seen the logo of the VIResort featuring on small pieces of tourist-*tapa* — a stylised rendering of one of the prehistoric faces painted on the cliffs on the west coast (Ewins 1995). The rationale given to me was that since tourists buy many t-shirts emblazoned with this logo as a memento of their stay on the island, they 'might like' *masi* with it on also.

²⁵ *Masi*-making was never the *i-yau ni vanua* of Gau — matweaving was and is (Ewins 1982b) — and an old Gau woman who knew Adi Arieta assured me that she did not learn *masi*-making there.

exchange-value of at least some forms, and it equipped them with a highly negotiable commodity with which to enter the emergent capitalist market forty years later.

That the figured *masi* was able to be quickly assimilated to assume the role of regional/group identifier for Vatulele is understandable by reference to the above description of how such meaning was/is transmitted. Adi Arieta had apparently assimilated several different *masi* traditions, perhaps as part of formal instruction in religious college. She telescoped a process normally resulting from centuries of migration and intermarriage, and gave the Vatuleleans a unique composite system which has now been theirs exclusively for over three quarters of a century. Her gift is commemorated by her having had ‘namesakes’ on the island ever since.²⁶

Standardisation of *masi* figuration throughout Fiji

From my observation Vatulele *masi*-makers show little commitment to the sanctity of their system of figuration, abandoning motifs and borrowing others. In 1980 I obtained from some of the old women (Informants A, B, R) a list of all of the ‘proper’ Adi Arieta motifs. By 1995, when I brought out those fieldnotes, the young women were intrigued by a number of motifs they said they had never seen, with names they did not know, while some middle-aged women also commented that until reminded, they had forgotten some. The micro-evolution occurring is shown in the following list of motif sources on two large *taunamu*, one I bought in 1980 from a highly regarded artist (at that time aged 33), the other I saw made in 1989 by a small group of women, the stencil-cutter (who determines the motifs) a young woman in her mid-20s. She would have learned her art some 20 years after the maker of the older piece.

Motif type	1980	%	1989	%
Adi Arieta (Vatulele)	12	70%	7	50%
Lau (i.e. Moce)	3	18%	4	29%
Autonomously invented	2	12%	3	21%

Table 2. Motif occurrence on Vatulele *taunamu*

Taunamu were chosen for this sample because they are clearly a culturally

²⁶ Church records indicate that her husband trained at Navuloa Theological Institute at Rewa, where instruction in traditional arts and crafts for theological students’ wives (with older women teaching younger ones) was introduced from 1904 to 1907 by Sophie Heighway, wife of the then-principal (Wood 1978: 293; Knapman 1986: 66). Arieta’s having learned here would explain the eclecticism of the figuration, and how she could ‘give away’ information that one would otherwise expect to have been ‘regional copyright.’

embedded form, both examples were intended for ritual use on the island and were thus made with as much care and fidelity to meaning and aesthetics as one will see today. However, I make no claim that the comparison is more than indicative, since a far more comprehensive survey than I have been able to conduct would be needed to give a definitive picture.

A negative reading of the comparison would be how quickly traditions can be lost in largely non-archival societies (which describes most tribal societies to a greater or lesser extent). A positive reading would be that Vatuleleans' very high level of production fosters an attitude to their *masi* as a living artform, not merely a traditional object made for occasional demands. One might therefore expect change, both of form and of content, at a far more rapid rate than in those islands producing solely for traditional purposes.

Tourist-*tapa* would show an even higher proportion of Lauan and invented motifs, indeed it is common to find tourist-*tapa* today which has few or no identifiable Adi Arieta motifs. There has also been a dramatic change in the field. Originally, large bold motifs were repeated in parallel lines along one axis (translation symmetry). Today smaller, more intricate and more tightly-packed motifs are arranged in mirrored 'closed' designs (Plate 2 and Appendix 4). Thus the distinctiveness of Vatulelean tourist-*tapa* has been diminished, and it is frequently difficult to distinguish from that of Moce or Oneata.

It would, of course, be illogical to suggest that Vatuleleans *should* adhere rigidly to a system that was itself an accident of Arieta's personal history. And as Graburn (1976b: 10) pointed out, '[even if] arts are made for local consumption and are never intended for outside peoples or for external display or trade, [that] does not mean that they do not change. Two major sets of forces are at work: material and technical opportunities, and cultural and formal influences.' Both are present here.

One of the reasons for these changes is straightforward: some tourists have at some stage shown a preference for the pretty Moce tourist-*tapa*, its mirror symmetry of design appearing to their eye more 'finished' than Vatulele's traditional open-ended parallel bands of motifs with simple translation symmetry (see Appendix 4). Also, its smaller motif-size also fits stereotypical notions that 'intricate' = 'genuine,' though historically in Vatulele large motifs were the norm. Shopkeepers read this as universal tourist taste, so have increased the price of Moce tourist-*tapa* relative to that of Vatulele, and pressured middlemen to get 'their' makers to imitate the more saleable 'look.' Since tourist-*tapa* has little meaning other than as cash commodity, makers respond pragmatically, and oblige.

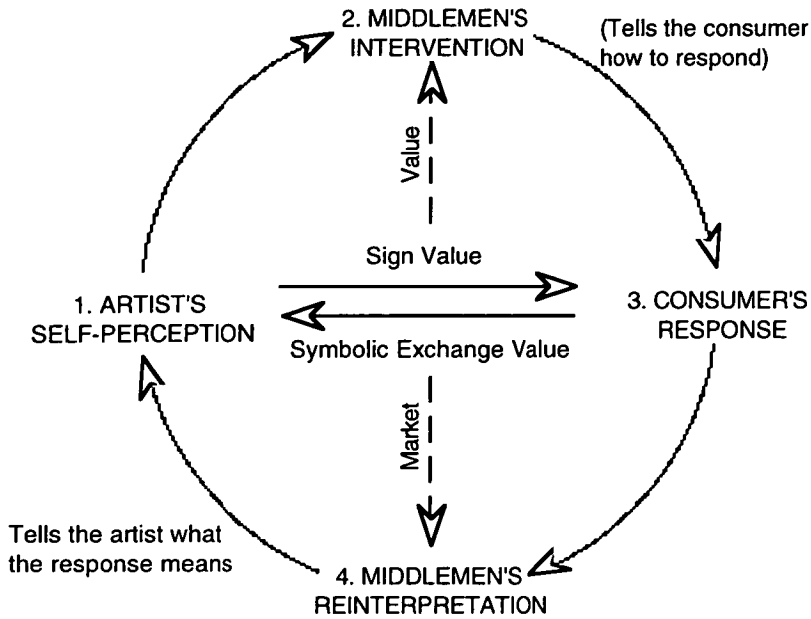


Fig.15. Communication in the tourist art system.

(After Jules-Rosette 1984: 19)

The Government Handicrafts Centre is also influential. It was set up in the 1970s with a specific brief to sustain traditional Fijian craft in all of the still-existing craft-producing areas, but in the past decade management policy has come closer to that of ordinary tourist outlets. They have stopped buying printed bark-cloth from Vatulele, buying only their white bark-cloth and employing two Lauan women who live in Suva to print it. The Centre manager explains that 'tourists prefer the smaller designs of Lau, and the paint used in Vatulele is not waterproof.' However, much of what is being produced is neither Vatulelean nor Mocean, but 'reproduction' cloth imitating a line of wrapping-paper that is printed with photographs of 19th century *masi* from the Fiji Museum.²⁷

The GHC management is highly critical of the quality of even the white *masi* from Vatulele. The Vatulele women are economically not in a position to refuse to sell to the GHC, but find the new policies insulting, saying that while the previous management imposed exacting quality standards, they had no difficulty meeting

²⁷ All of this information derives from an interview with the manager of the Government Handicraft Centre, Adi Asenaca Gonelevu, in July 1993. One of her printers is from Namuka, the other from Kabara, but they both print to order. As well as the 'reproduction' pieces referred to, most *masi* in the shop when I visited it in 1993 and 1995 was after the style of the Moce 'doily' cloth which appears to be setting the pace for pan-Fijian *masi*.

these.²⁸ They see the refusal to buy on the grounds that tourists do not like their bold designs as questionable in light of their substantial sales elsewhere, and also as a criticism of their traditions, and thus of their identity. Viewed from the outside, perhaps the most questionable aspect of the Centre's current policies is its development of its own 'standardised ethnic art,' in other media as well as *masi*. With governmental imprimatur, this is then sold in competition with artists working in traditional artforms which, because they are still socially relevant, have the capacity for development and change, which are stultified by the standardised form.

The pressure from all of these handicraft shops undoubtedly strongly influences such standardisation, and there is developing a 'pan-Fijian tourist-*tapa* decoration,' a hybrid which retains the overall look of traditional Fijian cloth, but with fewer and fewer of the traditional motifs or design formats of any of the producing areas. These changes are not limited to tourist-*tapa*, but rapidly enter culturally-embedded *masi*.

The loss of diversity and regional distinctiveness resulting from such standardisation strikes a chord of nostalgia. But setting that aside, it has been stressed throughout this thesis, all of the systems of meaning which societies employ are subject to constant (and sometimes rapid) 'updating' as the parent culture evolves, as evidenced by the number of invented motifs listed above for *taunamu*. This process of change is nonetheless arguably best-served by maintaining the largest possible cultural 'gene-pool' as an aesthetic resource. The *masi*-maker's scope for autonomous action is circumscribed, as a producer on behalf of the group, by the group-generated intentionality and signification. This actually ensures change in the artform (and always would have), yet mediates, buffers, and directs the extent and pace of change. What is important is whether the modified artform is performing the functions the parent society requires of it.

This is also the reason why some of the kitsch images of thatched huts, fans, and flowers that are expected by tourists may sometimes appear on tourist-*tapa* but do not appear on *masi* made for indigenous use, however willing the makers may be to use them, because they possess no sanctioned content in Fijian culture and

²⁸ While it is possible that the quality of Vatulele *mahi* have declined because of rapid production, the manager is a Lauan woman of high birth, and when I interviewed her she was frank about preferring the products of her own confederation over others. She said that she also no longer buys any products from Cakaudrove, which unquestionably produces some of the most traditional and well-made bark-cloth, mats and fans in Fiji. In a pattern familiar in Fiji, with its fierce parochial loyalties, what was established as a Fiji-wide governmental support scheme has thus recently become a regional benefit scheme, and Vatulele happens to be in the wrong region to benefit.

consequently have no sign-function in the limited domain Eco (1973) called the 'semantic field' in which *masi* is a sign. This is not to say that these forms could not, under appropriate circumstances, *become* Fijian signs in their own right, but those circumstances would have to bear on the identity of the makers and/or indigenous users. To use Eco's model, they would have to have appropriate *content* for those concerned, which would need to be transformed as figuration on *masi*, the whole constituting a sign appropriate to the semantic field.²⁹

A contrary notion has been advanced, which appears to suggest that 'authenticity' and/or 'effectiveness' in the originating system is lost if transformation occurs:

... new design elements and new or added meanings for traditional symbols are rarely found in traditional arts of a ritual or sacred nature, for they are indicative of a degree of change or freedom in these restricted communicative codes. ... Anything beyond ... minor ... artistic change in these aesthetically stylised systems represents an irreversible break, even though superficial formal resemblances may remain (Graburn 1983a: 72-3).

Such an argument appears to view ritual as rehearsive and conservative, and tradition as, if not immutable, at least very inflexible. Such views have been contested throughout this thesis. As long as the art continues to have meaning for the maker/user group, it is difficult to postulate an 'irreversible break.' The cloth which Vatulele makers (and others) are nowadays imitating, that of Moce island, demonstrates this most dramatically. A piece of provenanced Moce cloth in Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, dating from at least 1928 (# E.128.6), provides evidence of what their cloth used to look like (Ewins 1982a: 14-15). At some time, probably *over* some time, the makers introduced radical changes (probably, in the view of several informants, in the post-WW2 era). Typical border-motifs of stripes or 'chain' motifs were replaced by frilly arcs imitating the scalloped edges of paper doilies — actual paper doilies may have been used for the first stencils. Traditional abstract motifs such as concentric circles were also

²⁹ For example, stylised representations of muskets did occur on a couple of pieces of 19th Century *masi* (Clunie 1983), since these weapons had become indigenised and in themselves had become symbols of military power and political influence. Judging stylistically, the pieces of *masi* concerned came from one place, and the muskets may (or may not) have signified something relevant to local group identity — such as either boasting possession of them, or courting divine intervention to provide them, in cargo-cult fashion. Or the maker (or her male clientele) may just have liked muskets, and found them amenable to a congenial stylisation! Unromantic and unsemiotic but entirely possible. What is certain is that they were a freakish and unique manifestation in Fijian art.

replaced by playing-card motifs, in this case named directly because of their source: diamonds, hearts, spades and clubs (*daimani*, *ati*, *siveti* and *kalavo*). All of these derivations are acknowledged, indeed have been explained to me, by Moce makers. Whether the new motifs were introduced to cater to tourist tastes no-one today remembers, but it is these recent forms that tourists find so appealing, and that Vatuleleans and other makers have imitated. What is certain, however, is that although only 'superficial formal resemblances remain,' the cloth used in their own rituals seems to be as deeply culturally-embedded as ever, apparently contrary to Graburn's prognosis.³⁰

Though in Vatulele change in overall *design* (as distinct from motifs) tends to be slower in such culturally-embedded objects as ritual clothing and house-decoration-strips, this is more probably because the 'open-ended' design suits their form better, than because of any perceived need to sustain group identification. Proud as Vatulele women remain of their *i-yau*, they show slight and probably diminishing interest in its figuration as group-identity marker. Perhaps this is because the very period during which Vatuleleans used figuration for the first time coincided with the loss of *masi*'s utilitarian functions, the widespread abandonment of its manufacture by non-specialist areas, and most importantly, radical changes in Fijian requirements for sub-group identification.

In the pre-Western-contact era, when Otherness was limited to different clans or federations of Fijians (perhaps in some places including Samoans and/or Tongans, affines, allies or foes as they were), the 'boundary-establishing' significations in figuration which specified clan identity were undoubtedly of critical importance. As described earlier, rituals could facilitate selective transgression of these boundaries when wished, with the 'identity-marked' goods being presented to the Other groups, the purposeful act of transgressing what could otherwise be a hostile barrier, itself forging bonds between them.

On the other hand, there was no need for *masi* to self-consciously represent an ethnic identity, which was in any case a rather nebulous concept beyond the fact that as the priest affirmed to Williams all, and only, Fijians had *masi*. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, differences between Fijians have been intentionally

³⁰ The illustrations in Kooijman's study (1977) make it clear that the new forms had dispersed thoroughly through both tourist-*tapa* and culturally-embedded cloth by the time of his fieldwork in 1973. In light of the motif and design changes described here, his observation that 'the norms and criteria applied in the production of *tapa* for the community itself' were largely uninfluenced by production for the Western market (1977: 159) requires some qualification.

minimised as a matter of government policy for over a hundred years, first under colonial pressure, and following Independence, under the pressure of ethnic competition. Every Fijian is today perceived as *kai vata* (countryman), in some level of 'imagined kinship' to every other Fijian. But just as such intra-ethnic differences diminished, candidates for Otherness increased, and any construction of Fijian identity must take account of these Others and define boundaries with them — Fiji Indians in particular continue to be defined as 'strangers' or *vulagi* (see Mishra 1993), and there are resident and transient foreigners from many countries.

Also, as pointed out in Chapter Six, Vatulele's *masi* must now assume surrogacy for that of non-producers who have neither claim to, nor interest in, any group identity it may bear — this is as irrelevant as if they use bolting fabric as a surrogate. They are investing in its spiritual denotation and in its myth of Fijianness. These are important where identity (albeit generalised) remains crucial (as in ritual dress and wedding paraphernalia particularly, and for certain prestations), but its specific group signification is not.

When Vatuleleans present their own *masi* in inter-*vanua* rituals, it is a recognised marker of their identity. But today such rituals more often celebrate mutuality than negotiate new relationships, so boundary-definition plays only a minor role. In fact today the rituals that predominate are 'in-house' family affairs or those between superclans/clans on the island. In these, while the passage of *masi* remains important, figuration was introduced long after the island became a single *vanua*, so it has never possessed an intra-island group-distinguishing role.

Today the affirmation of ethnic homogeneity, notwithstanding its artificial and etic origins, is usually of greater strategic value than the assertion of kin- or place-identity. *Intra-ethnic group demarcation has largely given way to a generalised inter-ethnic group demarcation*, and since it was the former which necessitated the specificity of different group-figurations, 'pan-Fijian' standardisation of *masi* figuration hardly diminishes its effectiveness in performing this changed social role. The mutability of meaning, and the flexibility of the makers in adjusting it in response to changing social needs, contribute to *masi*'s survival where so many artforms have perished.

Not all *masi*-makers are as sanguine about the 'pan-Fijianisation' of *masi* as are Vatuleleans. 'Borrowing' and 'standardisation' are often contested by the original 'copyright owners,' and in fact the highly eclectic Vatuleleans are a prime target for criticism, probably prompted in no small measure by envy of the economic prosperity their *masi* brings them. The situation echoes that documented by Moulin

(1996: 128) for Eastern Polynesia, where recent artistic borrowing between the islands has contributed to growing tensions. She suggests that it is not merely the breach of copyright of itself, but the 'growing political and economic importance of cultural distinctiveness, particularly when defining that culture to outsiders ... as Pacific nations determine the boundaries of local, regional and global culture.'

Fijians would resent, say, Philippines makers breaching general copyright in some way. Within Fiji, discord over local-regional copyright is of two sorts: in more traditional *masi*-making areas such as Natewa, Oneata and Namuka, less involved in the commercial market,³¹ resentment is about boundary-breaches of the group identity still clearly signified in their *masi*; whereas between Vatulele and Moce particularly, the concern is undoubtedly about market-share.

Aesthetics and Vatulele *masi*

'Within a community of similarly conditioned people, consensual standards of quality ... are, within the limits of that consensus, valid' (McEvelley 1992: 67).

If, as proposed above, many of the changes in *masi* are pragmatically logical in terms of changes in its socio-cultural role, are they also able to be seen as a normal aesthetic evolution, as Jules-Rosette (1984) suggested? If meaning is inextricable from aesthetics, the answer is clearly yes. Bourdieu ((1979)1992: 50) appeared to suggest that this is so, insisting on the possession of appropriate and specific knowledge of 'aesthetic context,' which he defined as possessing appropriate cultural capital, to understand art cross-culturally. Assigned meaning and applied aesthetics are certainly both distinctive qualities of a work of art, or of an art genre. They are also inter-related, particularly in the art which, as has been argued for Fijian *masi*, conveys meaning syntagmatically, through the relationship of its components. But their interrelationship does not mean that they are the same thing, nor that their 'evolution' inevitably occurs in the same manner, or at the same rate. Difficult as meaning may be to understand in the art of other cultures, aesthetic canons are more so. Universal definitions of beauty must fail precisely because different societies have settled on different objects and qualities to value aesthetically. Beauty, like Truth, is a culturally contingent concept, and just as elusive. Dissanayake notes that

³¹ For some years Moce functioned as a 'clearing house' for the Government Handicraft Shop, collecting *masi* from Namuka and Oneata and sending it to Suva with its own. This arose, however, as a collaboration between the manager of the Shop and the *Turaganikoro* (elected village head-man) in Moce, and when that stopped, so did the arrangement. Since then Namuka and Oneata have had less access to cash markets (Makasiale 1993).

One can argue about whether premodern ... people have detached aesthetic experiences. Certainly they make value judgements, but their emotional reactions to the arts seem to be to the subject matter and its social or spiritual significance, even when they judge some works to be 'better' than others (1995: 131).

Her remarks are applicable to Vatulele. It would certainly be quite alien to Vatuleleans to look at a piece of *masi* with the 'detached aesthetic eye' with which Westerners might look at their own works of art. One reason is that aesthetic detachment is a modernist cultural construct, and its separation from 'other cultural practices and the social' is a concept again under challenge from several quarters (Lash 1990: 157-67). In Benjamin's (1973) terms, Fijian art is 'non-auratic,' its intention social and political as well as aesthetic, its reception collective and normally in the context of other stimuli (architecture, ritual events) so that its consumption is not under conditions of 'immersion' and/or contemplation, but of 'distraction.'

Having said that, frequently when I ask a Vatulelean *masi*-maker why she put a particular form in a certain place, the perfectly reasonable answer is 'because I think it looks good that way!' She is exercising 'aesthetic intention' as Maquet (1986) would call it, wishing to make an object that satisfies her sense of the aesthetic conventions of her culture as well as those of meaning. But what are those conventions? In the literature, partly because of persistent presumptions of some universal aesthetic, and partly because indigenous aesthetic canons are difficult for an outsider to determine, there has seldom been any attempt to test how they relate to western aesthetics, and whether they have changed significantly over a time.

After some urging, and with a display of great diffidence (*madu ā*), one respected old woman (Informant B) gave me this list of the qualities she valued in *masi*:

- 1 . The whiter the cloth, the better
- 2 . The cloth should be thick, because it is stronger and the paint will not show through to the back (a thickness, and thus relative 'stiffness,' often criticised by Westerners).
- 3 . Apparently paradoxically (given statement #2), she considered the modern multiple-bark procedure inferior to the old two-bark method, yielding a less thin and supple cloth. This may not be a contradiction. The thin younger barks used today are relatively weak and porous, whereas more mature barks (as used formerly) have greater fibre density and strength, yielding supple and fine, yet strong and patent cloth with good 'keep-out,' as Western printers say of the capacity to retain ink on the surface. Production pressure, however, will not permit

a return to the old procedures, which are also more demanding in terms of skill.

4 . The printing should be neat and clean, and the paint bright.

5 . To be 'proper' Vatulele cloth, the designs should be large and arranged in parallel rows down the full length of the cloth, not in closed symmetry as is done today in imitation of modern Lauan design.

6 . In the old days, designs tended to be large and were applied very slowly and carefully, with a very clear result. Today, she said, the work tends to be very fast and is often smudged, because the designs are small and are printed wet-on-wet, without allowing time for drying.

7 . Whatever designs are used, quality depends on how the finished job looks.

One other aesthetic convention, not mentioned by her but deducible from the *masi* itself and the responses of women I have spoken to while they were printing, is the value placed on visual complexity. Except in one specific type of printing called *vābonu*, limited to a couple of types of cloth, in which small asterisk or other simple motifs are scattered sparsely over the white field, the general desire is to fill every square centimetre with printing.

Items (5) and (6) in my old friend's list might be ascribed to memories brightened and sharpened by nostalgia. As pointed out previously, contemporary tourist-*tapa* in Vatulele demonstrates greater care and skill than some museum examples I have seen from the 1950s. Nonetheless, though this exercise was far from scientifically rigorous, the wide currency of all of the above yardsticks was suggested by the remarkably similar responses I received from makers in Buca, Cakaudrove (NE Fiji), the same year.

Aesthetic canons are comparable with ritual templates, and like them, evolve. But in times of stress and change, aesthetic canons have a less focused social function than the intention and meaning carried by art and ritual, and are thus more vulnerable. They also lack the capacity of myths, discussed in Chapter Two, to be 'compressed' (to borrow computer jargon) without serious loss. The standardisation of *masi* designs and motifs discussed above is part of a reductivism occurring in Fijian art generally, perhaps a product of the increasing complexity of their lives which provokes a discarding of the non-essential in all domains. Not only are denotations and connotations encapsulated as myths, but the elements which carry the myths, even the forms themselves, are apt to be essentialised. Neither the Western and indigenous markets factor aesthetics into price, which is determined by size and type only, so here, aesthetics are almost incidental. It is difficult for makers to resist the conclusion that it is foolish to spend a lot of time and trouble making a fine product which only fetches the same as something made

in a slipshod manner. Only when the object is made for their own rituals is greater care exercised, but unfortunately, as any artist will affirm, aesthetic judgement atrophies with disuse, and may prove difficult to summon at will.

An example of their pragmatic approach is the great *taunamu* wedding-screens. Originally intended, as described above, to separate the sleeping area off from the main body of the single-roomed house, today *taunamu* are often hung against the wooden wall which permanently partitions the bedroom off. Accordingly, the red-rubbed section (see Appendix 4) is not seen, and thus those commissioning the *masi* request that it be largely left off, reducing the size of the cloth by about 40%, and the cost by a third. When I asked Vatulele women how they feel about this truncated cloth, they said they are unhappy, but not on traditional or aesthetic grounds — they bewail the fact that they increasingly receive \$100 instead of \$150 or \$200 for their commissions! ³²

It might be argued that aesthetic canons, which have evolved over long periods of time where cultural change occurred very slowly, may have a far longer 'response time' than intention and meaning, to withstand the disruption of rapid change. That could perhaps explain why the aesthetic systems operating in pre-colonial Fijian *masi* generally appear far more internally resolved than those which have been made during the numerous colonial and postcolonial episodes of social stress, and particularly the great acceleration of change and threats to identity that have occurred since WW2. It may also, however, help explain why Vatulele *masi* today appears aesthetically better resolved (in the terms outlined by Informant B) than the 1950s examples mentioned earlier — there has been nearly half a century of 'catching-up time.' This is an optimistic speculation, since given the indisputable creativity of the artists, as long as the artform persists aesthetic refinement will occur following past, and any future, disruption. But the result at the end of this process will inevitably be very different from what existed previously. As with

³² Another example is *kumi*. In 1993 the ex-manager of the Government Handicraft Shop expressed concern that Vatulele *kumi* is today substantially smaller than it used to be — instead of 4-6m, pieces now average 2 - 2.5m in length. She said when she taxed them about this they simply shrugged and said that was the size they make now (Makasiale 1993). From my own observation, *kumi* are also no longer made of traditional double-thickness *masi*, as they were when I first worked there. Form is certainly not irrelevant to the cloth's syntagmatically-transmitted meaning, but its sign-function is being 'edited down' like that of the truncated *taunamu*, and the smaller form is evidently considered to still carry sufficient signification for its current role. Though they command a high cash price, relatively few *kumi* are sold in the indigenous market (Appendix 5) and none in the Handicraft shops. So most are for the makers' own ritual use, and under considerable pressure of work as these women are, they will make what is necessary and no more.

meaning, it is inconceivable that aesthetics will ever restore previous forms.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the meaning that *masi* transmits, how transmission occurs, and how meaning and aesthetics interrelate. The historical role of *masi* reveals that it shares with textiles in other societies the denotation of spirituality, with further layers of meaning added incrementally through the form (shape, size and physical embellishment) of the cloth, and in the case of stained or figured cloth, through its colours and its figuration.

The Vatulelean view is that *masi* and *tabua* are the two principal *i-yau*, and there is evidence that historically they were customarily presented together in a complex resonance of male and female signs which bore all of the ambiguities and alternations which have been noted by other writers for the gendering role of objects in Oceanian societies. The *tabua* was considered male *i-yau* but was originally an exchange-surrogate for women, signifying female reproductive capacity and potential to connect groups, while *masi* was female *i-yau* but an essential sign in all male rites of passage, and signifier of male status. The frequent absence of *masi* from rituals today, while other female *i-yau* (in particular mats) accompany male *i-yau*, has been attributed here to reduced access to *masi*, and the eliding of both *tabua*'s female sign and *masi*'s male sign as they are both subsumed into the myth of essential Fijianess. Male/female resonance today is signified more generally through kinship, and prestation rituals, where the 'sides' in exchanges and the wealth exchanged (*i-yau* and food) must balance male and female gender.

While spirituality inheres in *masi*, further layers of meaning are inscribed through colour symbolism, and through the motifs and designs of its figuration. These form an abstract system in which relationships of all of the elements and the context in which they and the cloth itself occur are critical. Expressed in terms of the semiotic model advanced by de Saussure and Jakobson, meaning transmission in *masi* is largely syntagmatic, rather than paradigmatic as is the case in much Western art.

Taking all of these sign-functions together, *masi* can be seen as a symbol of great potency, fitting Langer's definition of sacred objects as 'life-symbols [which] present the basic facts of human existence' (1957: 124). Many of these original meanings relating to cosmology, status, gender and group identity have in varying degree been subsumed by the larger myth of Fijianess.

There is increasing standardisation of design and motifs. While the basis of this change can be found in Western commercialisation, the fact that it is occurring in

culturally-embedded *masi* without compromising its social role is argued as relating to changes in its group identification aspect, with the definition of Fijian identity in inter-ethnic, rather than intra-ethnic, terms now strategically advantageous. Thus standardisation and aesthetic reductionism are both consistent with the increasing complexity of Fijians' lives, and altered social needs.

Having established the nature of the meaning ascribed to *masi* and the manner of its transmission, it remains to explore the relevance of this to the late-20th Century commercialisation of *masi*. This concerns how the Western free market originally prompted that commercialisation; how the traditional relationships of social value affected the development of cash prices; and how the indigenous market for *masi*, originally a continuation of barter exchange operating within traditional trade networks, has expanded and transformed itself into a cash market, ultimately become far more lucrative than the Western market. Those are the issues discussed in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight

FROM NON-RITUAL TRADE TO COTTAGE INDUSTRY

The various levels of meaning just discussed, and the roles of *masi* as mythified art and ritual prestation-object detailed in previous chapters, have already been stated to have a bearing on its increased role in the indigenous market, supplying urban Fijians and others who have not sustained their own manufactures of *i-yau*. This chapter starts by re-visiting the relationship between the so-called 'gift economy' and barter in Fiji, and arguing that rather than traditional analyses in terms of gift vs. commodity, or kinship distance, Fijian systems of goods circulation are better distinguished in terms of ritual and non-ritual communication.

The limitations of early commercial ventures are then argued to exemplify the economic handicaps placed on Fijians during the Colonial era, making the commercialisation of *masi* the first potential source of reliable income to present itself. Vatulele men's Labour Corps experience in WW2 was shown in Chapter Four to have provoked unprecedented levels of postwar activity seeking other, and more effective, ways to enter the cash economy. The events which led to the commercialisation of *masi* as a tourist commodity, and the resultant marketing strategies familiar in economically 'developing' societies, are mapped. The manner in which the traditional system of assigning social value was integrated with concepts of price in the cash economy is considered.

The indigenous systems of goods circulation coexisted with open-market commercialisation throughout this period, its sign-functions adjusting as discussed in Chapter Seven. Traditional trade mechanisms were also progressively adapted, recently metamorphosing from barter trade into a cash-order business, allowing this sector to eclipse the Western market in economic importance to Vatulele. Finally, some outcomes of this 'industrial development' are reviewed. Its capacity to mitigate urban drift is noted, and also its persistence as economic mainstay of islanders despite the development of the VIREsort. Most importantly, the effect of women's economic ascendancy is discussed in terms of overall gender roles.

Non-ritual goods circulation in Fijian society

Theories of goods circulation have ranged from Mauss's ((1925)1969) depiction of gift, barter and capitalism as an 'evolutionary' sequence, to seeing them as

extremes on a continuum (e.g. Sahlins 1972: 192). But the capacity of objects to be either gift or commodity in different temporal/social/intentional contexts (Chapter Five) is inconsistent with a concept of these as opposed categories, or of ritual gift-giving and traditional trade as extremes on a continuum. Sahlins also suggested that as kinship distance lengthens, the *nature* of transactions changes from generalised ('putatively altruistic') gift exchange to more impersonal and 'unsociable' trade (1972:193-6). But as will be seen, kinship (real or assigned) has seldom been far distant in any Fijian goods circulation, and much of Vatulele's barter trade has always occurred between groups or individuals who were already partners in production/distribution networks that were largely kinship-based.¹

Weiner noted of Massim exchange that it is a mistake to isolate the 'grand' inter-island *kula* from the other circulation of objects that take place (1983: 164-5). Even Malinowski recognised its complexity, proposing seven forms of goods transmission based on intention and expectation ((1922)1961: 176-91), but he still represented these as a continuum ranging from 'pure gifts' without direct return (e.g. within a family), through 'ritual gifts' with the necessity of an equivalent exchange (e.g. *kula* exchanges), to 'trade, pure and simple' (*gimwali*).

In attempting to understand the Fijian market, goods circulation is most fruitfully considered in terms of the level of ritual in the interaction. To revisit Bloch (1977b: 283-7), day-to-day non-ritual communication and 'special' ritual communication are not binary opposites nor a continuum, but components of an interconnected web, merging, separating, and competing for precedence. Different meanings operate depending on the levels of ritual associated with their transfer — their signs and myths can be, as it were, mentally switched on or off according to their momentary role. This flexibility within their own traditional systems has given Vatuleleans, indeed Fijians generally, a far greater capacity to understand market economics than they have often been credited with.

Isolation, transport and markets

The distance of Vatulele from potential markets was always an impediment to commercial enterprise. At the time of Cession, Vatulele possessed only small sailing outriggers, hollow-hulled *waqaniviti* obtained from Kadavu and locally-built solid-hulled *lātoka*. Both had a small deck that would carry only two or three

¹ The term 'real or assigned [kinship]' is used to emphasise that genetic kinship is not the only relationship through which either ritual prestation or non-ritual trade can operate. Kinship in Fijian society is a social construct and a state of mind as much as a genetic condition, and as such can be assigned.



Plate 12. *Boto*: the interisland ferries of Vatulele

(a & b) At anchor, Ekubu.

(c) Women hurrying to catch the 7.00 am departure from Taunovo, with heavy bags full of *masi* for market.

(d) Loading immediately before leaving.

1988; 1994: 318-9), and supports considerable areas of dense jungle and forest. Most of the arable land is on the east coast, the main reason all four villages are located there. However, even there rocky outcrops prevent ploughs being used, making commercial cropping untenable. Above all, there are no rivers or springs, and drought has always been a significant problem, with only a few natural sink-holes, man-made ponds, and since WW2, brackish wells (see Coulson 1968; McInnes 1986; 1988). Recently-built concrete storage tanks for each house provide drinking water, but not sufficient for watering crops.⁴

Apart from plantain bananas (a staple food, and sanctioned male ritual prestation item), little fruit is grown, with only tiny amounts irregularly marketed. Only 2 of 17 families surveyed (Appendix 5) ever market fruit, while garden produce for the others barely meets their own needs. Vatuleans were encouraged to participate in attempts to revive Fiji's earlier 'island cotton' industry in the late-1920s to early-1930s, but that venture collapsed (Derrick 1951: 163-4). Similarly, they were encouraged to take part in the government-sponsored Nadrogā export banana venture in the late 1950s (Belshaw 1964: 39-45), but through misunderstanding their substantial efforts were again wasted.⁵

Fishing

Since the early 1950s, some men have made money spear-fishing or netting, selling to the 'Coral Coast' hotels, but the lack of freezers or ice has always made this precarious (Clark 1993). The advent of the VIREsort has fostered this activity, being on the spot, buying regularly, paying reasonable prices (particularly for more

⁴ A large concrete tank was built in each village in the 1930s, but the first well was not dug until after WW2, by a Chinese storekeeper (Informant Q). Drought remained a regular event, with villagers sometimes forced to scrounge in the jungle for water in rock depressions. Even in this decade the government has been forced to barge water in from Suva. The VIREsort has tapped into a freshwater lens under the island for its water supply, but the villagers still have no access to this. This is viewed by many islanders as an alienation of *their* water, not covered by the surface lease, and the water is seen as being used wastefully by tourists for showers and toilets. Villagers say that similar action by an island resort in Western Fiji totally used up the resource in a matter of years. The resentment has resulted in several instances of vandalism to the pump-house (situated near the village) and pipeline.

⁵ The soil types on Vatulele produce some of the most delicious bananas in Fiji, but also make them appear very pale while green. The agents, mistaking this for ripening, rejected their entire consignment, reducing Vatuleans to hawking them around the streets of Sigatoka, Lautoka and Suva for a couple of shillings a case instead of the ten shillings they had expected, or thirteen shillings they would normally receive in the market (Clark 1993). They still remain wary of government-sponsored projects, such as a pig-rearing scheme a government official was attempting to promote in 1995.

people and little cargo. They were fast, doing the round trip to the mainland in a day, but neither type had a cabin, so everything on deck was drenched during the journey (Informant B). They were impossible for transporting bark-cloth.

Communication was mostly via trading cutters which occasionally brought supplies and took away copra. A ketch bought by the District in 1932 was sold to pay debts before WW2, and for the next twenty years they depended largely on a Chinese-owned vessel from Beqa, which called in erratically or could be chartered for special purposes. It was not until 1957 that a Vatulelean again had the courage to borrow money to buy the island's first large outboard-powered boat, or *boto*, for regular ferry-services to the mainland. The infrequent shipping service gave way to regular and reasonably fast communication. This was one of several congruences that facilitated the commercialisation of *masi*, exactly coinciding with the tourism boom and rapid growth of a market for tourist souvenirs. Over time, other individuals and groups acquired *boto*, and today about half a dozen operate regular services (normally thrice-weekly), carrying everything from foodstuffs to building materials to livestock, as well as passengers, so villagers have an ease of contact with the urban centres of Sigatoka, Lautoka and Suva that is unusual not merely for islanders but even for many mainlanders (Plate 12, f.p. 248).²

Vatulele's commercial enterprises

Despite isolation, from very early in the Colonial era the independent-spirited Vatuleleans showed themselves eager to play a role in the capitalist system and improve the quality of their lives. Only ever encouraged to undertake agricultural enterprises, their experiences epitomise the difficulties identified by both Belshaw and Sutherland (Chapter Four).

Agriculture

The name Vatulele (Vahilele) is unpromising — it means 'sloping rock,'³ from its low wedge-shape and coralline limestone foundation. This rises to low cliffs on the West coast, and everywhere outcrops through the thin soil cover as a jagged honeycomb. The soil, however, is fertile weathered-down volcanic rock (Nunn

² Typically these are shallow-keeled vessels 10 metres or so in length, made of planks or plywood. Deep-sea versions such as Vatulele's have a cabin with a hold of sorts, where perishable goods can be stowed in *relative* dryness. There is usually provision for a mast and sail to be stepped when conditions permit, but the main motive power is one or two huge American or Japanese outboard motors. All are today owned by families, villages, or social groups.

³ Personal communication, Paul Geraghty, Sept. 1993

exotic items like crayfish), and having its own freezer. However, fishing remains a minor contributor to the island's economy. Of local benefit is the fact that Ekubu's two football teams have purchased a freezer, and fish they catch are frozen and re-sold in the village, along with meat they bring across from the mainland. Profits are used for community projects.

The 1980s-90s revival of interest by Chinese agents in Fiji's *bêche de mer* affected Vatulele in 1995. With a major 'Vatulele Day' drive to raise substantial amounts of money for community purposes, many young men formed diving teams (most of them kinship-based), and embarked on a frenzy of diving and processing, capitalising on the \$25/kg paid for some varieties. Concrete slabs normally covered with drying *masi* were covered with curing *bêche de mer*. Buyers visited the island from two Vitilevu-based Chinese firms and in less than 2 months injected over \$90,000 dollars into the small economy. While the purpose was specific, and no-one regarded it as reliable income, elders opined that the young men would want to continue exploiting the easy big money. Many 19th century trader log-books catalogue such ruthless stripping of *bêche de mer* from fringing reefs that took decades to recover, and with unknown ecological ramifications. But no-one from the paramount down seemed to either understand or care — he spoke expansively of 'the riches from the sea' as though inexhaustible. The creatures' survival may rely on the fact that the work will become more arduous and less lucrative as stocks dwindle. Either way, it will not be a longterm competitor to *masi* production.

Coconuts

Early in the colonial period Vatulele, like virtually every island in Fiji, had forest cleared and coconut palms planted for copra production. In 1918 a Chinese general store set up in Taunovo, soon followed by one each in Ekubu and Lomanikaya, and these became the agents and processors.⁶ They also constituted the Vatuleleans' first consistent encounter with capitalism, though much of their business was still barter: 'It was up to you whether you used money, or gear, or food' (Informant E).⁷ In the early 1950s, as part of their postwar 'economic push,'

⁶ The presence of Chinese merchants throughout the islands of Fiji was the norm from an early date. In some places these had already become established by the turn of the Century, and virtually every village of any size in Fiji had its 'Chinaman's store' by the 1930s. They were gradually displaced by the setting-up of the Co-Ops in the 1950s, a process that was complete in Vatulele by the end of that decade.

⁷ *Masi* is not recalled as a trade item, though it may have been to some small extent, like the sea-shells which were collected by the women on the reef for sale to the shop, to be sold-on to other

some Vatulelean men started sun-drying and marketing copra for themselves.

Coconuts were for decades Vatulele's only significant commercial product, 'the only path of money,' reaching a peak production of perhaps 500 tons/year of copra in the 1960s, a boom period when it reached \$560 a ton, and an hour's work could earn a man \$10. However, copra prices fluctuate widely, and plantations become unproductive without systematic replanting (Brookfield 1985). Further, the commercialisation of *masi*-production was established by then, developing as copra prices fell, and coming to gross between two and three times as much as copra.⁸ The commercialisation of *masi* also democratised access to money, as access to coconut plantations was limited to the land-rich clans with large plantations, whereas every family has access to enough land for at least a small *masi* plantation (see Appendix 5:12).

The introduction of local ferries, while facilitating the *masi* trade, created problems for the copra industry. By the 1960s *boto* had started bringing in most of the island's supplies, but proprietors of inter-island cutters declined to visit unless they had full holds each way. Charters were very expensive, but the *boto* were too small to fill the breach. Finally, the closure of some processing plants in the 1980s necessitated double shipment, via Suva to Vanualevu. By the late 1980s, with copra prices sometimes falling as low as \$300/ton, reportedly no copra was being made or nuts sold except from Bouwaqa, which has the smallest *masi* production.

Clearly, only the earning capacity of the women made the decision to abandon the exclusively male coconut industry possible. An uncharitable assessment would be that instead of continuing to work their coconuts and contributing jointly to what would be a far higher overall level of prosperity, the men are content to work less while the women work harder. Even at the low point of the copra market, and

Chinese in Vitilevu and thence to Westerners or urban Fijians.

⁸ The Report of the Coconut Board for 1993 estimated the income from coconuts to be about half that of 30 years earlier (Cruickshank 1994). Production figures are not available for Vatulele's *masi* and coconuts for the 1960s or 1970s, so to establish some relativity, those for mid-1989 have been used. Copra was then \$340/ton, so 500 tons would have yielded about \$170,000 gross, though costs would have cut that sum by a considerable amount, perhaps by 25% to a net figure of \$130,000. This may be contrasted with an estimated income in 1989 of about \$1,500 per year for each woman producing *masi*, with every household having at least one woman (frequently two or more) who can produce *masi*. The number of women between 15 and 45 on the island was about 200 at that time (Nursing Station estimates), but women would normally continue significant production until they are in their 60s. This might add a further 50 productive women to the total, indicating that Vatulele's net income from *masi* may have been between \$300,000 and \$400,000 that year.

taking all of the costs and vicissitudes into account, processing and marketing would almost certainly have paid better than the \$1/hr for which men were prepared to labour, building the VIResort, in 1989. Perhaps the fact that women's *masi*-earning capacity *surpassed* men's copra-earning capacity was a blow to male pride, that they sought to deflect by shifting to working on aspects of *masi* production, thus participating in the mainstream of Vatulele economics. Whatever the rationale, abandoning coconut production has left the men almost totally dependent of the women's income, which is ultimately a source of stress to both, as will be further discussed.

Cassava

Though it is not grown commercially on Vatulele, cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), locally called *tavioka* (tapioca) is of practical and ritual importance. Though reportedly accepted with reluctance when first introduced to Vatulele by the Agricultural Department in the 1930s, and recognised by agronomists as a mixed blessing (Thaman & Thomas 1980; 1985), this fast-growing and hardy crop has dispelled the almost yearly episodes of severe deprivation, amounting to near-starvation following the frequent summer hurricanes. As well as becoming the island's staple food, some credit the surplus food *tavioka* provided with resulting in the increase in large-scale rituals (Chapter Five).

One articulate elder (Informant Q), however, stated that the change of balance from planting almost exclusively yams and sweet potatoes to planting mostly *tavioka*, did not occur until some time after WW2, *brought about by the need to supply the increasing number of rituals*. His account reverses the emphasis — the increase in rituals was already occurring, *tavioka* giving people the means to provision them. This is consistent with the argument advanced in Chapter Five, that however essential having the wherewithal is, *means follow need* rather than the reverse.

The development of the Western market for *masi*

Given the difficulties outlined above, it is not surprising that when a market for their *masi* did open up, Vatuleleans quickly capitalised on it. However, it was a long time coming:

1 . As described in Chapter Four, the colonial period was one of relative cultural torpor for Fijians, contained in their villages with their neo-traditional life merely ticking over. Art production was at a low level and circulated only through traditional channels. Fijian demand for *masi* was satisfied through the exchange network Vatulele had always supplied, with no requirement for production to

expand, nor indigenous cash market.

2 . In Chapter One, it was pointed out that tourism to Fiji was at a relatively low level right up to the 1950s, and Fijian-made souvenirs largely consisted of items like coral, shells, seed and shell necklaces, and carved canoes. It was suggested that part of the reason for low demand for *masi* may have been because tourist-*tapa* had yet to be developed. The *masi* sold in the markets was mainly ritual cloths intended for urban Fijians, but difficult for tourists and local Europeans to use.

Souvenir demand was just changing early in the 1940s, perhaps due to the presence of soldiers of the NZEF, probably the first large group of long-stay 'tourists' to enter Fiji.⁹ Whatever the reason, it is clearly remembered that the first commercial *masi* was some small pieces of clothing-*masi* (see Appendix 4) taken by two or three men to Suva and sold to Noel Levy, a jeweller whose store was also famous for 'curios' for nearly half a century until the late 1950s.

Mr Levy didn't come to the island. I never heard of *anyone* coming here to buy *mahi*. I only heard of it being taken to the mainland by some of our men on the boat from Beqa. This happened [probably in 1941] after the War started but before the soldiers went to the Solomons (Informant A: 1993).

How the connection was made is unclear, but it was soon interrupted by the exodus of men from Vatulele for war service. Following WW2, the returned FLC members' preoccupation with finding ways to make money caused them to again explore the possibility of selling *masi*. With tourism expanding rapidly thanks to the increased air traffic using Fiji as a stopover port, in 1949 Northern Hotels established Fiji's first truly international-standard 'Resort,' on the Southern Vitilevu coast due north of Vatulele.

The Korolevu Beach Hotel and the development of tourist-*tapa*¹⁰

By the late 1950s the KBHotel had forged two important links with Vatulele:

1 . They acquired a launch and organised *ad hoc* day-trips to the island, providing the greatest contact most had ever had with Westerners. Some bought pieces of the *masi* they saw the women making, and in a short time the vessel's approach became a signal to the women to spread *masi* on the village common, along with

⁹ New Zealand Expeditionary Forces. At least one group is recalled as visiting Vatulele, but they were given, not sold, *masi* 'as a thank-you gift because they were defending our country.'

¹⁰ The information that follows is a composite of accounts from islanders and an interview with Bill and Kathy Clark (1993).

reef sea-shells, recognised as a 'Westerner' commodity since the 1920s when the Chinese storekeepers bought them. These 'shell-markets' are still a feature of tourist visits, today from visiting tourist-cruise vessels and the VIREsort.

2 . A small shop was opened, to market souvenirs to guests, and one of the men who had sold to Levy started supplying it with *masi*. The hoteliers sought and obtained custom-made pieces, small because of the weight allowances of the new breed of airborne tourists, and made in squares which were more appropriate than traditional long or large *masi* for putting on walls or using as place-mats 'back home.' With tourist preferences prevailing over tradition, this was an early, if not Fiji's first, example of the development of tourist-*tapa*. By the 1960s, the shop was reportedly buying a considerable amount, but no figures are available.

Vatulele 'middlemen' or agents

Encouraged by the profitability of their connection with the KBHotel, at the end of the 1950s a few men approached Indian storekeepers in Lautoka, Nadi and Suva (Informants A, B, P). Persuaded that the market for souvenirs was becoming lucrative, these became customers. Formerly only making *masi* for ritual clothing/prestation goods or for barter, women began to increase production as this cash market was established, and the number of Vatulele's 'professional' middlemen grew. As might be expected in light of Fijians' equivocal attitude to money, the position of these agents was and remains liminal. Their role is accepted as useful, but their wealth earns scant respect (seen as being earned at their fellow-villagers' expense), and they are the butt of barbed jokes. By contrast, the football teams' sale of fish to fellow villagers is admired, because their profits fund community projects. As Toren commented, 'monetary transactions must not be allowed to confuse the social relations of the market with social relations "in the manner of the land" (1989: 144).

Agents have all been men except for one chiefly woman in Ekubu who regularly takes the produce of a number of her female Nalimolevu kinfolk to Suva to sell-on. Unlike the men, she takes no commission or payment, though she irregularly receives gifts in cash or kind. In part a testimony to Vatulele women's solidarity, she earns much approval from villagers of both sexes, who see her actions as laudably *vāvanua*, befitting a woman of true *yalo vāturaga* (chiefly spirit). The male middlemen, however, normally keep between 20% to 25% of the amount they receive from the shopkeepers, who in turn mark-up by anything from 60% to 100% to arrive at retail prices. The following prices have been fairly constant over the past decade, with variations between middlemen and shops which do not affect

the base price paid to makers¹¹:

Maker receives: \$5.00 / m²

Middleman receives: \$6.50 - 7.00 / m²

Shop sells for: \$10.00 - 14.00 / m²

In the late 1970s one entrepreneur — a hereditary chief of Lomanikaya, Rātū Kitione Waqavonovono — went beyond the limited role of middleman and became a significant retailer. Under the sponsorship of the Department of Co-Operatives, he established a company with some 200 shareholders and a shop in Suva called 'Handicrafts of Fiji Ltd,' developed links with sources of supply all over the Group, and established markets in the USA and elsewhere. In Vatulele he dealt directly with the co-op of his own kinfolk in preference to those of the other villages. Several times a year they sent 5-6 sacks of typical small pieces of tourist-*tapa*, each sack worth about \$350. Occasionally these were supplemented from Ekubu/ Taunovo, making a total shipment of 10 or more sacks at one time. The efforts of this unusually enterprising man¹² had a tangible effect on art production all over the Group, and nowhere more so than in his home village.

However, Lomanikayans say that even at the height of their relationship with Rātū Kiti in the mid-1980s, they made more *masi* for domestic use and trade to other Fijians, than they did for the non-Fijian market. The death of Rātū Kiti in 1988, and winding up of his firm, therefore had less impact than might have been anticipated, though other outlets had to be sought, and in 1995 the Tui Namō said sales were as good as the 1980s. While two men go to the mainland seeking orders from shops, worth about \$1,000 each month, this is probably no more than a third of the women's earnings. Just as the 1995 survey established for Ekubu/Taunovo (Appendix 5), the rest is from commissions.

Teckle (1984: 441) indicated that during her fieldwork in the late 1970s most sales of *masi* were through the co-ops. She mentioned women selling direct to Indian

¹¹ From notes made of prices between 1989 and 1995 at the Government Handicraft Shop in Suva, Nadi Handicraft, and Jack's Handicraft in Nadi. In 1995 the manager of Jack's also provided a comprehensive price-list (Khatri 1995).

¹² The Fijian entrepreneur is a rare breed (see Fairbairn 1988). Following the Coup, Kasper *et al.* (1988: 129) wrote:

we had hoped to find a number of success stories of ethnic Fijians who had succeeded in modern business. In this we were disappointed. Where Fijians were reported to be acting as entrepreneurs, they were usually frontmen for capitalists of other races.

The number of European shareholders could lead to a similar conclusion in Rātū Kiti's case.

shops, but made no mention of middlemen, though it was they who opened up the market and at least half a dozen of them were operating consistently from immediately after their demobilisation from the FLC. Even by the time of my first field-trip in 1980, their activity exceeded that of the co-ops, and these have continued to decline as an outlet, compared with Moce where the co-op remains the main marketing avenue.¹³ Probable reasons are:

1. The *boto* have facilitated middlemen getting to Vitilevu easily, whereas the islands of Lau are still dependent on notoriously erratic commercial shipping.
2. By 1966 when co-ops first traded in *masi*, middlemen were well-established.
3. Middlemen are mostly from the chiefly clan, with many connections. Women prefer to sell through relatives — as usual, money flows down kinship channels. Village support for the Lomanikaya co-op was largely loyalty to a local chief, and died with him, most of their production being diverted to an Ekubu middleman of high rank married to a Lomanikaya noble.¹⁴
4. Though they only take relatively small quantities at a time from one woman, the co-ops do pay on receipt (middlemen pay after sale), an advantage if money is needed urgently. Sometimes women go to Vitilevu and do their own direct selling, obtaining retail prices. Thus women interviewed say they mainly use the co-ops to obtain (or pay off) credit for food and goods — an extension of traditional barter.

¹³ As mentioned previously, the Taunovo Co-Operative Society Ltd. was the first to apply for registration, in 1952, but it did not record any trading in *masi* until 1966. Those of Ekubu and Lomanikaya did not apply for registration until 1 October 1963, but started trading in *masi* in 1966, the same year as Taunovo. The Bouwaqa Co-Op never recorded any sales of *masi*, in keeping with the fact that, for reasons that remain unclear, that village has never produced a great deal of *masi*.

¹⁴ In 1989 this middleman said 6 sacks of tourist-*tapa* for \$2,400 was typical of his 15-20 selling trips to 'his' shop in Nadi each year. Another said in 1993 that in the *ogaoga* for Vatulele Day he had been given 5 sacks of tourist-*tapa*, which he sold for \$3,100, with a further 3 sacks a fortnight later yielding \$2,000. He made a trip every 3-4 weeks and estimated that he averaged about \$25,000 p.a. in sales. If that figure is multiplied by 8 (the average number of middlemen operating at any one time) it shows a contribution to Vatulele's 'black economy' of \$200,000. But the 1995 survey (Appendix 5) suggested that sales to middlemen, co-ops and direct sales represent less than a quarter as much as sales to other Fijians via *ota* and *vih ā*. All told, the 160 + households of the three main producing villages may thus be generating about \$1,000,000 p.a., an average of just under \$1,000 per man, woman and child on the island and far in excess of the standard figure of \$1,000 per household that women always admit to. They fear anything about their income being written down, since their earnings are officially deemed to be below tax thresholds, and they will always give very low figures when asked.

The indigenous market

[There is] a certain propensity in human nature ... to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another (Adam Smith (1776)1976: Ch.2).

Many older informants assert that bark-cloth production for tourism *never* exceeded that being made for Fijian use. Though in the absence of any documentation it is impossible to prove this quantitatively, four things support their contention:

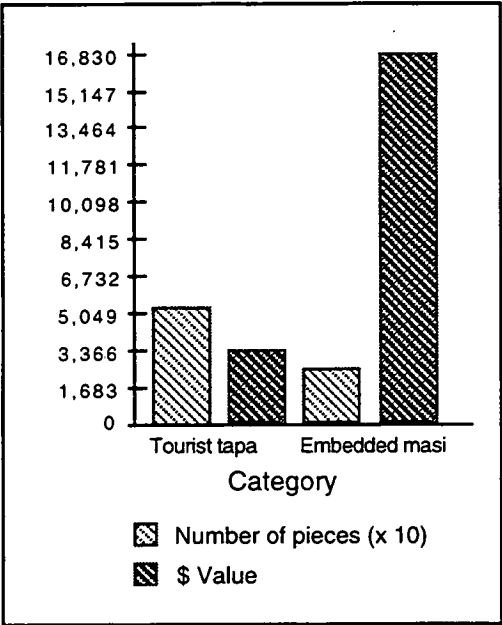
- 1 . Informant A (quoted in Chapter Five) said that prior to WW2 *masi*-production for local use was not great, with all women making *masi* weekly for traditional purposes, which would have included the non-ritual *vih ā* barter trade as well as ritual presentations. But even if each woman was only making a small amount each week for ritual and trade, total production would still have been substantial, albeit nothing like current totals.
- 2 . In the 1950s sales to tourist outlets were still in their infancy, and would not compare with the volume of *masi* made for major rituals or traded for mats. Writing of the late 1970s, when tourist-*tapa* production had reached its peak, Teckle (1984) nonetheless noted the many acres of *masi* that were cultivated and processed specifically for a single wedding or similar major event. The *masi* would be for use in the ritual and also to raise the money needed by selling it. What had occurred was not a diminution in traditional use, but the addition of a cash market.
- 3 . Virtually simultaneously with the development of the tourist market, it became clear that the British would leave shortly (as discussed in Chapter Four), creating a climate of great uncertainty, ethnic tension, and socio-cultural stress which caused a resurgence of interest in traditional identity signs and mechanisms that had been little accessed for years. The indigenous market for *masi* started to grow. The fact that this was virtually invisible to administrators and was overlooked by most researchers did not disguise it from the people making and trading the *masi*.
- 4 . Numerical statistics can be misleading. Tourist-*tapa* is reckoned by square measure, and while a maker counts the number of pieces, her real concern is with the amount of *masi* beaten and stencilled. Not only does a single large *taunamu* measure over 2m², equivalent to 100 or more small pieces of tourist-*tapa*, but its price in the Fijian market is far greater than the cash return for those 100 pieces. Thus though fewer *items* may be sold in the indigenous market, the 1995 survey (Appendix 5) showed that they generate far more income (Graph 1, p.254). Estimates given in that survey of the respective destinations of product for the first half of 1995, based on relative volume, were as follows:

Total to the Fijian market: >70%

Total to the Western market: <30%

When this was itemised, together with the money earned from it, the proportionate gain from the Fijian market was seen to be much greater:

Fijian market = 87% dollar value but say >80%
Western market = 13% dollar value but say <20%, allowing for some of the embedded cloth to be considered as finding its way onto the Western market.



Graph 1. Quantity vs. value of *masi* sales, Jan-Jun 1995

Only one woman of the 17 sampled said that she sold 100% of her production to ‘tourists.’ Finally, this is what was being *sold*, and the survey revealed a great deal of *masi* being made for use in local rituals.

Whichever figure is taken, and even allowing for the fact that the survey covered a short period and used a small sample, the ratios make it clear that today by far the greatest quantity of cloth is made for Fijian use. In Chapter Six the inter-island clients were profiled as those who no longer make appropriate *i-yau* for ritual use, especially urban Fijians with no other

access to *masi* for weddings. This burgeoning ‘ethnic identity’ market appears to be growing far faster than is the Western market (which may actually have declined).

The circulation of goods for the Fijian market has been achieved through traditional channels, the several non-ritual mechanisms being employed flexibly as appropriate to the situation. As in Weiner’s picture of Massim goods transfer cited above, Vatulleans require little or no mental ‘gear-changing’ as they operate the system, but move smoothly and confidently through almost infinite combinations and permutations of intimacy, impersonality, ritualism and directness.

***Kerekere* or socially-sanctioned ‘cadging’**

The simplest and most pervasive form of day-to-day non-ritual circulation of goods (and services) throughout Fiji is *kerekere*, a system which broadly fits Malinowski’s ‘pure gift’-giving, though it extends beyond kin. *Kerekere* may best be defined as ‘cadging,’¹⁵ and may be levied on anyone felt to be on familiar terms,

¹⁵ Though colloquial, ‘cadging’ is more appropriate than any available academic term. The Macquarie

though most commonly on relatives, and as one might expect, most of all on cross-cousins (*vītavale*). Vatuleans say that they do not expect, or calculate, any direct reciprocation *to* them as givers or *from* them as recipients.¹⁶ The system depends for its perpetuation on the strength of norms and the Fijian's horror of being seen as mean. This means that requests will generally be complied with even at great personal cost or inconvenience to the person being importuned. Fajans has pointed out that 'many events that we call exchange ... can be understood as sharing' (1993: 11). *Kerekere* is certainly that — it is rather like membership of a club, the benefits of which are 'what goes around, comes around,'¹⁷ with the 'club' in this instance being the community. But it goes beyond that. As well as practical benefits, *kerekere* embodies and reinforces many aspects of idealised Fijian identity, so participation provides personal validation in the group's terms.

Nonetheless, its effect on social solidarity is anomalous today. As well as providing communal support, it is continually cited, both in the literature and by Fijians themselves, as impeding initiative and inhibiting the accumulation of capital.¹⁸ People always express great urgency about committing any money they

Dictionary defines 'cadge' as: 'to obtain by imposing on another's generosity or friendship ... to obtain things from others with no intention of repayment' (Delbridge 1981: 279), a definition which accords well with *kerekere*. As might be expected of so pervasive a social institution, *kerekere* is extensively discussed in the literature (e.g. Thomson (1908)1968; Deane 1921; Roth (1953)1973; Sahllins 1962; 1993; Watters 1969; Nayacakalou 1975; 1978; Thomas 1992).

¹⁶ Obtaining from others with a promise to repay either in cash or in kind, is called *dinau*. The obligation for equivalent repayment is clearly understood, but may still end up being rationalised away by a liberal interpretation of the lender's social obligation and borrower's valid expectation.

¹⁷ In the absence of health or unemployment insurance, retirement plans, or other safety nets, such mutual support is critical (Gounis & Rutz 1986: 81-3). It is every villager's guarantee against starvation as long as any fellow villager possesses food, against total poverty, even against the embarrassment of being unable to meet social obligations (such as the goods required for ritual prestation), as the wherewithal can usually be obtained by *kerekere* from family members. It ranges from a solemnly-delivered formal request for substantial help (such as 1,000 *masi* suckers to develop a new plantation), usually accompanied by a gift of *yagona*, to casual cadging of anything that takes the asker's fancy, with no payment of any sort given.

¹⁸ Fairbairn notes: 'Pressure from their families and neighbours to distribute their surplus produce or any profits ... [means that individuals] are often unable to save money for reinvestment or unexpected contingencies' (1988: 66-7). In 1982 the then Prime Minister Rātū Mara was reported as citing as a common reason for business failure the Fijian's difficulty 'separat[ing] his business obligations to make a profit, from his village obligations to help with money' (Fiji Times 4 Nov 1982, cited by Monsell-Davis 1986: 150). Both of the two independent shopkeepers in Ekubu spoke of it as an almost overwhelming obstacle (made worse because both proprietors are of the chiefly line, and refusing requests is 'un-chiefly').

acquire to some project or purchase, before it gets dissipated by *kerekere* with no tangible benefit. This has been suggested by some Vatulleans as an explanation for their willingness to spend so much on rituals. Rituals are the surest way to transform what will certainly be *ephemeral* economic capital into *permanent* social capital for themselves and their extended family and clan.

Kerekere is frequently abused in Vatullea today by those Hindess (1993) calls 'free riders' who threaten the collective good by exploiting without contributing. Even some hotel workers are resented as nonchalant cadgers but slow givers, despite earning large incomes by village standards. Colonial attempts to abolish *kerekere* (France 1969: 155; Macnaught 1982: 20-21), then to regulate it (Sahlins 1962: 203, 441) were accompanied by the imposition of a capitalist system, taxation, and obligations to the church, without concomitant opportunities to obtain money (Chapter Four). This and government's manipulation of Fijian identity fostered the growth, rather than the demise, of *kerekere* for both practical and emotional reasons.¹⁹ Pressures have increased since Independence, particularly psychological pressures toward materialism, accompanying improved communications. Both the economic security it provides, and the centrality of generosity and social obligation to the Fijian self-image (see Toren 1989), support *kerekere*'s perpetuation.

***Vih ā* — traditional non-ritual trade**

Despite its drawbacks, *kerekere* is a serviceable means of distributing goods and services within a small closed community where in practical terms self-sufficiency is impossible. Reportedly Vatulleans have always used either *kerekere* or simple 'swaps' of *masi* or fish to obtain small quantities of goods from kin on the nearby Vitilevu coast. However, when the scale of non-ritual goods circulation increases beyond the capacity of the 'community chest,' a more reliable reciprocity is

¹⁹ Nicholas Thomas and Marshall Sahlins engaged in a lively exchange on the pedigree of the *kerekere* institution (Sahlins 1993; Thomas 1993) following Thomas's publication of two papers suggesting that it was not 'substantivised' or 'objectified' until the colonial era. Sahlins assembled an array of documents which cast much light on the manner in which early Europeans were subjected to *kerekere*, and how they and subsequently the government reacted. But, typical of much Western commentary then and now, the documents left much in doubt about the manner in which the custom actually functioned *within* the society, the issue which interested Thomas. He raised interesting questions about the degree to which such practices were recognised by the Fijians as *social institutions* before outsiders identified them as such, and suggested that colonialism altered the nature of Fijian perceptions. France cited an early debate in the Fijian-language journal *Na Mata* supporting this contention, demonstrating a level of self-scrutiny and analysis of customary practice which was undoubtedly novel for Fijians. The further argument made here is that social and economic stress has always increased dependence on the institution of *kerekere*.

expected. Two issues emerge:

- 1 . without the formality or the inviolable obligations entailed in ritual, it is wise to address the issue of reciprocation at the time of the exchange;
 - 2 . for significant amounts of property, prior arrangements must be made.
- The institution of *vih ā* appears to have been developed to meet these issues.

Large *vih ā* trips

Large trading trips have been made throughout living memory, some to obtain containers of sea-salt from Lomawai or pots from Nadrog ā, but because of their ritual importance, 'mats were always the big thing, mostly from Rewa and Kadavu' (Informant H). In pre-WW2 Fiji, the familiarity and trust required for ongoing non-ritual trade only really existed within traditional production/distribution networks. Therefore, of numerous large non-ritual exchange-voyages described by elderly people, the first involving non-traditional exchange partners only occurred after WW2, to the village of a 'war-buddy' in Eastern Vitilevu (informants P, W).

When traditional networks are used, social connections and identity are inevitably tacitly rehearsed. But the intention is not primarily the social bonding and/or social transformation that are addressed by ritual prestations, and elders stress that *vih ā* exchange has never called for ceremony (Informant A). The most that might occur is when people with ties meet after long hiatuses, they may exchange *sevusevu* of small bundles of *yaqona*, normally prepared immediately and drunk together.

The following description is typical. It is of a trip made to Rewa by 22 villagers from Lomanikaya and Bouwaqa as recently as 1991.

(Informant H): We took *masi* to exchange for mats. We went by *boto* to Korolevu, then by carrier to Lokia [a village on the bank of the Rewa River, about 25 km from Suva], and finally by water-taxi to Lomanikoro [the chiefly village of Rewa]. The *boto* cost \$400, the carrier \$200, and the water taxi was free. We exchanged *sevusevu*, had lunch, and then the *vih ā* took place. The exchange was done in the community hall. Each Vatulelean spread their *masi* out, it was looked at by their Rewan exchange-partner (*matanivih ā*), and folded up. Then that person spread their mats out, and when it was agreed, these were rolled up and taken. Then the next pair repeated this procedure. We spent the night in Lomanikoro, and then came back. I exchanged:

3 <i>mahi kolikoli</i> , 1 medium <i>taunamu</i> , 1 bedcover 7'x5'	1 floormat 6m, 1 floormat 4m, 1 medium tasselled mat, 4 fringed sleeping mats. Total value c.\$240
Total value c.\$235	

This shows how carefully balanced such exchanges are overall, including transport costs and food. Assuming the value of H's goods as typical, over \$5,000 worth travelled in each direction, and over 150 mats entered the Vatulele social economy. This was a modest exchange, others yielded 300–400 mats. With modern transport, it was also very quick — earlier exchanges, even to Kadavu which is nearer, could take two weeks or more.²⁰

Even such large, imposing, non-ritual *vih ā* show important differences from *hōlevu* ritual exchanges:

1. In important rituals, although less *i-yau* may actually change hands than in large *vih ā*, there are several subordinate ceremonies of welcome and farewell in addition to the main event. Most of these involve the presentation of *tabua*, and some of them other *i-yau* as well. In *vih ā*, even those between groups with the strongest of connections, ceremony is minimal and no *tabua* are ever presented.
2. In *vih ā* exchange is immediate and equivalence is agreed upon openly. The visiting group is committed to the quality and quantity of the goods they have brought, so the respondents must 'balance' them, but both sides must be satisfied.
3. By this agreed equivalence, trade lacks the competitiveness characteristic of close relationships, and thus much of the angst or *ogaoga* of ritual prestation 'encounters.' Kinship, when mobilised, brings a range of obligations, inhibitions, and stresses, but here Appadurai's definition of barter as the 'maximum feasible reduction of social, cultural, political, or personal transaction costs' (1986a: 9) is appropriate. '*Vih ā* are easy. The blood makes *hōlevu* difficult!' (Informant W).
4. No social transitions or transformations are associated with non-ritual trade, whereas mediating these is one of the fundamental roles of rituals.

Inter-personal *vih ā* and the cash-based *ota* system

As the above account shows, large *vih ā* trips have still been made into the 1990s, most are small-scale affairs involving one maker and one exchange partner who have agreed on their respective contribution in advance, generally through mutual acquaintances (often, but not always related to one or other side). The actual exchange almost always take place on the Vitilevu coast at Korolevu, where Vatuleleans have many relatives so arranging a venue is simple.

²⁰ It is instructive to compare this account with one of the earliest on record, in Taveuni:

Their manner of trading among themselves ... is entirely conducted by barter. ... each one deposits in a large heap what goods and wares he may have. Any one may then go and select from it what he wishes, and carry it away to his own heap; the other then has the privilege of going to the heap of the former and selecting what he considers to be an equivalent. ... If any disagreement takes place, the chief is there to settle it; but this is said rarely to happen (Wilkes 1845: 91-2).

- 1 . They may begin with a bowl of *yaqona*, which in such a context today is a relatively casual social drink for both men and women.
- 2 . The Vatulleans bring the pre-arranged *masi*, set it down, and move back.
- 3 . The exchange partners collect the *masi* and in its place leave the mats, shop-goods (or money) that have already been agreed upon.
- 4 . They may or may not have a meal together, but if so it would merely be something like parcels of *roti* and curry washed down with tea.
- 5 . All then go home, or either party may linger to visit relatives.

Over the past two decades there has been a very significant change in the nature of *vihā*. Other than traditional *i-yau* (principally mats), cash is increasingly the ‘commodity’ requested by *masi*-makers. The transaction has, therefore, the outward appearance of an ordinary cash deal, and indeed women refer to them as *ota* (orders). Some say they prefer cash because they did not receive a fair measure of shop-goods in a previous *vihā*, but increasing need for cash to purchase all manner of goods and services both outside and on the island clearly plays an important part. For example, their involvement in *masi*-making gives women less free time for food-gathering, sewing and other tasks, so they must buy processed food and manufactured goods.

It is the depersonalised, non-significatory, nature of money as a instrument of exchange that changes *vihā* into *ota*, not any difference between gifts and commodities, or kinship distance. The lack of ritual in *vihā* should not be mistaken for impersonality. The nature of the prior arrangement, and the face-to-face contact of the exchange, personalises even non-kinship associations. Women describing their *vihā* invariably list the relatives, friends, or relatives’ friends through whom things were arranged — word-of-mouth contacts called *vikilai*. These often become regular conduits to other buyers because of their wider spread of mainland contacts, particularly in towns. The situation recalls Gluckman’s comment that ‘where a Borotse barter regularly with another they become “friends” and then perhaps “blood-brothers” — quasi-kinsmen’ (1965: 49). That *vihā* are still thought of in kinship or quasi-kinship terms is evidenced by the fact that these go-betweens are never paid a commission for their role. They may (or may not) receive small gifts from either or both parties at some future time.

The 1995 survey (Appendix 5) showed that *vihā* for goods had dwindled to a tiny percent of sales, only about 10% even of the ritual cloths such as *taunamu* and *kumi* being transacted this way. Some women, however, made the point that they still do request exchange-goods rather than cash, particularly mats, but also furniture, cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery, or bed linen. The reasons they

state include the following:

- 1 . they still prefer the *vāvanua* way of trading especially with *i-yau* like mats;
- 2 . they seldom get to town to buy shop goods for themselves;
- 3 . some goods can be stored and given as gifts in wedding *tevutevu* if necessary;
- 4 . their husbands cannot take the money from them to buy cigarettes or *yaqona*;
- 5 . (probably most important) it is far less likely that others will *kerekere* the goods from them, particularly large items like chairs and wardrobes, whereas the presence of cash seems to be immediately known to, and attract swarms of, importunate friends and relatives.

If there is a lot of work in the contract a woman might in theory share it with other kin. In practice, she will usually attempt to do it herself or with immediate family, to maximise earnings. In 1993 a woman in late middle-age (Interviewee E10) was completing a very large commission for the chiefly investiture of affines in the Mamanuca Islands West of Vitilevu, for which she was to receive several thousand dollars. Her husband worked on it with her for weeks, doing much of the heavy beating as well as other tasks, to avoid having to involve others.

In the early 1980s it remained normal for young unmarried women (even if not closely related) to be 'borrowed' (i.e. asked to leave their own work and help out) when large amounts of ritual *masi* needed making, or even if large commissions were being undertaken. Their only payment was being well fed while the work went on. But times have changed. Today they expect to be paid in cash for such help, and will return to their own homes to eat, the whole matter being a business transaction. But for close family, they will share meals while the work goes on, and will probably be 'paid' by similar help being given to them at a future time. The system of sharing, therefore, has not gone, but the social boundaries within which it occurs have contracted as money intrudes.

The *vikilai* system, and many of the same go-between contacts, have transferred into the *ota* system. Thus just as the *vihā* system utilised the traditional networks of production and distribution but de-ritualised the exchange process, the *ota* system goes a step further, utilising the neo-traditional networks of go-betweens, but de-personalising the exchange process through the introduction of cash. Several women said in 1995 that they had never met those commissioning *masi* for cash, and that they would send the completed item(s) to Suva, Lautoka or wherever with a third party who was going there, who would simply hand over the goods and bring back the cash. Should that form of impersonality become standard, as appears to be happening, all that would remain of the *vāvanua* system of non-ritual

exchange would be that the transactions would still be with other Fijians.

Social value and commodity price

As recently as 1995, an intelligent and influential Taunovo man highlighted the confusion this can generate in Fijians' self images. In a 'Vatulele-Day' cash-drive, the enthusiasm of the occasion had caused him to contribute about \$380, money he had been saving up to repair the leaking roof on his house, and nearly double the amount his household had been expected to contribute. He complained:

We don't really know how to use money. It just runs through our hands. We know how to use our own *i-yau*, *tabua*, food, stuff like that. But money is out of control. We try to use money the same way we use *i-yau*. But we know how much *i-yau* to give. We don't know how much money is the right amount (Informant G).

The point is that money is a social construct as much as *i-yau*, but they operate within different semantic fields whose overlaps are irregular. When buying a lantern or an outboard engine in Suva, Vatuleleans have no difficulty with money, since they are trading two commodities (cash and object) neither of which has any traditional social value for them, and which they therefore only think of in relation to one another. But there is a disjuncture between two types of value in the ritual context, and G's difficulty was trying to translate from cash, an abstract with still-unstable meaning and no direct social value in the Vatulelean semantic field, to ritual value, without the intermediacy of sanctioned goods, which he could have used as yardsticks.

In terms of the commercialisation of *masi* in the cash market, the translation has been in the opposite direction — from social value into price — and this has also been problematic. Gregory (1982: 109) observed that in traditional exchange systems gifts have rank whereas commodities have price. Such a distinction endorses what Elster (1989: 97) called 'one of the most persisting cleavages in the social sciences ... [that] between *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus* ... the former supposed to be guided by instrumental rationality, ... the latter ... dictated by social norms.' But Lukes (1991) has challenged this dichotomy as he argues for the rationality of norms, and nor do Fijian notions of value reflect such a neat cleavage.

It has been shown that *i-yau* move in and out of the categories of gift and commodity, but *masi* also moves between the open (Western) market and the (closed) indigenous market, and cash prices of *masi* reveal adjustments between

what each will pay. While shopkeepers must pragmatically base price on the willingness of tourists to pay certain amounts, price in the indigenous market has been extrapolated from the relativities of what Gregory calls 'rank' but is here called social value, employed in reckoning equivalence in ritual prestation *and* non-ritual trade.

'Social value,' as defined in Chapter Five, is pre-eminently sign-value, with functional utility of far less importance. Through the last half-century there have been very great changes in cash value of Western commodities and the earning power of village Fijians, and makers have attempted to locate the cash price of *i-yau* in the commercial market with some relativity to other goods and services — that these prices have been very low is consistent with the devaluation of Fijian labour and productivity generally. But the hierarchy of, and relativity between *i-yau* has remained remarkably consistent, as Tables 3a and 3b show for mats and *masi*. The data comes from accounts of actual exchanges, given by old and young, male and female, Vatulele informants.

The Western market does not recognise this *status* of goods, and one of the difficulties Fijians have had in reconciling the two types of 'marketplace' (indigenous vs non-indigenous) is that there may be a wide disparity between social value (and the price it *should* fetch in the indigenous system), and the price it can fetch in the open commodity market with buyers who are oblivious of, and immune to, traditional values. This may be one reason that relatively little 'traditional' *masi* can be found in tourist 'handicraft' shops — makers prefer to sell them on the indigenous market for more. For example, despite the size and imposing presence of *taunamu*, the manager of Jack's Handicrafts in Nadi said that they do not stock them, since at most a couple per month might sell, though most tourists who enter their shops buy at least one or two small pieces of tourist-*tapa* (Khatri 1995). But small tourist-*tapas* retail for between \$2 and \$5 (even 6'x4' and 8'x4' pieces were only \$20 and \$24 in 1995), and tourists are unwilling to pay for *taunamu* the prices which would result from the shopkeeper and middleman adding their percentages to the \$150 - \$200 makers routinely receive from their *ota* customers for the two sizes of *taunamu*.²¹ By developing tourist-*tapa*, makers have simultaneously detoured

²¹ Shop retail prices over the period 1989-95 were consistently between two and three times the wholesale price women received from middlemen. In 1995 the retail rates in Jack's Handicrafts ranged between \$10/m² and \$13/m² depending on the item (figures supplied by Raju Khatri, Manager). Extrapolating from this, they would want to charge c. \$250 for a large *taunamu*, which would translate back to c.\$120 the maker might get from a middleman, only about 60% of the \$200 (or \$10.00/m²) that she would receive from *ota* in 1995. She would need to be desperate for cash to accept those wholesale prices. *Kumi* are virtually never bought by shops, notionally

around this problem and responded to Western notions of what is a 'useful' purchase. Price relates to what tourists are willing to pay, and as discussed in Chapter Three, it exists outside the indigenous sign-system, and thus also outside the system of social value. The lower return is accommodated by lower 'quality control,' and compensated for by the reliability of the market, while *ota* are irregular and unpredictable. Within the indigenous market, on the other hand, the traditional relativity between different *i-yau* has been directly transported into cash equivalence (Table 3b). Extrapolating these cash prices backward to the 1930s, Table 3a reveals a remarkable consistency of equivalences over time.

YEAR	MASI	MATS
1930s	1 large <i>taunamu</i>	1 floor 6m x 3m, 1 large tasselled, 2 fringed sleeping
	1 <i>kumi</i> 6m x 2m	1 large floor, 2 small plain
	1 med <i>taunamu</i>	1 floor 6m x 3m, 1 small tasselled, 1 fringed sleeping
	1 <i>mahi kolikoli</i>	1 fringed sleeping
1940s	1 med <i>taunamu</i>	1 floor 6m x 3m, 1 small tasselled, 1 fringed sleeping
	1 <i>mahi kolikoli</i>	1 fringed sleeping
1991	3 <i>mahi kolikoli</i> , 1 medium <i>taunamu</i> , 1 bedcover c.\$235	1 floor 6m, 1 floor 4m, 1 medium tasselled, 4 fringed sleeping c.\$240
1995	1 small <i>taunamu</i> c.\$100	1 large tasselled c.\$100

Table 3a. Equivalence of bark-cloth and mats in non-ritual exchanges

1 large <i>taunamu</i>	\$200.00	1 large tasselled mat	\$100.00
1 medium <i>taunamu</i>	\$150.00	1 large floormat (6m)	\$60.00
1 small <i>taunamu</i>	\$100.00	1 med floormat (4m)	\$40.00
1 large <i>kumi</i>	\$70.00	1 small tasselled mat	\$40.00
1 bedcover 2.2m x 1.5m	\$25.00	1 fringed sleeping mat	\$20.00
1 <i>mahi kolikoli</i>	\$20.00	1 small plain mat	c.\$15.00

Table 3b. 1995 indigenous-market cash values (provided by Vatulele women).

The following points should be made in amplification of the two tables:

because they are not attractive to tourists, but in practical terms they are sold on the indigenous market at an even greater premium on the square-measure rates, for about \$12.50/m², women would never sell them for the \$5.00/m² the middlemen/shop avenue would offer.

1. The disparity of value between *masi* and mats is not rational in Western economic terms, as can be demonstrated at every level:

(a) Pandanus leaves and mulberry bark are totally different basic materials, and the plants require different conditions and cultivation practices. However, in a village context, with ample space and appropriate conditions, it may not be unreasonable to deem the cultivation of the respective plants required to make one large mat and one large *taunamu* as roughly equivalent.

(b) The total investment of time (including harvesting, processing of raw materials, and making the finished product) for one woman to make one large *masi* is estimated as one 6-day working week, whereas a large wool-tasselled mat could take three to five working weeks.

(c) As cited in Chapter Five, a woman trained as a matweaver who learned *masi*-making when she married into Vatulele declared *masi* relatively easy technically.

(d) The cost of wool (or even synthetic fibre) would also involve a substantial cash outlay, since a large tasselled mat could use over \$30 worth. The cash outlay for even a large *taunamu* 6m square is only the cost of *togo* mangrove bark for making *keha* paint, or of *keha* prepared by mainland entrepreneurs and sold for \$10/gallon, which is more than enough for a *masi* this size. Nor, since both types of article were in current manufacture and thus readily available, was scarcity or supply and demand a factor.

2. One Survey Interviewee said that when agreeing to a recent exchange she had worked out what to ask for by cash price ('I exchanged one small *taunamu* for one big *vābati* because they both cost \$100'). Thus the two objects' cash price in the indigenous market, which had previously been established on the basis of relative social value (and thus their exchange equivalence), was now being used as a short-cut to determine their exchange equivalence. Other informants, however, who were quite confident about exchange equivalence, said they could not give mat prices because they had never bought any. It may be that over time cash value will become autonomous of traditional social value, but in Vatulele that time has not yet come.

The *masi* industry and urban drift

While it might be supposed that Vatuleleans' ease of access to the mainland would whet the appetites of the young for the bright lights of town, in fact there is less of a problem of urban drift here than exists in many other islands. The retention is not 'immobility of the inept.' The school headmaster stated in 1995 that over 90% of their Class 8s (about 20 a year) normally pass the Fiji Eighth Year Examination, and go on to school in Nadroga, Suva, or Lautoka — an enviable retention rate. Four young Vatuleleans have recently earned degrees, in Economics, Surveying,

and two in Arts (one a woman). They all work in Suva and Lautoka, but most youngsters who go to school on the mainland return to Vatulele on completion, including one teacher-trained young woman at the school.

Perhaps their ready access to urban centres enables evaluation of the 'bright lights,' reducing the attraction of the unknown. And as pointed out in Chapter Three, the energy surrounding its ritual life makes Vatulele far less boring to the young than many rural areas, and heightens identification with it. But the strongest factor appears to be both the availability of a secure income from, and the variety of activities associated with, the bark-cloth industry. Vatuleleans well know that unemployment is endemic in Fiji's urban centres, and it takes little to deduce that it is more sensible to earn money on the island and occasionally spend it on a good time in town, rather than risk a penurious existence in town, as the progressively more unwelcome guest of relatives. Finally, the hotel has added to the spice of life, but it employs very few (5% of the population, compared with about 25% making *masi*, and probably about a further 30% principally employed in supporting roles).

As can be seen in the population statistics and graph (Appendix 6), the growth rate has been both consistent and significant since WW2, by no means typical in Fiji's islands today. The Wesleyan minister, originally from Kadavu, in 1995 asserted:

It is the *masi* that keeps people on the island. My own village is more typical. More than half of those we call our own are in Suva or other towns — less than half still live in the village. Many of those still in the village are the elderly and the children who have been left for the grandparents to bring up in the village ways. There is no way for young men and women to earn money in my village. They have to move if they want anything more than just growing *tavioka*.

The paramount chief confirmed that there were less than 400 men, women and children identified with Vatulele but living elsewhere in Fiji, including those who had married out of the island and their descendants, not only those who had left for employment or other reasons. That is less than 30% of the total, as against over 50% estimated by the minister for his village.

The Vatulele Island Resort and *masi*

The only other way of earning a steady income on the island is to work for the VIREsort. The social effects of the Resort were scanned briefly in Chapter Four. Overall it has had little direct effect on the *masi* industry, though like tourism throughout Fiji, it is undoubtedly one of the sources of social stress stimulating

recourse to the identity-reinforcement of ritual and art, and thus *masi*-making.

It does not, however, pose any threat to the industry, since its contribution to the indigenous economy through wages and in-kind contributions is still far less than that of *masi*. Even at an individual level, though a woman at the top of the Resort pay-scale *may* make as much as twice what she used to make from *masi*, the average 45 hours that employees work per week is far above what she would spend on *masi*-making except at times of maximum *ogaoga*. One woman, a maid near the top of the pay-scale, said that she had actually been able to save more as a skilled *masi*-maker, because everyone knows exactly what she earns at the Resort, and she is the target of incessant *kerekere*, whereas they never knew what money she made from *masi* (Informant X).

Although their heavy work schedule leaves most women employed in the Resort little time or energy, and they only beat or figure *masi* occasionally, as a sociable pastime assisting their female relatives, there are fewer than 20 of them. That is not a sufficient number to have had much impact on the island's productive capacity, since even in Ekubu/Taunovo where most employees come from, there are about 150 women of child-bearing age, plus older women still making *masi*.²²

The hotel shop sells a small number of 6' x 4' sheets. The shop pays very well and demands high standards, but the potential positive effect these two things could have on the industry is neutralised by the small amount commissioned and their almost exclusive patronage of only one maker. Originally the Resort employed village women to give demonstrations of *masi*-making, but this ceased and now female staff are instructed to do demonstrations (Informant O). However, the guests generally take little interest in the industry, despite the Resort using *masi* for much of its presentation (soap-wrapping, menus etc.) (Livingstone 1993).

It was mentioned previously that in the organised 'village trips' undertaken by Resort guests, village women organise *ad hoc* 'shell markets' on the village common, but the visitors buy little, and more reef-shells than *masi*. What *masi* they do buy tends to be small pieces of tourist-*tapa* for a dollar or two, ignoring the unusual opportunity to buy the fine examples of large cloths often brought out by the makers, and priced far below handicraft shop prices. A group of these '\$1,000

²² In 1993, hotel-worker sources identified 37 islanders employed, roughly equal numbers of men and women, 16 from Ekubu, 19 from Taunovo, and 1 each from Lomanikaya and Bouwaqa. 21 were 'inside staff,' 11 of them women, earning the higher rates of pay. The total indigenous population of Vatulale that year was 984, 730 of them in Ekubu/Taunovo (Appendix 6), and approximately 21% of those were women of child-bearing age (Ekubu Nursing Station Statistics).

per night per couple' Resort guests interviewed while attending one such market said that price, not quality or size, was their criterion. Against this, their willingness to contribute to a trust fund the Resort has set up for the benefit of islanders appears paradoxical, but is in the final analysis a further example of the paternalism which has beset Western behaviour toward Fijians since Cession — whereas buying villagers' *masi* would enhance their self-esteem and boost their sense of identity, giving them charity erodes both but boosts the self-satisfaction of their 'benefactors.'

Cash income and gender status

In her ethnography of Vatulele, Teckle (1984) gave a thoughtful analysis of the relationship between Vatulele women's capacity to earn money and their status. The still-increasing volume of production, and the introduction of hotel work as an alternate local income source, necessitate revisiting this issue.

Teckle also concluded that status is difficult to adjust with money, though she agreed with the contention advanced here that women's status is secure and valued in Vatulele society in any case. But she felt that through their *masi* production and sale 'women have been able to gain control over their lives' (1984: 455). That may be debatable. It is obvious that women's economic contribution adds to their value to the community, and to their sense of self-worth, but arguably the obligations thrust on them by their principal breadwinner role actually take away some of their control over their lives, without adequate compensation.

On one side of the issue, as Gregory (1984: 318) pointed out for PNG, 'it has become increasingly apparent during recent years that males are not necessarily as dominant in public matters as they may superficially appear to be, and that women may often play a far stronger role in such matters than has generally been recognised.' While men commonly hold the titular offices, in Vatulele as elsewhere in Fiji, the world of women clearly functions in parallel with that of men, with a full range of assigned status. This often effectively mirrors, and equals, the male structure. While the two domains intersect constantly (particularly, as has been shown in this thesis, in ritual), there is also a separation, and men do not interfere in women's domain on pain of being berated by the whole body of women, a response which proves quite as effective as the probable more direct physical response of males to female intrusion in their affairs would be. Vatulele women, therefore, like their sisters throughout Fiji, have always in their own right enjoyed considerable status and associated power.

In Chapters Five and Seven the symmetry of gender in terms of identity symbolism was stressed, and shown to configure the ritual template. While men are the principal actors 'on stage' for most of the action, women play indispensable roles in every aspect of the ritual. As the ones who make and control *masi*, women enjoy the status of its symbolic importance, and never manifest more pride than when they process with lengths of *kumi* in rituals such as 'lifting of mourning.' Some kin-based wealth transfers, like the *tevutevu* in weddings, are conducted exclusively by the women while the men sit elsewhere and drink *yaqona*, sometimes maintaining their imagined superiority by calling out disparaging things to the women as they pass by going about their affairs. Finally, women are the 'keepers' of the group's ritual knowledge — in explaining the intricacies of a ritual, men frequently refer to women for amplification. They may be the principal actors, but the women do much of the direction and stage-management.

It is thus arguable that women's income-earning capacity has *most* enhanced their status simply by underwriting the escalating number of rituals, thereby increasing the rehearsal of their established status along with that of male participants and élites. It is also in this domain that women say they would like to enhance their status, rather than in political or economic areas. But it adds a considerable burden of social obligation to their already heavy load.

In Chapter One, the numerous advantages of cottage industry arrangements were outlined, including the flexibility of work-times, and conditions of work far more congenial than those of their sisters in urban sweatshops. But the people of Vatulele joke about their island having become a 'factory,' and there is a real sense in which the women *have* today become factory labourers, with no choice other than to keep up a certain level of production.²³ Their control of their income is variable, less because their men in some cases take the money away from them, but more because they are generally the principal, and frequently the only, breadwinners.

The difficulty of accumulating capital because of *kerekere* has been discussed above, but more usual is the difficulty of simply making ends meet. The burden of ritual and non-ritual social obligation, as well as the demands of the church and school, falls squarely on women. They often have little discretionary income available even to spend on their own families, let alone on themselves, or to finance any aspirations they may have. One talented young Taunovo mother (Informant N) makes most of the 6' x 4' *masi* sold in the Resort shop for a good return. Her

²³ Working hours extend from about 7am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday, interrupted only by Sabbath restrictions on work.

earning capacity is at the high end of the village scale. But as she said in 1993, she has little control over whether she makes *masi*, or how much. 'After we pay for the school, and the church, and give for all the *soqo*, if I want money to buy food and some nice clothes for my children I must keep making *masi*.'

While the women earn most of the money, it is male elders who make all of the policy and planning decisions for spending it in the public domain, such as the school, the church, and other community ventures.²⁴ Women play no part in the village meetings that determine these, and indeed all other village policies. In 1993 the then-headmistress said that she was the only woman on the School Committee, and had very little influence. This woman is intelligent and forthright, but claimed her views were routinely ignored. There is also a Mothers' Club, but she pointed out that it is not very active as the women are all too busy making *masi*.²⁵

Since Westernisation, men throughout Fiji have lost most of their ancient roles in warfare and religion, in making *i-yau*, buildings and sea-vessels. Conversely, most traditional women's roles remain intact. This often causes a situation observable throughout Fiji, particularly but not exclusively in villages, of busy, industrious and purposeful women but disenfranchised men. When women's productivity is the mainstay of both ritual life and economics, their relative importance to the wellbeing of the community could appear to be almost overwhelming.

The women are not insensitive to this. They almost invariably maintain that they are in partnership with the men, not that they have achieved any precedence or elevated status through their *masi* production, nor that they are exploited. They draw attention to the men's contribution in gardening and maintaining the *masi* plantations on which *masi*-making depends. And the men, for the most part, do work hard in their plantations, and a few even assist with the heavy but less skill-

²⁴ Fundraising is a highly-developed extension of traditional communal self-help. It ranges from a form of 'doorknock appeal' to help pay the schoolfees of children who must go to the mainland to continue schooling, to very major events when large amounts of money are needed for community projects. The latter employ the competitive spirit of Vatulleans, dividing them into randomly-chosen groups which compete to raise the money. The amount which families are expected to contribute is considerable — in the 1995 'Vatulele Day' drive the group to which my family belonged was expected to contribute \$400 per household — a real hardship to families with only one woman earning, and far from the only such demand. The amount of money raised overall on that occasion was \$86,211, an astonishing figure for a community of less than 1,000 people.

²⁵ It is not only the women who increasingly feel disenfranchised in this way. In 1995 a large proportion of the *bêche de mer* earnings of the young men was donated to the Vatulele Day money drive mentioned above. One young man joked wryly to another that they didn't know where the money went, they just worked like slaves to make it, and gave it to the chiefs.

demanding preliminary beating of cloth.²⁶ Every woman surveyed in 1995 (Appendix 5) said that the men in her household had sole responsibility for the plantations and harvesting of *masi* (see Appendix 4, including Plate 13). One grandmother (Interviewee E10), knew neither the size nor even the location of 'her' *loganimahi*, having never even *seen* it in 22 years of married life! She knew only that there were three conjoined plots providing raw materials for herself and three other women.

Therefore, the women's 'partnership' picture of male/female roles, while generous in light of their major role, has justification. In addition, there are increasing numbers of male income-earners — fishermen, hotel-workers, and the groups of young (mostly unmarried) Vatulele men who, following the tradition established by FLC veterans (Chapter Four) hire out for wages on and off the island. The income is generally pooled and used on community projects or facilities, to widespread approval. Such employment provides further sources of income for the community, but even more importantly, feelings of self-worth for the men concerned.²⁷

But the male self-image in Fiji is one of gender dominance, and being relegated to what is essentially a supporting role for the women's *i-yau* makes this image tremble. The tension sometimes surfaces as verbal abuse, short-tempered husbands calling their wives 'lazy' (*vuces ā*) or stupid (*doce* or *lialia*), against all available evidence. The women's loyalty in the face of such machismo is all the more remarkable. Men's enthusiasm for ritual is also increased by the fact that, notwithstanding the female symmetry described above, and women's industry underwriting it, ritual places men centre-stage and rehearses a hierarchy of which men hold seniority, if only statutory and however illusory.

²⁶ Women in Somosomo (Taveuni Island, north-eastern Fiji) expressed great envy when told that Vatulele men cultivated and harvested the *masi*, since their men, they said, insisted that it was women's *masi*, so they should do the work of growing it! Little Somosomo *masi* finds its way onto the market, so its economic importance is minor and the men cannot see a direct personal or community advantage in their labouring in the plantations, something very clear to Vatulele men.

²⁷ In particular, the two Ekubu football clubs, mentioned earlier as selling frozen fish, also work for hire. The twenty young men (*cauravou*) in each team will work for other villagers (e.g. weeding *masi* plantations), such as women without menfolk or hotel workers who have insufficient time, for \$10 an hour total (i.e. 50 cents/man-hour). They also hire out for sessional work at the Nabou pine plantation or sometimes cutting cane at Sabeto, both near Nadi. The two clubs pool their earnings to maximise their effectiveness. In 1992 their earnings bought the materials, and they provided the labour, to build four concrete water tanks for needy villagers. In 1994 they bought the freezer mentioned above. They have also bought a TV and VCR, on which they play tapes of rugby matches and other currently favourite shows, charging a small admission.

Summary

In this chapter it has been shown that despite their determined efforts since early in the colonial period to enter the 'new economy,' Vatuleleans have been able to access very few 'paths of money.' Geology and geography combine to make most commercial agriculture unviable, and fishing is of minor economic importance. Copra, their only long-term money-earner, exists in a notoriously fickle market. They therefore responded eagerly to the possibility of commercialising their *masi*. This arose in the 1950s through the conjunction of three factors:

- 1 . men returning from war service casting about for ways to increase cash income;
- 2 . associated with (1), the startup of indigenously-owned and -run ferry services, facilitating rapid communications with the mainland;
- 3 . the rapid buildup of tourism and growth in the market for 'native' souvenirs.

Thus its mythified signification of Fijianess, and importance to Vatuleleans and other Fijians as a necessary component of ritual, which had ensured that it continued as an important manufacture, in turn positioning Vatuleleans to commercialise it. Commercialisation entailed not only increases in production, but also the development of market networks, involving co-operative societies, middlemen, individual marketing to markets, stores, and interpersonal contacts.

Systems of social value which governed ritual and non-ritual exchange have influenced Vatulelean perceptions of money and Western trade, and have been translated into relativities of price of different *i-yau* such as mats and *masi*. *Masi*'s layers of meaning also ensured that, as the project of Fijian ethnic assertion developed in the shadow of Independence and fears of ethnic domination, indigenous demand increased, accessing traditional non-ritual trade structures.

Traditional non-ritual goods-circulation involved various applications and combinations of the ubiquitous 'sanctioned cadging' (*kerekere*), simple ad-hoc 'swapping,' and the most structured non-ritual mechanism, *vihā*. All of these both accessed and structured interpersonal relationships and individuals' capacity for business enterprise. The transition of the *vihā* into a system of commissioning for cash, called *ota*, has seen production for the indigenous market not merely exceeding that for the Western market in volume, as Vatuleleans maintain has always been the case, but now to also account overwhelmingly the greatest part of Vatulele's cash income.

Masi's capacity to gainfully employ men as well as women has combined with the identity-reassurance both the artform and the island's ritual life afford, to minimise

the urban drift of its youth compared with that from other islands. The importance of the industry to the island has hardly been diminished by the setting-up of the VIResort, either in terms of its input to the indigenous economy, which is far less than *masi* income, or its direct effect on sales, which is minimal.

Finally, the effects of the dominance of this female artform on both the ritual life and the economic life of Vatulele are examined. Women's status is argued to have always been secure in a system in which gender symmetry is embedded in everything from concepts of kinship to ritual roles. Their economic importance to the island does not greatly affect this status except indirectly, in so far as their money underwrites the ritual efflorescence which rehearses their identity and status as much as it does that of traditional male leaders. But it creates further stress by calling into question male concepts of their own dominance and control, threatening their sense of self and of norms, and stimulating further recourse to the identity-affirming mechanisms of art and ritual. It is one of the many ways in which the solution, in Vatulele, has come to contribute to the problem.

In the next chapter, which is the Conclusion, the principle arguments developed in the previous chapters will be summed up and measured against the theoretical models put forward at the beginning of the thesis, seeking a perspective from which to view the current relationship of Vatuleleans to their *masi* and their ritual, and considering the ongoing potential of these for managing change.

Chapter Nine

CONCLUSION

The first objective of this research was to identify reasons for the remarkable success of Vatulele's bark-cloth industry, and gain an understanding of Vatuleleans' strong identification with the cloth itself, *masi*. A number of questions presented themselves: Why does production appear to be still increasing, while many other indigenous artforms have declined? What bearing does tourist patronage and the commercialisation of *masi* have on this vigour? Is such commodification a recent phenomenon in relation to Fijian art, or does it have indigenous origins? How does the apparent increase in production relate to the clearly evident increase in ritual, both on the island and in the wider Fijian community? If so, what are their roles and what is their interconnection? And how does all of this relate to Vatulele's economic dependence on the sale of its *masi*?

The thesis has been structured so as to define the broad sweep of the argument in theoretical terms in the first three chapters, and then to amplify the elements of that argument by detailed description of the Vatulele case-study in subsequent chapters.

The thesis or proposition developed in attempting to answer the questions, is that *art and ritual are coextensively involved in the definition, maintenance and construction of individual and group identity, and can perform adaptive functions to assist groups to cope with change and social/cultural stress*. This process is glossed in the title of the thesis as 'the negotiation of identity.'

The specific social role of Vatulele's *masi* is held to be both historically contingent and mutable, and to occur interdependently with the social role of ritual. Individually and jointly, they are central to the ongoing process of constructing, reviewing, and reconstructing group identity both within Vatulele and increasingly in the wider Fijian community.

The origins of Vatulelean identity and sources of social and cultural stress have been scanned, and a detailed scrutiny undertaken of the manner in which Vatuleleans use art and ritual to define the kinship relations and gender symmetry which underpin their social structures, affirm group solidarity, bridge temporal and social transitions, and at a very practical level, secure the economic base upon which depends their ability to retain control of their identity.

The theoretical basis of the thesis

Tourism commercialisation explanations

It was noted in Chapter One that when material culture is dealt with in its own right in writing on tourism, the analysis and/or prognosis ranges between two extremes, one negative and pessimistic, the other positive and optimistic. The negative scenario tends to adopt one of two positions: either that, along with other indigenous culture, it is apt to be destroyed by tourism, or that it will inevitably and irrevocably be corrupted by it. The optimistic view is that tourism contributes positively to material culture, even to the point of saving it from extinction. But within this view there is usually the countervailing fatalism that accepts that ultimately, all indigenous art in tourism-oriented countries will be conscripted to the service of tourism commercialisation. It has been shown here that very little of the writing accepts the possibility that culturally-embedded indigenous art can persist, let alone come to again dominate indigenous production, as is shown here to have occurred in Vatulele.

A number of reasons for the conventional readings have been discussed, but two appear particularly important:

- (a) The failure to adequately privilege indigenous agency.
- (b) The almost exclusively economic-cum-developmental focus, which ignores the indigenous social role of art.

As Boissevain (1996a) has explored, people in a wide diversity of situations have evolved ways of *Coping With Tourists*. One strategy he emphasised is the quarantining of particularly valued practices (or artforms) from touristic consumption, in an inviolable 'back space' in Goffman's (1959) terms. Also relevant are the conclusions of McKean ((1977)1990) in Bali, and Deitch ((1977)1990) in India, about the persistence of a dual production of artforms. At first glance at least, their descriptions appear not dissimilar to Vatulele, but neither provided sufficient detail to be sure, and neither attempted to analyse the *meaning* of the embedded artform versus that of the tourist object.

Here it is suggested that the coexistence of the two streams of art production relate less to an intentional quarantining than to the fact that they have different meaning for the makers and the consumers, the embedded forms embodying the myths of Fijianness, tourist-*tapa* the myths of tourism. This is reflected in the fact that, though embedded *masi* can be commercialised for the tourist market on the basis that its embedded meaning is simply incomprehensible to the buyers, tourist-*tapa* lacks the sanctioned meaning to play a role in indigenous ritual. The exclusion is

not so much intentional, as unavoidable. The exclusion of the most significant forms of culturally-embedded *masi* from the tourist market is suggested here to similarly not be intentional, but rather a function of its continuing social value elevating the cash price which can be obtained from other Fijians far above what most Westerners will pay.

Tourism has sometimes been credited with stimulating indigenous cultural activity, resulting in the sort of efflorescence of art and ritual noted here. The conclusion of this thesis is that indigenous cultural activity occurs at such unusual levels only when perceived threats to their identity appear to require counter-measures. Though it is clearly not the only one, tourism is almost invariably one source of such stress, and its stimulus may thus be analogised more as an antigen/antibody reaction than as natural flowering in a supportive environment.

It has been argued that the optimistic view that tourism can actually foster or 'save' an indigenous artform from extinction would be very difficult to sustain. Even if there were not the separation of signification proposed above, the mere existence of the artifact is not sufficient to sustain those cultural structures or practices by which it is defined because of the part it plays in them. However crucial that part may be, there are always other factors at play. Accordingly, nor is the absence of appropriate artifacts sufficient to cause the loss of the institution — substitute articles will be assigned meaning, as has been exemplified by the widespread substitution of drums of kerosene for large containers of coconut oil, and, where access to *masi* is too difficult, of bolting cloth for bark-cloth. While a simulacrum may be sustained, perhaps indefinitely, by a tourist or other non-indigenous market, it has been argued that its sign-functions and/or myths are different, so it can hardly be considered a 'saved' artform even if its physical form is similar. Rather, it is a new and separate one.

Nonetheless, it has been pointed out here that a case *can* be made for tourism reinforcing and assisting an aspect of culture which still has indigenous relevance, and the Vatulele example supports it. The tourist penchant for indigenous souvenirs clearly provided a fillip to Vatulele's bark-cloth manufacture when the first cloth was sold from the 1950s on. Their gearing-up for higher levels of production positioned them well to respond to the increasing indigenous demand for *masi* which resulted from the social stresses referred to above. By fostering infrastructure development and guaranteeing a certain 'critical mass,' tourism arguably did help sustain the artform. That is a long way from saying it 'saved it,' however, since had the need for strong symbols of identity not existed within Fijian society, no amount of infrastructure or production of a tourist commodity would

have provided that need. For these reasons, the thesis has concluded that a good deal more is going on in relation to Vatulele's burgeoning *masi* industry, than simply its commercialisation for a Western, tourism-generated, market.

Art and Ritual

What *is* going on, it has been proposed here, relates to intra-island attempts to maintain community and status relationships in the face of anomic forces, and wider Fijian agendas for the maintenance and continuous readjustment of ethnic, group, and individual identity. Many authors have spoken of the relationship of art to identity, but much still remains to be explained about how that functions. Teasing out that issue in relation to Vatulele's *masi* is a major component of this project. The first premise, developed with reference to the contemporary literature of material culture and social semiotics, is that the construction and maintenance of identity through art depend on the assigned/inscribed meaning of artifacts (indeed entire artforms such as bark-cloth) in relation to their social roles. While semioticians have pointed out that all human artifacts contain meaning, here the *intentionality* of assignation and inscription has been stipulated as the defining characteristic of art, artforms, artifacts etc. This argues for the rationality of the process by which societies ascribe social roles to artifacts, but dismisses as irrelevant circular semantic arguments about categories such as art, craft, and handicraft.

In relation to myth, Barthes's contention has been adopted, that when the sign-functions (content relative to context) of artifacts become particularly potent (ergo, their social roles are particularly important), they can become *mythified*. *Masi*, by this process, has come to embody an essential Fijianness, called on in its roles of embracing other Fijians in a collectivity and/or projecting 'Fijianness' to Others.

Such capacities become particularly important, it has been argued, at times of social stress, defined as times when identity (both in terms of social structures and culture) is felt to be under threat. This has been related back through an application of the identity theories of Burke (1991; 1996) and Kavolis's (1972) empirical demonstration of the efflorescence of art at times of stress, which he related to the capacity of art to mitigate social stress, provided that its sign functions are consistent with the myths, current values, and aspirations of the society. His findings are consistent with the efflorescence of *masi* production in Vatulele over the past four decades. This has, it is shown here, been a period of particular exogenous pressures which have generated and/or exacerbated stress both on the island, and in the wider Fijian community for which Vatuleleans produce *masi*.

Social stress has been shown to also cause societies to use ritual to reiterate group 'sentiments' (established norms, histories, and social ordering) and build social solidarity, but also to reconstruct group and individual identity by incorporating novelty in response to new demands, new resources, and new values. The domains of meaning and affectivity of art, myth and ritual are shown here to be coextensive, and ritual provides 'multi-media' events to bring them all together, the effect of each component combining synergetically with the others.

The original generative capacity of ritual relates to the liminal phase through which all ritual passes, as van Gennep ((1908)1960) first showed, with elaboration by many subsequent theorists, including Turner (1993; (1969)1990 etc.) and Boissevain (1992 etc). Liminality provides the potential for societies to re-imagine themselves as they reintegrate. But it is a precarious time of detachment which requires 'physically manifested, temporally experientiable sign vehicles' (Parmentier 1993: 357) to function as anchors, or rather as 'drags' since their signs and myths also are by no means fixed, indeed are capable of endless re-imagining. Once adjusted, those meanings in turn influence change in subsequent rituals. Ritual in Vatulele, as elsewhere in Fiji, is discussed here as being far from the conservative, rehearsive carrier of tradition it has commonly been represented as, with ludic elements and the capacity for substantial re-inscription within a broad template.

The coextensive identity functions of art-as-myth and ritual have therefore been represented throughout this thesis as the means by which the society has attempted to maintain at least a degree of steerage of its culture and its social structures during the process of change, and to buffer the impact of perceived threats to its identity at times of social stress. The result has been the maintenance of a strong sense of a traditional socio-cultural structure, the detail of which is adjusted constantly through a selective syncretic process as it has 'discarded elements that were incongruous, modified others to its purposes, and invented others that accorded with its taste' (Benedict 1934: 34).

It has not infrequently been suggested that rituals are keenly sought by traditional élites because they rehearse assigned status and reiterate the group traditions on which that status rests, and thus 'legitimate and realize social hierarchies' (Tambiah 1985: 155). This does not negate the fact that for all other individuals in the community the stability of their social positions also reaffirms a clear sense of self, and a sense of being valued and respected within one's assigned status at whatever level. Thus through participation in ritual they feel they are exerting some influence on their lives.

The empirical support for the claims

A stated premise of the discussion has been that in Vatulelean society art is not an isolated cultural entity as it has become in the West, but is integral to both of the blurred-edged domains of 'ritual and non-ritual communication' through which Bloch (1977b) has proposed societies carry on their extended dialogues.

The discussion of *masi*'s continuing importance has centred around:

- (a) Vatulelean identity and sources of stress;
- (b) The manner in which *masi* has functioned as myth — its historical role, role in ritual, and assigned and inscribed signs;
- (c) The manner in which *masi* has functioned as commodity — the historical relationship between ritual/non ritual roles, and tourist-generated commercialisation.

Chapter Four has elaborated on the origins of Vatulelean identity, and how that identity has been fashioned, threatened and restructured through internal strife and external influence. Vatulelean identity has been argued to derive at the most fundamental level from the Austronesian culture of the island's settlers. Their concept of self is still primarily constructed in terms of place (origin-place and present association ownership) and kinship (which again references origins, and in turn determines interpersonal connections and assigned status within the group). 'Identifying performances,' it has been argued, have had a special significance because:

- (a) the diverse origins of settlement groups required the negotiation of relationships to form a cohesive community out of often mutually hostile groups, and
- (b) their physical isolation and marginality in the wider Fijian context has always meant that they had to work hard to maintain inter-island linkages.

The cognatic basis of Vatulelean descent has been represented here as part of the symmetrical relationship between male and female sides which configures all Vatulelean life. This has been demonstrated in Chapter Five to operate not only in the ritual template, where the two 'sides' in the indispensable ritual prestations are defined in terms of gender-descent groups, but also in the ascribed and inscribed meaning of *masi* and its relationship with other goods, which interact on the basis of gender, not merely of maker but also of goods definition. These issues still underwrite most of the ritual and non-ritual interaction both intra- and extra-island.

By reviewing Vatuleleans' historical identity since Western contact, and the means by which they have carried on their ritual and non-ritual communication, the thesis

historical contingency and social process in the formulation and maintenance of Vatullean identity. This started with the manner in which settlement journeys provided the basis for Austronesian perceptions of self, and established the connections which to this day establish Vatulleans' place in Fijian society as a whole. The diversity of their origins and the strength of each group's identification with them have been argued here to have both led to civil war in the 19th Century, and generated the level of focus on symbols and instruments of solidarity which have defined Vatulleans ever since.

The colonial episode has been shown to have had an inevitable impact on Vatullean society and identity, particularly the codification of social units in relation to land ownership, the fostering of a traditional lifestyle and the reinforcement of élites' authority. But it has also been argued that this impact was filtered through local histories and modified by the island's remoteness and political marginality.

When told in the 1960s that Britain would shortly be quitting Fiji, Fijians were forced to confront the fact that colonial policies had cocooned them from the outside world so effectively that the only resources they had in good measure were

- (a) a strongly-held adherence to a neo-traditional identity, and
- (b) their traditional mechanisms of village communal lifestyle, art, and ritual with which to sustain group solidarity and navigate change.

That all of these elements were now replete with contradictions and social inequities must have made them seem poor tools with which to confront global economic entanglement and ethnic competition. In the lead-up to Independence Belshaw had good cause to write that Fijians were 'a society whose members are undergoing considerable stress ... [and while that is] a primary element in human creative activity ... there is an optimum beyond which the stimulating results of stress give way to inhibitory and destructive results' (1964: 270). As explored in Chapter Four, the fracture-lines for the stresses Belshaw identified have gone to the heart of Fijian identity:

- the now-questioned moral and political authority of traditional Fijian élites; hostility between Fijians and Indians, which became focused on what is arguably the most fundamental aspect of Fijian identity, the land, where their exclusive title to the majority of freehold excludes Indians from reliable tenure;
- Fijians' virtual exclusion, throughout the colonial era and beyond, from establishing autonomous economic viability, let alone anything approaching control of the national economy;
- attempting to maintain a neotraditional village-based lifestyle with structures and

- attempting to maintain a neotraditional village-based lifestyle with structures and conventions based on a colonially-exaggerated communality;
- finally, pressure to emulate role-models and participate in levels of development and change which were made virtually impossible by all of the above.

Independence exacerbated rather than relieved these stresses, and one result of increasing anxieties was the 1997 Military Coup, with at least two identifiable causes: a perception on the part of many Fijians that they were being eclipsed economically, educationally and politically by Indians, and status panic on the part of traditional Fijian élites fearing the growing internal challenges to their authority and privilege. Meanwhile other issues, such as cultural swamping by electronic media, have been emerging as potentially even greater threats to identity. But the Coup was atypical of the manner in which most Fijians have attempted to cope with change in the three decades since Independence. Cohen (1974: 98) noted that in the face of such change an ethnic group will attempt to 'adjust to the new situation in terms of its own traditional customs,' and it is this project, it has been argued consistently here, that accounts for the efflorescence of Vatulele's art and ritual.

During the last decade, the establishment of a luxury resort hotel on the island has imported many of the issues associated with a powerful, government-sanctioned but inherently exploitative industry in close association with a society that is culturally vulnerable and politically and economically in a relatively very weak position. As discussed in some detail, the management of this particular resort has demonstrated a greater-than-usual degree of sensitivity and benevolence toward the islanders (albeit paternalistic), but notwithstanding that, its presence has raised levels of social/identity stress several notches.

Vatulele's ritual template and *masi* as its sanctioned artform

On the island itself *masi* has been central to the rituals which have been increasingly mobilised since the 1950s. The template for the rituals by which Fijians maintained mechanical solidarity was one of competitive goods and food prestation. As mentioned above, in Chapter Five, using examples drawn from death rituals, it is shown that great pains are always taken to ensure that the organisation of the two 'sides' involved in every ritual maintains an overall symmetry between male and female, both through the gendering of prestation goods and the types and quantities of goods and food presented.

Chapter Six has shown how *masi* was the sanctioned product or *i-yau ni vanua* of Vatulele, and circulated among the members of its network of exchange partners via

system of production and distribution of goods operated through social contracts which organised the division of labour (constituent of 'organic solidarity' in Durkheim's terms ((1893)1960; (1912)1965), but went further by actually regulating and ensuring need.

The conventional anthropological interest in ritual caused an unblinking focus on ritual prestation as the basic economic system of societies like Fiji's, despite the fact that the objective of ritual exchanges has long been recognised as always being primarily social and only secondarily economic. It has been shown here that although they involved a sometimes overwhelming quantity and value of goods, ritual prestations were quite insufficient to keep groups adequately supplied with necessities. These they routinely obtained through non-ritual trade.

The coexistence of these systems is inconsistent with the Durkheimian model, and the way in which economics relates to ritual emerges as always having been differently sectioned in Fiji than the received anthropological wisdom would have it. On the other hand, the utilisation of the same (generally kinship-based) networks for non-ritual trade and ritual exchanges, the circulation of the same goods, and the capacity of powerfully significant artforms to alternate between ritual and non-ritual status, combine to confound conventional wisdom. This was first, that ritual prestation was the basis of the Fijian economic system, and second, that the domains of gift and commodity, or ritual gift-giving and barter trade, are separated on the basis of personal/impersonal relationships, and kinship distance.

Meaning and *masi*

The sign-functions of *masi* have been largely neglected in the literature to date, but it is these that have been argued here to explain its exceptional importance and to have sustained it where many other artforms have faded away. It has been argued that while they are not the 'floating signifiers' of postmodern theory, they are far from immutable in either form or meaning. Kertzer (1988: 174-5) has drawn an analogy with biological evolution with its natural selection, mutations, and genetic drift, concluding that 'In a comparable ... way, symbolic diversity exists in all societies, and the diversity is replenished through symbolic intervention and through contact with other populations having other symbol systems.' Thus the argument of this thesis is that symbol systems like *masi* are, like the other aspects of cultural syncretism described above, a 'melange ... by which we struggle, through a continuous series of negotiations, to assign meaning to events' (Kertzer 1988: 175). This process of absorption, re-inscription and re-interpretation has been shown here to be continuing in relation to the form, figuration, and sign-

been shown here to be continuing in relation to the form, figuration, and sign-function of *masi*.

In a process I described as being not a '*re*-enchantment of art' in Gablik's terms (1991), but an attempt to identify elements of enchantment that still inhere in *masi*, Chapter Seven has explained this system of meaning in terms of the following:

(a) In common with the cloth of many societies, *masi* has been pointed out as still carrying the denotation of spirituality which is evidenced by its documented use in Fijian religion. Evidence has also been marshalled to support the contention, not before advanced, that meaning was inscribed by means of the three colours of figured *masi* (red, black, and white). It is argued that their signs taken together initially comprised a cosmology, connoting symmetries of the spiritual and temporal domains, as well as of gender and kinship. While the specific connotations have today been absorbed in *masi*'s larger myth, their numinous denotations are still evident in its aura, while their social connotations are implicit in its social uses.

(b) Evidence from early literature has been cited to show that *masi*'s figuration has syntagmatically (through the selection and spatial relationship of motifs) conveyed information about kinship and group identity. This assumed enormous importance in the great wealth presentations of pre-colonial Fiji through which relationships between Fijian groups were negotiated, but it has been argued that this sign-function of intra-ethnic Fijian group demarcation has been progressively generalised, myth-like, by the homogenisation of design, into a marker distinguishing ethnic Fijians from Others. This has been cited as evidence of the capacity of *masi*'s signs to evolve in accordance with social need.

(c) Gender symmetry is observable in *masi* figuration and the relationship of *masi* to other powerful signs such as mats and sperm-whale-teeth. Historically *masi* consistently appeared in association with whale-teeth (*tabua*) as 'prime signifiers' or *ulu ni i-yau*. It continues to be regarded in this manner by Vatulleans today. It was the critical marker of manhood, essential to all male rites of passage from birth, circumcision, 'first kill' re-birth and re-naming, up to and including the ultimate 'rebirth' as deity incarnate, the paramount chief. In the earthly domain, it was a marker of male status. In ritual, again as principal female product, it 'moves against' *tabua*. Citing Hooper's (1982) and Clunie's (1986) conception of these as 'surrogate women,' gender symmetry has here been proposed as a movement of the female-made and -controlled *masi* as 'male principle' against the male-controlled *tabua* as 'female principle.'

It has been argued that it was the weight and complexity of *masi*'s multiple layers of meaning that not merely allowed, but necessitated subsuming them within a myth of Fijianness. That weight of meaning imparts to *masi* exceptionally high social value and thus high exchange status and relative trade value. Despite the fact that capitalist systems do not recognise such indigenous status, it has been shown here that in the indigenous market relative social value has been directly translated into cash price, and that the disjuncture between that price and the market-determined price available for tourist-*tapa* helps explain both the lack of esteem among Vatuleans for tourist-*tapa*, and the relative rarity of still-significant types of *masi* in the tourist market.

Despite the loss of specific connotations, the myth remains powerful, and the overarching concerns of rehearsing gender symmetry and epitomising Fijian identity remain *masi*'s principal functions, both in its own right and as a component of ritual. An analogy may be suggested in the sublimation, in Western usage, of the many connotations of wedding paraphernalia. White colour, bridal veils, flowers, rice (now replaced with confetti, a signifier of a signifier) are signs connoting respectively purity, intactness, abundance and fertility. Functioning in conjunction (i.e. syntagmatically), they constitute the 'bride' myth, with each component now referring to that myth rather than to their originating referents.

(d) In considering the overarching Fijian belief-system to which *masi* refers, conversion to Christianity has been presented here as a syncretic adjustment rather than wholesale replacement, typical of the manner in which Fijians have selectively adopted most Western culture. Ravuvu's (1987: 254) understanding of the resultant polytheism has been adopted, with the Christian God located at the head of a hierarchy, followed by founding entities and ancestral spirits and other spirits, then by high chiefs (of whom British Royalty became head) as spirits incarnate, and finally by lesser chiefs and commoners. This has been argued to contextualise Vatuleans' acceptance of assigned status, their persistent loyalty to the church and to traditional leaders. It further explains the emphasis on 'identifying performances' to clearly define all of the relativities in the scheme, and of art/myth/ritual's role in both maintaining the earthly order and mediating influence with spiritual agencies.

Non-ritual goods exchange and the development of cash markets

While arguments put forward here have attempted to broaden the tunnel-vision of economic developmentalism which has dominated many accounts of indigenous art, they have also attempted to show how *masi*'s social and economic roles are intertwined at every turn. Both are critical to Vatulean identity, to how they see

themselves and how others see them. This too is historically-based, since the relationship between gift and commodity has always been less contrasted than many accounts would suggest.

The circulation of goods in traditional Fijian society has generally been described in the literature in terms of ritual exchange, with any mentions of non-ritual trade being ambiguous, enigmatic or superficial. In fact non-ritual trade was always, certainly for Vatulleans and probably for the whole of Fiji, the dominant mechanism of goods circulation, occurring through 'sanctioned cadging' (*kerekere*), straight swaps, or pre-arranged *vihā* exchanges.

Familiarity with this type of in-kind trade has been argued here to have made many aspects of capitalism more straightforward to Fijians than generally credited. Part of the exclusion of Fijians from the economic domain in the colonial era was no doubt due, in part at least, to underestimating their capacity to 'truck and barter' as Adam Smith put it ((1776)1976). It has been argued here that difficulty has arisen far more when cash has entered the ritual domain, since it has an indeterminacy relative to the indigenous value system. The entry of socially-sanctioned goods like *masi* to the Western market has in broad terms been far less problematic.

It was, therefore, possible for Vatulleans, with very little prior engagement with formal capitalism, to commercialise their *masi* immediately following WW2. Vatullean men's off-island wartime experience of the cash society and alternative identity models stimulated a desire for a change to their way of life (now viewed by them as deprived and inferior), and this desire prompted them to seek entry to the commercial market with greater determination than ever before. One extraordinarily important factor in their entrepreneurship, it has been pointed out, was the introduction of inter-island ferries (*boto*), which facilitated access to the mainland and markets for produce. They were thus able to capitalise on the newly-emergent tourist-souvenir market, and in response to demand from their first major customer, the Korolevu Beach Hotel, they developed what was 'almost certainly the first tourist-*tapa* in Fiji. This tourism-initiated Western market grew rapidly, and Vatullean continues to this day to produce the largest quantity of bark-cloth for it.

The commercial development of *masi* generated anomic forces in ways Durkheim would recognise well. Also, the information revolution has ensured that Vatulleans are not immune to the *fin de siècle* anxieties and uncertainties that are besetting most of the world (Mestrovic 1991; Pahl 1995). They have been attempting to maintain control over the nature and pace of change, and the perceived threats to their group identity, using all of their traditional signs and mechanisms,

including language, art, and ritual to sustain a belief in their own value as humans and the value of their beliefs and practices — in other words, in their identity.

The saleable commodity has not only provided the wherewithal for the material and lifestyle changes they sought, but has generated funds to underwrite the mounting costs of the increasing number of rituals. Those rituals have also required *masi* as ritual garb and as their principal prestation goods. Thus for Vatuleans, the commercialisation of their *masi* has at every level enhanced its role in the negotiation of identity.

The wider Fijian use of *masi* and ritual derives principally from the newly-developing urban groupings (discussed in Chapter Four), for whom it is a marker of an increasingly attenuated but even more sought-after idealised, even romanticised, ethnic identity and solidarity. Urbanites have since the 1960s continued to be the backbone of Vatulele's rapidly-growing Fijian market for *masi*, and as shown in the 1995 survey (Appendix 5) now totally eclipse the Western market both in volume of material made/sold and cash return. They, and other Fijians who may still live in villages but no longer manufacture their own identity-marking arts, have suffered most of the same stresses as Vatuleans, and have possibly more focused concerns over ethnic competition with Indians, national politics, global economic responsibility, the rapid intrusion of tourism and other neocolonial enterprises. They buy and use *masi* simply as a marker in itself, decorating their homes, and as the trappings of the rapidly escalating number of rituals to which they too have had recourse, as described in Chapter Four. Their drive to negotiate this rapidly-changing identity helps Vatuleans both by relieving their economic problems, and by strengthening their identity as *masi*-makers and thus reaffirming their social worth.

Thus the indigenous market did not give way to, but grew simultaneously with, the Western market, and in terms of volume of cloth produced, reportedly also continued to absorb the greater proportion of the island's product. With the vagaries of tourism but steadily increasing social stress, the Western market has actually declined over recent years, while the indigenous market has grown steadily.

Chapter Eight has also pointed up important differences in the Western and indigenous markets from the Vatulean point of view:

(a) the Western market is primarily accessed via co-operative societies and middlemen, each selling-on to mainland outlets (primarily Indian stores), and occasionally makers sell direct, mostly via markets in Sigatoka, Lautoka, and Suva.

In all cases selling is totally cash-based and largely impersonal, though there may be connections between makers and middlemen. By contrast, the indigenous market was originally developed as a continuation of *vihā* barter trade, organised first within previous production/distribution networks, and subsequently through intermediaries who continue to lend it a degree of personal contact as it has moved to a cash market.

(b) the Western market has set cash prices on tourist-*tapa*, and certain types of embedded *masi*, on the basis of tourist willingness to pay. These prices bear no relationship to indigenous social value. The Fijian market, on the other hand, has continued to use social value as the determinant of relativities for embedded *masi*. Relativities have been remarkably consistent over time, and have now been translated into cash prices which are far above the exploitative prices now established for tourist-*tapa* and the smaller indigenous clothing-strips which also appear in the Western marketplace. Few Western buyers are therefore willing to pay the 'going rate,' for cloths of ritual importance. This great disparity in return, plus the fact that most tourist-*tapa* is small, means that the Western market accounts for probably not more than 20% of Vatulele's production, both in volume and cash value, facts which were confirmed in a survey undertaken in 1995 (Appendix 5). It is suggested here that the principal reason Vatulele women continue to sell to the Western market is that it is consistent and generally indifferent to quality, while the indigenous market is unpredictable and spasmodic, and group pride demands certain minimum standards for embedded cloth.

The ongoing process and unfinished project

[Ethnic] identity ... is not an archaic survival but ... an ongoing process, politically contested and historically unfinished (Clifford 1988: 9).

This thesis has been my attempt to tell a story of a people and their art, rather in the manner of an Austronesian story-teller, telling of their journeys first through place and then through time. I have tried to show how art and ritual have, from the earliest days of settlement, been implicated in every stage of Vatuleleans' structuring of their society and their belief systems. These have been their indispensable tools for forging a common identity and then sustaining that identity through changes the first settlers could not have foreseen in their wildest imaginings. That the tools are still both viable and vital is testimony to the inherent flexibility of human symbolic systems in general, and this one in particular.

It is also testimony to the fact that success is invariably a case of having the right resources at the right time in the right place. Their relative isolation and political and

economic marginality meant that they persisted with their art and their ritual not because of colonial mantras about preserving tradition, but because it *was* their tradition and there was little pressure to change. When the stimulus did come, and they embarked on a course of rapid change after WW2, it coincided with a number of things: the opening of the first major tourist resort on the very beach where they always landed when they voyaged to the mainland; the interest in indigenous souvenirs on the part of both the hoteliers and their guests; the initiation of the first motor-boat ferry service facilitating fast and easy transport of their *masi*, and finally and ultimately most importantly, the stress of being cast out of the colonial nest into a world full of uncertainty which caused the growth of an ethnic nationalist spirit on the part of other Fijians with a concomitant demand for *masi* as an identity symbol.

All of these congruences, however, would have meant nothing if the Vatuleleans had not been, as I have described them throughout this thesis, both outward-looking and remarkably pragmatic. Part of that pragmatism is their awareness that they are a community of only one thousand residents of a small, geographically isolated and politically marginal island, that their voice in the halls of power will never be heard as more than a whisper, and that their local identity is fragile. Their quite rational response to this knowledge has been to consolidate their strengths and build on them, both socially and economically. But in a tiny community such as theirs, this depended always on the maintenance of community and common goals.

It has been pointed out in Chapter Four that some (particularly among the young) Vatuleleans are becoming more individualistic. But it has also been maintained here that even these people display great pride in their identity as Vatuleleans, and make often substantial efforts to participate fully in the social and ritual life of the island. There is, in short, little evidence of the development of the 'community beyond tradition' composed of aggregations of disparate singularities 'not mediated by any condition of belonging' identified in some postmodern writing as the trajectory of contemporary culture as a whole (Agamben 1993: 62-4; cited by Morris 1996: 237-8). For Vatuleleans who have dwelt throughout their history secure in the *communitas* of their small island, such images would represent not ultimate freedoms but almost unbearable nightmares. Though it has been made clear here that Vatuleleans are aware of, and responsive to, global issues and trends, Vatulele remains a poor place to search for empirical evidence of such 'unfettered' social and emotional detachment. Which tends to support Bauman's (1992: 59) suggestion that this is not a universal, temporally-related, development but a Western one.

'The only antidote' to it, Morris declares, is 'striving for a renewed sense of collective purpose, shared values and the common good' (Morris 1996: 224). In

other words, Morris is advocating for the reconstruction of community in the postmodern West a return to the collectivist strategies which have been argued throughout this thesis to motivate Vatuleleans to sustain group identity and norms. Bauman (1992: 51) suggests that in postmodernity this search is actually being driven by advanced consumerism, through the 'pressure of symbolic rivalry, for the needs of self-construction, ... the search for social approval through lifestyle and symbolic membership.' But though these sound like the traditional norms that have been described in this thesis for Vatulelean society, it may be questionable, for reasons relating once again to intention, whether advanced consumerism will prove to be any better an instrument for forging or sustaining community than has Durkheim's 'anomic division of labour' (Raison 1979: 158-9). In Durkheim's terminology, Vatulelean communalism is *altruistic*, while advanced consumerism is at base *egoistic*: 'in the first, the integration of the individual into the social community, and respect for its values, is the source of the ... act[ion], whereas the second derives precisely from the absence of such integrative ties' (Giddens 1978: 47-8; Durkheim (1897)1952).

Ortner (1984: 137) pointed out that one of the important contributions Lévi-Strauss made was to permit a differentiation between *simple transformations* operating within a given structure, and *great change*, in which the structure itself is changed. The position taken in this thesis has been that there has been no revolution in Vatulele. Vatuleleans have shown themselves to be willing to embrace change rather than fearing or opposing it, and their great good fortune has been in being able to gain great economic advantage by selling the same highly specialised art that has been such a critical instrument of negotiation. Paradoxically, however, it is their very success in both of these domains that casts a shadow over the future that otherwise would look so bright.

The problem does not lie with any foreseeable loss of demand. The pace of global change is increasing rather than diminishing, and the threats to Fijian identity are therefore certain to increase. There seems little likelihood that either Vatuleleans, or their principle customers, other Fijians, will cease needing their art and ritual to negotiate the times ahead. Indeed, it has been pointed out throughout this thesis that rituals have been rapidly increasing in number and scale both on the island and among Vatuleleans' customers, increasing the demand for *masi* both on the island (to resource both the prestations and the sales for cash to underwrite the rituals) and off it. Also, the increasing cost of shop-food, clothing, transport and education on which they are now dependent, and their growing desire for more material possessions and an improved lifestyle, are all demanding increased sales of *masi*.

All of that demand, in fact, is the problem. The relative lack of urban drift, an undoubted social asset, nonetheless results in a steadily growing population, all with women making *masi*. The men are already talking anxiously about the pressure on available land — on such a small island, with the forests being steadily cleared to make space for cultivation, in not many years *masi* will compete for space with the food gardens by which they feed their families (see Appendix 4 for an expansion of this issue). Women are already working substantial hours processing *masi*, and it is not only the *ogaoga* of rituals that today causes them anxiety and stress, but their heavy responsibility as the island's economic mainstay.

If these and the many other stresses described throughout this thesis cause the number and scale of mitigatory rituals to continue to escalate at the present rate, can production increase sufficiently to cope with that as well as the other economic demands? And can the people maintain their economic viability when their time and productive energy as well as their cash is being drained away by rituals? The question, therefore, is not whether art and ritual can continue to be adjusted to meet changing exigencies as well as they have done to date, but rather whether there are systemic limits to the people's capacities and the island's resources. I have no glib answer to these questions. Fortunately none of them is at crisis point as I write, and Vatuleleans have a demonstrated ability to deal with adversity and adjust to change. It is hard to imagine that *masi* will not continue to be a central part of their resources for doing so, as it is so integral to their greatest strength, their community.

Bauman suggests, echoing Bourdieu, that in the capitalist Western world *seduction*, the 'sensual joy of tasty eating, soothing or enticing drinking, relaxing driving... [and] being surrounded with smart, glittering, eye-caressing objects,' is becoming 'the paramount vehicle of systemic control and social integration' (1992: 51). They sound like barren substitutes for Vatuleleans' social bonds: the island home they love, a cohort of people they know, trust, and understand because of shared kinship, values and experiences, all of which they celebrate ritually and signify through their art. Their paramount chief expresses no doubt about the emotional security these afford, and it is proper that he should have the last word:

Why do people stay here in Vatulele? I think the reason is that most of them, when they have been to school on the mainland, want to come back home, because the way of life, everything is easy here, with what we get from the sea, and the *masi* of the ladies. You see, everything's busy. The times have changed. But here they know who they are. On the mainland, especially in the towns, there are so many different people from all over Fiji and other places, it is easy to forget who they are. That's not our way (Racava 1995).

Appendix 1

VATULELEAN / STANDARD FIJIAN VOCABULARY

1. Fijian orthography and pronunciation

Consonants:

The first missionary linguists made some decisions regarding the writing of Fijian, assigning sounds to some letters which are different from those assigned in English. While this is initially confusing, once understood it provides a very simple and accurate phonetic system which has been, and continues to be, endorsed by all serious linguists, and it is followed in this work. The following are the Fijian consonant pronunciations:

b	is pronounced	mb	as in	<u>number</u>
c		th		<u>this</u> (never as in 'thin')
d		nd		<u>thunder</u>
g		ng		<u>singer</u>
j		ch		<u>chime</u>
q		ngg		<u>hunger</u>
z		nj		<u>engine</u>

Some special features exist in the Vatulele language: as in Lauan, 'j' is normally found where 't' would exist in Standard Fijian, and 'h' in the place of 's'. Thus the Standard word *titi* (aerial root of a mangrove) is found in Vatulele as *jiji*, and the Standard *sasa* (coconut leaflet midrib) is found as *haha*. Also, the Standard Fijian 'd' ('nd') is frequently represented by a sound like 'ndj' (as in engine, cringe) and this is written as 'z' (thus *dina* [true] is found as *zina*). Finally, the hard 'ngg' (written as 'q') normally has a softening 'w' after it in Vatulele; this is shown in the spelling (thus *qara* [hole] is found as *qwara*). Exceptions to these variations are not uncommon, and where they do exist, often indicate adopted words.

Vowels:

Vowel sounds in Fijian and Vatulelean are like those of Italy or Germany, and as in those languages, an 'e' on the end of a word is given normal value (thus Vatulele is pronounced Vah-too-leh-leh, not Vah-too-lee-lee or Vah-too-lay-lay). Common practice has been followed here, with a macron indicating long vowels, normally resulting in speech stress. Parts of speech are indicated in brackets at the end of English definitions.

i The single letter 'i' can function as a possessive pronoun, a preposition, or as a qualifier to transform a verb-root into a noun. Traditionally all three were written as stand-alone words, though current practice has moved toward attaching the prenoun 'i' to the noun (e.g. *i yau* becomes *iyau*). Neither approach is without problems, and following discussion with linguists, here a hyphen is used after the 'i' to indicate the connection while keeping the root-word distinct (e.g. *i-yau*).

2. The glossary

Since no dictionary of the language of Vatulele exists, the following glossary results solely from my own fieldwork. To assist understanding, equivalents are given in Standard Fijian and English. These have generally been provided by informants on Vatulele, many of whom are tri-lingual. Wherever possible, I have attempted verification by reference to Capell's 'New Fijian Dictionary,' and I have discussed some of the information I have gathered with members of the Fijian Dictionary Project. I am greatly indebted to them for their time and patience, but they have not edited the following and bear no responsibility for errors that remain, which I must acknowledge as my own.

Voha Vāvahilele (Vatulelean)	Vosa Vakaviti raraba (Standard Fijian)	Vosa Vakavalagi (English)
A (pronounced 'ah')		
B (pronounced 'mb' as in <u>number</u>)		
<i>balavu</i>	<i>balavu</i>	long, tall (adj)
<i>bete</i>	<i>bete</i>	priest (n)
<i>bogidrau</i>	<i>bogidrau</i>	ritual held 100 days after death (n)
<i>bo</i>	<i>bo</i>	<i>yaqona</i> strainer (n)
<i>boka</i>	<i>reguregu vakavanua</i>	presentation of <i>i-yau</i> (goods + <i>tabua</i>) by mourner to those who will 'lift their mourning' (n)
<i>boto</i>	<i>boto</i>	open or half-cabin punt with out-board engine(s) (Eng. 'boat') (n)
<i>buco, bucobuco</i>	<i>vula, vulavula</i>	white (adj)
<i>Buli</i>	<i>Buli</i>	government District administrator (normally a chief of the District) (n)
<i>i-buli</i>	<i>i-buli</i>	block of red ochre clay (n)
<i>Bulou</i>	<i>Adi</i>	female chiefly title, 'Lady' (n)
<i>butaniyau</i>	<i>butaniyau</i>	'Act 2' (reciprocation) in prestation rituals (n)
<i>buto</i>	<i>loma</i>	middle, centre (n)
<i>i-butubutu</i>	<i>i-butubutu</i>	mat or <i>masi</i> for 'red carpet' (n)
C (pronounced 'th' as in <u>this</u>)		
<i>cabo(ri)</i>	<i>cabo(ra)</i>	present ritually (v)

<i>caga</i>	<i>caga</i>	handspan (n)
<i>cagi, cagibula, cagilaba</i>	<i>cagi, cagibula, cagilaba</i>	wind, strong wind, hurricane (n)
<i>cere</i>	<i>cere</i>	<i>masi</i> streamer used by relations in <i>vacadra</i> ceremony (n)
<i>ciba</i>	—	a single felted unit of <i>mahi</i> (n)
<i>cōcō, ibelevu</i>	<i>cōcō</i>	large floormat (n)
<i>covacova</i>	<i>vakatunuloa</i>	open-sided (temporary) shelter used for ceremonies (n)

D (pronounced 'nd' as in thunder)

<i>dare</i>	<i>dari</i>	ceramic <i>yaqona</i> bowl (n)
<i>dave</i>	<i>tanoa</i>	wooden <i>yaqona</i> bowl (n)
<i>doka</i>	<i>doka</i>	midline fold in <i>taunamu</i> , and panel near this on face (<i>mata</i>) of cloth (n)
<i>drasa, dradra</i>	<i>damu, damudamu</i>	red (adj)
<i>dradra ni kehakeha</i>	<i>qeledamu, umea</i>	red ochre for paint (n)

E (pronounced 'eh' as in lend)

<i>e -</i>	<i>- na</i>	possessive prefix (V), suffix (R)
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G (pronounced 'ng' as in singer)

<i>gahau</i>	<i>gasau</i>	reed (n)
<i>gahaunimate</i>	<i>gasaunimate</i>	message from chief of a death (n) (formerly a reed, today <i>yaqona</i>)
<i>gane(na)</i>	<i>gane(na)</i>	opposite-sex sibling (n)
<i>gonedau</i>	<i>gonedau</i>	fisherman (-men) (n)
<i>guhunivanua</i>	<i>matanivanua</i>	chief's spokesman, herald (n)
<i>gwazi</i>	<i>gadi(na)</i>	maternal uncle, MBr (n)

H

<i>hau</i>	<i>sau</i>	high chief or ruler; his authority (n)
<i>hauturaga</i>	<i>sauturaga</i>	elder of high rank, who can perform installation of chief (n)
<i>herau</i>	<i>serau</i>	bright (eg. <i>mahi</i> figuration) (adj)
<i>hewa</i>	<i>lailai</i>	small (adj)
<i>hila</i>	<i>dua</i>	one (num)

<i>hōlevu</i>	<i>sōlevu</i>	ritual prestation ceremony (n)
<i>holi , holi-a</i>	<i>solī, solī-a</i>	gift (n), give (v)
<i>homate</i>	<i>somate</i>	funerary observances (n)
<i>huli</i>	<i>dalo</i>	taro, <i>colocasia esculenta</i> (n)
<i>i-hulu</i>	<i>i-sulu</i>	clothing, kilt of cloth or <i>masi</i> (n)

I (pronounced 'ee' as in machine)

<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>	noun prefix, normally indicating that a noun derives from a verb
<i>ibe</i>	<i>ibe</i>	mat (n)
<i>i-ike</i>	<i>i-ike</i>	<i>masi</i> beater, mallet (n)

J (pronounced 'ch' as in chime)

<i>jaba</i>	<i>jaba</i>	'jumper,' but used for blouse (n)
<i>jiki</i>	<i>tiki</i>	piece (n)

K

<i>kai</i>	<i>kau</i>	wood, tree (n)
<i>kaikai</i>	<i>kaukauwa</i>	hard, strong (adj)
<i>kasava, tavioka</i>	<i>kasava, tavioka</i>	cassava, <i>Manihot utilissima</i> (n)
<i>katu</i>	<i>katu</i>	measure of outstretched arms, one fathom or 1.8m (n)
<i>katudrau</i>	<i>katudrau</i>	100-fathom ritual cloth, white or figured, 2-3 fathoms wide (n)
<i>kawa</i>	<i>kawa</i>	descent, kinship (n)
<i>keha</i>	<i>kesa</i>	paint for <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>keha-jia</i>	<i>kesa-ta</i>	print <i>masi</i> (v)
<i>kete</i>	<i>kete</i>	abdomen, stomach, interior (n)
<i>e-kete</i>	<i>kete-na</i>	inner surface of bast (n)
<i>i-koji</i>	<i>i-koti</i>	scissors (n)
<i>kojikoji</i>	<i>kotikoti</i>	cardboard or x-ray film stencils (n)
<i>kotokoto</i>	<i>davodavo</i>	sleeping mat, often fringed (n)
<i>i-kovu</i>	<i>i-olo</i>	wrapping, shroud (n)
<i>e-kubu</i>	<i>kubu-na</i>	"nipple" on end of a banana (n)
<i>kumi</i>	<i>masi vakatoga</i>	Tonga-style rubbed <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>kuveji</i>	<i>kupeti</i>	Tonga-style rubbing tablet (n)
<i>kwa vavanua</i>	<i>kā vakavanua</i>	norm, custom (n)

<i>kwa vou</i>	<i>kā vou</i>	new (introduced) thing (n)
<i>kwai ...</i>	<i>kai ...</i>	person indigenous to ... (adj)

L

<i>lala</i>	<i>lala</i>	'first fruits' obligation to chief (n)
<i>lali</i>	<i>lali</i>	wooden slit-gong (n)
<i>lātoka</i>	n.a.	Vatulele sailing-vessel with solid hull and outrigger (n)
<i>leka, lekaleka</i>	<i>leka, lekaleka</i>	short (adj)
<i>lewa, yalewa</i>	<i>yalewa</i>	woman (n)
<i>lewā</i>	<i>lewā</i>	rule, authority (n)
<i>e-lewe</i>	<i>lewe-na</i>	inner bark (bast) (n)
<i>limanirevo</i>	<i>liganilovo</i>	officiators at ritual-food oven (n)
<i>limanimagiji</i>	<i>liganimagiti</i>	providers of food for rituals (n)
<i>limaniyaqona</i>	<i>liganiyaqona</i>	officiators at <i>yaqona</i> -bowl (n)
<i>loloku</i>	<i>loloku</i>	best man, witness at wedding
<i>luvabenu</i>	<i>luvabenu, vakataraisulu</i>	lifting of mourning rituals (n)
<i>luvaluva</i>	<i>veiluvaluva</i>	strip and exchange clothes (v) (done in some kinship rituals)

M

<i>magiji</i>	<i>magiti</i>	feast (n)
<i>mahi</i>	<i>masi</i>	paper mulberry (<i>B.papyrifera</i>), and cloth made from it (n)
<i>mahi keha</i>	<i>masi kesa</i>	decorated <i>masi</i> (new name) (n)
<i>mahi kolikoli</i>	<i>masi volavola</i>	decorated <i>masi</i> (old name) (n)
<i>mahi kuvui</i>	<i>masi kuvui</i>	smoked <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>mahi luvui</i>	<i>masi toni</i>	<i>masi</i> dyed to resemble <i>kuvui</i> (n)
<i>mahi raba, mahi matairua</i>	<i>masi matairua</i>	<i>masi</i> two barks wide (n)
<i>mahi vābonu</i>	<i>masi tutuki</i>	white <i>masi</i> decorated only with scattered red or black asterisks or flower motifs (n)
<i>mahi vādrau</i>	<i>masi vakadrau</i>	special type of fringed <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>mahima</i>	<i>masima</i>	salt (n)
<i>mahiyara</i>	<i>i-tini yara, masi yara</i>	train of <i>masi</i> worn by nobles (n)
<i>māmā</i>	<i>mamada</i>	light (weight) (adj)
<i>maremare</i>	<i>mamare</i>	thin (as in cloth or paper) (adj)
<i>mata</i>	<i>mata</i>	face, eye of person or thing (n)

<i>mata</i>	<i>mata</i>	official office-bearers (n)
<i>e-mata</i>	<i>kete-na</i>	figured section of <i>taunamu</i> (n)
<i>mataihau</i>	<i>mataisau</i>	elder [very high office] (n)
<i>mataihila</i>	<i>mataidua</i>	felted cloth '1 bark' wide and long
<i>mataihulu</i>	<i>mataisulu</i>	2-3 piece set of <i>masi</i> clothing (n)
<i>matairua</i>	<i>matairua</i>	two <i>mataihila</i> edge-joined to make wider piece for kilt (n)
<i>mataqwali</i>	<i>mataqali</i>	clan (n)
<i>matatalai</i>	<i>matatalai</i>	envoy, ambassador to group (n)
<i>mataihila</i>	<i>mataidua</i>	single-width piece of <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>matairua, mahi raba</i>	<i>masi matairua</i>	double-width piece of <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>matahere</i>	<i>tasere</i>	untie of itself, come undone (v)
<i>matanivanua</i>	<i>matanivanua</i>	herald (n)
<i>mataqwali</i>	<i>mataqali</i>	clan (n)
<i>matau</i>	<i>matau</i>	axe, adze (n)
<i>mataukai</i>	<i>i-sau</i>	wooden digging-stick (n)
<i>matavā</i>	<i>mataivā</i>	steel digging fork (n)
<i>matayalevu</i>	<i>matailelevu</i>	large-featured (e.g. motifs) (adj)
<i>matayasewa</i>	<i>matailalai</i>	delicate, fine-featured (adj)

N

<i>niji</i>	<i>teve</i>	circumcision (n)
<i>niji-a</i>	<i>niti-va</i>	circumcise, incise <i>masi</i> bark (v)
<i>nikiavi</i>	<i>enanoa</i>	yesterday (n)
<i>niqwata</i>	<i>nimataka</i>	tomorrow (n)

O (pronounced 'aw' as in short sword)

<i>oga, ogaoga</i>	<i>oga, ogaoga</i>	social obligation, anxiety (n)
<i>i-olo</i>	<i>i-olo</i>	parcel (e.g. of <i>masi</i> or mats) (n)
<i>i-oro, mahi rabayahewa</i>	<i>i-oro</i>	long single-width <i>masi</i> , worn as 'cummerbund' waist-band (n)

Q (pronounced 'ngg' as in hunger)

<i>qāqā</i>	<i>qāqā</i>	dried, unbeaten <i>masi</i> bast (n)
<i>qwara</i>	<i>qara</i>	hole, branch-hole in bark (n)
<i>qwara-va</i>	<i>qara-va</i>	attend, mind, take care of (v)

<i>qwarayaqona</i>	<i>qarayaqona</i>	2 attendants at <i>yaqona</i> bowl (n)
<i>qwavi</i>	<i>qavi</i>	woven container of salt (<i>i-yau</i>) (n)
<i>qwele</i>	<i>qele</i>	soil, clay, piece of land (n)
<i>qweleniyaga</i>	<i>qeleniteitei</i>	cultivated land (n)
<i>qwoli, qwoliqwoli</i>	<i>qoli, qoliqoli</i>	fish (v), fishing grounds (n)

R

<i>raba</i>	<i>raba</i>	width (n)
<i>rabalevu</i>	<i>ra balevu</i>	broad, wide (adj)
<i>rabayahewa</i>	<i>rabalailai</i>	narrow (adj)
<i>rakuraku</i>	<i>milolo</i>	shiny, glossy (e.g. printed motifs)
<i>rārā</i>	<i>rārā</i>	village common or 'green' (n)
<i>Rātū</i> (cf. <i>Rō</i>)	<i>Rātū</i>	chiefly title like 'Sir' or 'Lord' (n)
<i>rau</i>	<i>drau</i>	leaf (n)
<i>ravuqweleqwele</i>	[unknown]	large funerary mat (n)
<i>revo</i>	<i>lovo</i>	earth oven with heated stones (n)
<i>Rō</i>	<i>Rātū</i>	chiefly title, originally from Rewa, roughly 'Sir' (n)
<i>Roko</i>	<i>Roko</i>	(modern) government official (n)
<i>Rokotui</i>	<i>Rokotui</i>	(traditionally) spiritual leader (modern) highest government official in a Province (n)
<i>i roqo</i>	<i>i roqo</i>	<i>masi</i> (or mat) 'baby -rug' (n)

S

<i>sevusevu</i>	<i>sevusevu</i>	formal gift to preface a request (n)
<i>somate</i>	<i>somate</i>	funeral ceremony (n)

T

<i>tabili</i>	<i>tabili</i>	mortar for pounding <i>yaqona</i> (n)
<i>tabua</i>	<i>tabua</i>	sperm-whale tooth, ritual object (n)
<i>taci(na)</i>	<i>taci(na)</i>	(younger) same-sex sibling (n)
<i>tacilawa</i>	<i>tacilawa</i>	fish-drive in the sea, with net (n)
<i>i-tadtratadra</i>	[unknown]	mat or <i>masi</i> celebrants sit on during certain ceremonies (n)
<i>tāhiga</i>	<i>tasina</i>	Tongan-style rubbed print (n)
<i>tailevu</i>	n.a.	'great shore,' Vitilevu mainland (n)

<i>tainamu, taunamu</i>	<i>taunamu, gatu vakaviti</i>	ritual <i>masi</i> 'great cloth,' especially used as a wedding curtain (n)
<i>e-taku</i>	<i>daku-na</i>	back, exterior ; rubbed section of <i>taunamu</i> (n)
<i>takala</i>	<i>takala</i>	head of <i>yavusa</i> , subject chief (n)
<i>Takala i Ekubu</i>	n.a.	head of <i>yavusa</i> Ekubu, highest-ranked elder in Taunovo (n)
<i>i-talatalaci</i>	<i>i-talatalaci</i>	ritual departure-gifts to guests (n)
<i>tamu</i>	<i>sega ni</i>	not (adv)
<i>taqwa-cia</i>	<i>cece-ga</i>	lift up the edge (e.g. of cloth)
<i>tara - tarā</i>	<i>caka-va</i>	make or do (v)
<i>tavale(na)</i>	<i>tavale(na)</i>	cross-cousin (n)
<i>tavatava</i>	<i>tavatava</i>	'pinked' edges on cloth (n)
<i>tavioka, kasava</i>	<i>tavioka, kasava</i>	cassava, <i>Manihot utilissima</i> (n)
<i>tevutevu</i>	<i>tevutevu</i>	display ('spreading') of wedding gifts, also formal recognition of young chief (n)
<i>i-tokotoko</i>	<i>i-tokatoka</i>	sub-clan (introduced word) (n)
<i>i-tovo vāvanua</i>	<i>i-tovo vakavanua</i>	ways of the land, traditions (n)
<i>tuaka(na)</i>	<i>tuaka(na)</i>	(older) same-sex sibling (n)
<i>tūraga</i>	<i>tūraga</i>	chief, gentleman (n)
<i>Tūraga ni koro</i>	<i>Tūraga ni koro</i>	village headman (elected) (n)
<i>tutumahi</i>	<i>samusamu</i>	beat bark-cloth (v)
<i>i -tututu</i>	<i>i-samusamu</i>	beating of bark-cloth (n)
<i>i-tuvaulu</i>	<i>i-tuvaulu</i>	wake c. five days after death (n)
<i>tūyaqona</i>	<i>tūyaqona</i>	server of <i>yaqona</i> (n)

U (pronounced 'oo' as in rule or put)

<i>i-ubi</i>	<i>i-ubi</i>	cover, grave-covering <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>i-uho or i-zinu</i>	<i>i-sala</i>	hairscarf (turban) of chiefs (n)
<i>i-uku-uku</i>	<i>i-uku-uku</i>	decoration (n)
<i>i-uku-ukuniwere</i>	<i>i-uku-ukunivale</i>	house-decoration or frieze of figured <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>ulu-na</i>	<i>ulu-na</i>	head (n)
<i>uluniyau</i>	<i>uluniyau</i>	principal prestation goods (n)
<i>ulunivorē</i>	<i>ulunivuaka</i>	'pig's head' — compensation gifts for a pig contributed to a ritual (n)
<i>uma tamata</i>	<i>uma tamata</i>	group of people in settlement (n)
<i>ura</i>	<i>ura</i>	prawn (n)
<i>urabuta</i>	not applicable	red prawn of Vatulele (n)

<i>utu mahi</i>	not applicable	contribute <i>mahi</i> toward a large project, such as a large <i>kumi</i> (v)
V		
<i>vā</i>	<i>vaka, vā</i> (contraction)	like (adv)
<i>vābati</i>	<i>vakabati</i>	mat with multiple woollen fringes, used in marriage and death rituals
<i>vacoa</i>	(1) <i>bogitini</i> (2) <i>tunudrā</i>	celebration on tenth day after birth, then on 1st birthday (n)
<i>vācabori</i>	<i>vakacabora</i>	act of ritual prestation (v)
<i>vācadra</i>	<i>kau mata ni gone</i>	presentation of her children to her family by exogamously-married local woman (n)
<i>vadrāhiga</i>	<i>sigana</i>	dry/bleach in the sun (v)
<i>vādreji</i>	[unknown]	<i>masi</i> circumcision-bandage (n)
<i>vahi</i>	<i>vatu</i>	rock, stone (n)
<i>Vahilele</i>	<i>Vatu lele</i>	Vatulele - 'sloping rock' (n)
<i>vāhobu</i>	[unknown]	<i>tabua</i> presentation (n)
<i>i-vatākarakara</i>	<i>i-vakatākarakara</i>	sign, symbol (n)
<i>vakotō</i>	<i>vakoto-ra</i>	put stencil in place for printing (v)
<i>vakoto-re</i>	<i>vakadavo-ra</i>	put work aside until later (v)
<i>vālili</i>	<i>vakalili-a</i>	hang up (eg. <i>taunamu</i>) (v)
<i>vāmamaca</i>	<i>vakamamaca</i>	welcome ritual, closing ritual (n)
<i>vāmata</i>	<i>draudrau</i>	generic term for <i>masi</i> motifs, also term for printing stencil (n)
<i>vanua</i>	<i>vanua</i>	land, place (n)
<i>vāvanua</i>	<i>vakavanua</i>	traditional(ly) (adj, adv)
<i>veha</i>	<i>vesa</i>	small, single-bark <i>masi</i> worn on arms/legs for ceremony/dance(n)
<i>vehaveha</i>	<i>ketekete</i>	collecting-basket woven from a coconut leaf, with a handle or shoulder-straps (n)
<i>vehi</i>	<i>vesi</i>	species of hardwood, <i>Intsia bijuga</i> , formerly sacred (n)
<i>vīgwaneni</i>	<i>veiganeni</i>	opposite sex siblings/parallel cousins (n)
<i>viha</i>	<i>veisā</i>	non-ritual goods-exchange (n)
<i>vīkabiji</i>	<i>veitaravi</i>	contiguous (e.g. villages) (adj)
<i>vikaikai</i>	<i>veikau</i>	bush, forest (n)
<i>vīkaikai</i>	<i>vakaukauwa</i>	hard, firmly (adv)
<i>vīkilai</i>	<i>veikilai</i>	familiars, go-betweenes (n)

<i>vinivoa, vinavoa</i>	<i>vinivoa, vinavoa</i>	'pinafore' - generic term for Western-style female dress (n)
<i>vinono</i>	[unknown]	<i>tabua</i> given as ritual 'bride-purchase' (n)
<i>vīqwaravi</i>	(<i>dau</i>) <i>veiqaravi</i>	carer (n)
<i>vītacini</i>	<i>veitacini</i>	(all) same-sex siblings (n)
<i>vītavaleni</i>	<i>veitavaleni</i>	cross-cousins (n)
<i>viututuri</i>	—	join together pieces of <i>masi</i> collected for a joint project (v)
<i>vīwekani</i>	<i>veiwekani</i>	closely connected by kinship or alliance (adj)
<i>vīwekani vadrā</i>	<i>veiwekani vakadrā</i>	related by blood (adj phrase)
<i>voivoi</i>	<i>voivoi</i>	pandanus, <i>P. caricosus</i> (n)
<i>volivoli</i>	<i>sawana</i>	beach (n)
<i>i-vono</i>	<i>i-dole</i>	gift (eg. land) in return for special services (n)
<i>vorē</i>	<i>vuaka</i>	pig (n)
<i>vū</i>	<i>vū</i>	fundamental origin, founding spirit/entity, tree-trunk (n)
<i>Vunih ālevu</i>	<i>Vunis ālevu</i>	paramount chief, title of Tui Ekubu today (n)
<i>vuniyaqona</i>	<i>vuniyaqona</i>	stump + roots of yaqona for ritual prestation (n)
<i>vuo(na)</i>	<i>vugo(na)</i>	child of opposite sex sibling (n)
<i>vutu</i>	<i>vutu</i>	food-pounder; printing motif (n)
<i>vūwere</i>	<i>vūvale</i>	family unit, either a 'House' or nuclear family (n)
<i>vuzi</i>	<i>vudi</i>	plantain, eating banana (<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>) (n)

W

<i>wā</i>	<i>wā</i>	vine, string or cord (n)
<i>wābale</i>	<i>wābale</i>	shoulder-sash, worn by chiefs (n)
<i>wai, waidroka, waitaci</i>	<i>wai, waidranu, waitui</i>	water, fresh-water, sea (n)
<i>waka</i>	<i>waka</i>	small root(s), bundle of <i>yaqona</i> (cf. <i>vuniyaqona</i>) (n)
<i>waqaniviti</i>	<i>waqaniviti</i>	lit. 'Fijian boat,' outrigger canoe (n)
<i>wehi</i>	<i>meke</i>	dance (n)
<i>were</i>	<i>vale</i>	house (n)

Y

<i>yaboyabo</i>	<i>i-reguregu</i>	goods presented at funeral (n)
<i>yaga</i>	<i>loga, teitei</i>	garden (n)
<i>yaganimahi</i>	<i>loganimasi</i>	paper mulberry plantation (n)
<i>yago</i>	<i>yago</i>	body (n)
<i>yaqona</i>	<i>yaqona</i>	kava (ritual drink) — infusion of dried pulverised roots of pepper bush (<i>Piper methysticum</i>) (n)
<i>yaqona vātūrāga</i>	<i>yaqona vakatūrāga</i>	chiefly <i>yaqona</i> ritual (n + adj)
<i>i-yarayara ni mahi</i>	<i>i-yarayara ni masi</i>	special drying-place for <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>yatua</i>	<i>dudua, dutua</i>	anvil for beating <i>masi</i> (n)
<i>i-yau</i>	<i>i-yau</i>	specialist manufactures, used in ritual prestations (n)
<i>yavu</i>	<i>yavu</i>	housemound (n)
<i>yavu; hā yavu</i>	<i>oti; sa oti</i>	after, finished ; it is finished (adv)
<i>yavuha</i>	<i>yavusa</i>	super-clan, phratry (new) (n)

Z (pronounced 'ndj' as in engine)

<i>zinau</i>	<i>dinau</i>	borrowing with acknowledged debt (c.f. <i>kerekere</i>) (n)
<i>i-zinu, i-uho</i>	<i>i-sala</i>	chief's hair-scarf of single-bark <i>masi</i>
<i>i-ziri</i>	<i>i-diri, i-diriki</i>	extra <i>tabua</i> given to persuade a reluctant party to an agreement (n)

Appendix 2

PEOPLE WHO PROVIDED INFORMATION

(sex, age, village, and assigned status — names omitted)

I.D	Sex	Born	Living in 1995	Village	Status
A	F	1917	√	Ekubu	Very high-ranking chief
B	F	1912	x	Taunovo	Senior Elder
C	M	1902	x	Ekubu	Senior Elder
D	M	192?	√	Ekubu	Senior elder (<i>Huaturaga</i>)
E	M	1944	√	Ekubu	Very high-ranking chief
F	F	1952	√	Ekubu	Commoner
G	M	1957	√	Taunovo	Commoner (<i>vahu</i> to chiefs)
H	M	1936	√	Lomanikaya	Very high-ranking chief
I	M	1936	√	Ekubu	Paramount chief
J	F	196?	√	Ekubu	Commoner (wife of chief)
K	F	194?	√	Taunovo	Commoner
L	M	1942	√	Ekubu	Chief
M	M	1956	√	Ekubu	Commoner
N	F	1964	√	Taunovo	Commoner
O	F	1963	√	Ekubu	Commoner (<i>vahu</i> to chiefs)
P	M	1903	√	Taunovo	Commoner
Q	M	1925	√	Taunovo	Commoner
R	F	1924	√	Taunovo	Commoner
S	M	1938	√	Taunovo	Commoner
T	M	193?	√	Ekubu	Senior elder (<i>Huaturaga</i>)
U	M	192?	x	Ekubu	Senior elder (<i>Huaturaga</i>)
V	M	1906	x	Taunovo	Commoner
W	M	191?	x	Taunovo	V. high-ranking superclan-head

Appendix 3

**ORIGIN PLACES OF VATULELEANS, EKUBU-TAUNOVO
SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Origin-places and sequence of settler-arrivals (Table 4):**(A) LOMANIKAYA:**

People	Specific Origin Place	Island of Origin
1. Nonovahina (Kade+Rota)	Autochthonous (both groups)	Vatulele
2. Bouwaqa	Naselai (Nakelo)	S.E. Vitilevu
3. Lomanikaya	Suva ?	S.E. Vitilevu
4. Koromahina	Nahigatoka (Sigatoka)	S.W. Vitilevu

(B) BOUWAQA:

1. Bouwaqa	Naselai via Lomanikaya	S.E. Vitilevu via Vatulele
2. Nacaca	Serua ?	S. Vitilevu
3. Nukubā	?	?
4. Namaravu	Davigele	Kadavu
5. Nakuruilagi	Rewa	S.E. Vitilevu

(C) TAUNOVO:

1. Ekubu Taunovo Bole Narewa Nahalia Niu } Natoto } Navuhatu	Nasaibitu (Wainibuka)	E. Vitilevu (via Nukulau I.)
2. Valevale Valevale Natokowaqa Matavatu	Korolevu-i-Colo	Central Vitilevu
3. Nalimolevu Vunivau Nadrouriyaga Vunitawalō Vunimoli Matana Nahoho Nalawaidoko	Verata via Burebasaga (Rewa)	S.E. Vitilevu

(2b) Structure acknowledged locally

(Official roles are in brackets. For meanings of terms see Glossary - Appendix 1)

yavuha **NALIMOLEVU** (mainly Ekubu village)

mataqwali *i-tokotoko*

Nalimolevu⁺ — Nalimolevu (*turaga*) { Ewaqa (formerly Vunitawalō)**
 3 (now 2) houses { Cakau (formerly Nadroumiyaga)
 { Werelevu (formerly Vunivau)

Valevale	—	Valevale (<i>guhunivanua</i>)\	}	
		Matavatu (<i>matatalai</i>)	}	
		Natokowaqa* (<i>matatalai</i>)	}	These clans
Nukunitabua	—	Nukunitabua (<i>liganikau</i>)	}	together are called
Nahoho	—	Nahoho ⁺⁺ (<i>liganilovo</i> +)	}	Nonovāhina (<i>mata</i>)
Vunimoli	—	Vunimoli ⁺ (<i>liganiyaqona</i>)	}	
Matana	—	Matana ⁺⁺ (<i>mataihau</i>)	}	

Nabokā — Nabokā (*voutama* and *liganikau*)

Toga — Toga (*gonedau*) [Tongans who settled from mainland Vitilevu]

* = extinct sub-clan ** = extinct house + = Nalimolevu groups before war

yavuha **EKUBU** (mainly Taunovo village)
(*liganimagiji* and *vīqwaravi*)

mataqwali *i-tokotoko*

Nahalia (*Takala i Ekubu*)

Bole

Navuhatū (*guhunivanua* to the *Takala*)¹

Naicokocokobalavu — Taunovo
Nakula

Niu

Narewa (*bete*) [can also supply *guhunivanua* if Navuhatū presents no candidate]

Nacaniji

Nalawaidoko — Nayavuhlato ²

¹ Before the civil war, the Navuhatū were *hauturaga* to the *Tui Vahilele* in Lomaninkaya. Subsequently they moved to Ekubu/Taunovo, staying with Narewa, and became *matanivanua* to the *Vunih ālevu*. In Lomanikaya, the role of *matanivanua* to the *Tui Nam ō* is today played by a member of the *mataqwali* Lomanikaya.

² This group were originally part of the Nalimolevu, but transferred themselves to the Ekubu following a dispute.

(3) Kinship

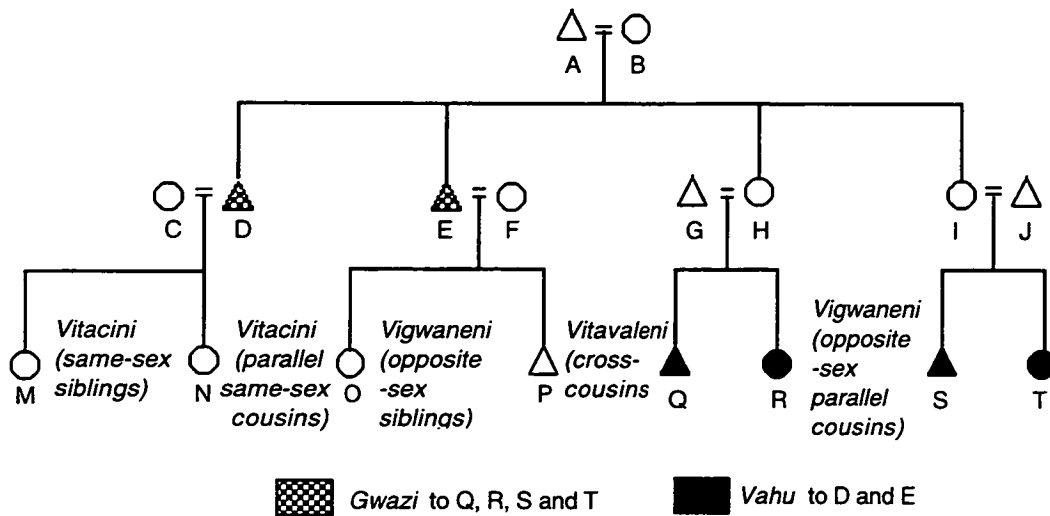


Fig.16. Kinship relationships (*v̄wekani*)

3(a) Cross-cousin relationships: amplification

Today there are fewer cross-cousin marriages, the reasons suggested by the women being:

- 1 . a general relaxation of such expectations;
- 2 . the number of 'shotgun' weddings and/or 'stolen bride' weddings where the couple have not thought of the implications for the clan;
- 3 . the number of 'outsiders' marrying into the island with the increased movement of people in the post-WW2 period.

Of 18 women in a random survey (in conjunction with the survey in Appendix 5), the figures for marriages were as follows:

First-generation cross-cousins	2	(11%)
More distant cross cousins	4	(22%)
Distant relatives	5	(28%)
Not related at all	6	(33%)
Parallel cousins	1	(6%)

This is a fairly small sample (only 9% of the families in Ekubu/Taunovo were surveyed), but it provides some indicative information. The high incidence of kinship reflects the degree of intermarriage, with relatively little 'new blood' until the last 2-3 generations. It also shows, with 2 of the 18 marriages being first-generation cross-cousins, that this relationship is still a factor in marriage, particularly in light of the 4 'distant cross-cousin' relationships which lifts the count to 33%, the same percentage as those who are not related at all. The injunction

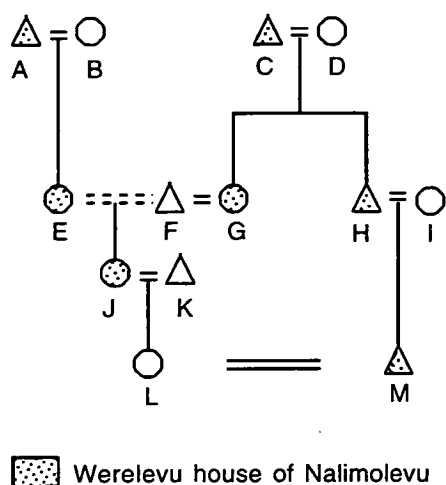


Fig.17. An example of notional cross-cousin marriage

against parallel-cousin marriage still holds generally, the one exception in the survey, which the woman divulged rather coyly as being a 'stolen bride' liaison. The figure here shows, however, just how tenuous the cross-cousin link can get. The male M is a member of the chiefly house, Werelevu. His wife L is from another clan, though strongly connected through her mother to Werelevu. Theirs was a 'proper' wedding with no hint of impropriety or irregularity. The cross-cousin relation-

ship was established in the generation of M's father H and L's maternal grandmother E. H had a sister G who married F, a man from a different clan. Any female children or grandchildren of that union would have been cross-cousins, and thus ideal marriage-partners, to M or his children. F, however, had a liaison with a young unmarried woman E of his wife's clan. The issue of this union was a daughter, J, who though not genetically a cross-cousin is regarded (as are her children) as classificatory cross-cousin also, simply because her father's children should have this relationship. Thus the marriage of her daughter L to M is regarded as a cross-cousin marriage, whereas in western terms they would be seen as distant parallel cousins through A and C who were parallel cousins. Notwithstanding the above, J took her clan identity from her mother, which is normal for illegitimate offspring.

3(b) Avoidance rules

Avoidance has been relaxed gradually since the 1950s, and today is not practised, though people aged over 50 still sometimes display discomfort when breaching the notional injunctions. The obsolete rules were stated to me as follows:

- i. Siblings (older or younger) of opposite sexes should not talk to one another once they pass the age of puberty. This includes parallel cousins, considered siblings.
- ii. A male should not talk to his in-laws (*vīvugoni*) with the exception of his father-in-law. In fact, even today a male may find it difficult to talk to anyone in his wife's entire extended family, and will often find pretexts to avoid extended contact. He should also not talk to his brother's wife, who is considered *tabu*.
- iii. A female should not talk to her husband's brothers, but can speak to all of his female relatives and to her father-in-law. The relationship between sisters-in-law may in fact be very close.

Table 5. Vatulelean Terms of Reference/Address
[table structure adopted: after Sahlins (1962:108)]

RELATION OF M/F EGO	REFERENCE TERM	TERM OF ADDRESS
Fa	<i>lequ rātū</i>	<i>Rātū</i> (Tata informal)
FaOBr	<i>lequ rātū levu</i>	<i>Rātū levu</i>
FaYBr	<i>lequ rātū sewa</i>	<i>Rātū</i>
[M, F] FaZ [F] HMo	<i>gwanita, nita</i>	<i>Gwanita, Nita</i>
[M] OBr, WBr, FaOBrS*, MoOZS* [F] OZ, FaOBrD* MoOZD* (* = //-cousin)	<i>tukaqu</i>	<i>Tukaqu</i>
[M] YBr, FaYBrS FaYBrS*, MoYZS* [F] YZ, FaYBrD* MoYZD* (* = //-cousin)	<i>taciqu</i>	<i>Taciqu</i>
[M, F] Opp.sex sibling, //-cousin	<i>gwanequ</i>	Name or <i>Gwanequ</i> [formerly not addressed]
Ch	<i>luvequ</i>	Name
BrCh	<i>vugoqu</i>	Name
Mo	<i>lequ lewa</i>	<i>Lewa</i> (Namu, Nana inf.)
[M, F] MoZ	<i>gwanequ</i>	<i>Gwanequ</i>
[M, F] Grandparent either sex, either side + FaMoBr	<i>lequ tai</i>	<i>Tai</i>
FaFa, FaFaBr, MoFa	<i>lequ tai rātū</i>	<i>Tai rātū</i>
FaBrW, MoMo, MoMoZ, FaMo	<i>lequ tai lewa</i>	<i>Tai lewa</i>
[M] W, WZ, FaBrSW	<i>lequ yalewa, or lequihā</i>	Name or <i>Lequihā</i>
[F] H	<i>lequ tagwane</i>	Name or <i>Lequ Tagwane</i>
SCh, BrSCh	<i>vakubuqu</i>	Name or <i>Vakubuqu</i>
MoBr	<i>naqu gwazi</i>	<i>Gwazi</i>
[M] ZCh	<i>lequ vahu</i>	Name or <i>Vahu</i>
[M, F] FaZCh, MoBrCh (x-cousin) (all together, <i>vitavaleni</i>)	<i>tavalequ, or lequ yalewa / tagwane</i> for opposite sex.	Name or <i>Tavale</i> , or <i>Lequ Yalewa / Tagwane</i> for opposite sex.
[M] BrW, BrWZ	<i>lequ daku, lequ tabu</i>	Name or <i>Daku</i> [formerly not addressed]
[F] HZ	<i>ivaqu</i>	Name or <i>Ivaqu</i>
FaMoBrCh, FaFaZCh, MoMoBrCh, MoFaZCh, (ie., 2nd gen. x-cousins)	<i>lequ rātū</i> or <i>lequ lewa</i>	<i>Rātū</i> or <i>Lewa</i>

Appendix 4

MASI: MAKING, TYPES, USES, AND COMMODITY STATUS

Although a great deal of my research has been concerned with documenting the making and printing of *masi*, this thesis is not a technical treatise and there has been little reference to process in the text. Nonetheless, so much of Vatuleleans' lives is involved with the production process that it is difficult to detach it totally from an account of the meaning of *masi* to them. The following very abbreviated information and illustrations are therefore appended to provide some understanding of the complexity of the art and the amount of labour involved, as well as a more detailed list of the types of *masi* made in Vatulele today, and their uses. These provide a context in particular for Chapters Seven and Eight.

Processing:

Masi is made from the bast (white inner bark) of the paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*). This is not indigenous to the Pacific but was brought from Southeast Asia. It therefore requires careful cultivation, and the choice of soil and process of cultivation must be such as to encourage it to sucker and coppice, and to produce tall straight saplings with only few branches limited to the crown of the plant. Fortunately, Vatulele's light, alkaline soil and rocky terrain suit it admirably.

The process of making *masi* is simple in its essentials, though as always 'the devil is in the detail,' which is why it takes some time to become a skilled maker, and this is usually spread out through a girl's childhood and adolescence, as described in Chapter Six. The desired number of barks are first stripped from the stem of the freshly-harvested sapling, then the outer bark is stripped off, leaving the clean inner bast. After brief soaking, this is beaten out on a wooden anvil using a grooved wooden mallet, both purpose-specific. It is progressively folded during beating to make a strong pack, resisting damage as the bark becomes thinner. When two or more barks have been prepared in this way, they are layered one on top of the other, their ends reversed, and felted together by further beating. The bast will have been widened by up to 20 times, and the felted piece will be maximum of 1mm thick, and flexible. This piece is sun-dried, resulting in one 'module' which may be cut up to make small pieces of 'tourist-tapa,' or joined to other modules (end to end and/or side to side) to make large pieces. It may be variously printed, or left white, and decorative fringes may or may not be cut along its edges.

The increase in production which has occurred during the past forty years, and the emphasis on speed, have led to important changes in the process of manufacture. It should be realised that the issue here is not solely tourism and its demands, but the combined demands of tourism and of indigenous use both within the island and by other Fijians — in other words, both Western and indigenous forces. Without attempting to elaborate all of them, a few changes which have wider ramifications deserve notice.

First, as mentioned in Chapter Nine the large and still-increasing quantity of *masi* produced today, and the amount of paper mulberry that must be cultivated to supply that production, are placing pressure on the arable land available. The steadily-increasing population generates other competing pressures for land. There is an increasing need for land both for growing food, and for growing *masi*. Vegetable gardens have not been sacrificed for growing *masi*, but areas of forest are progressively being cleared to create new plots. From being almost completely forested in 1950, it can be seen from the air that the island is inexorably moving toward the point where its forest, on which they depend for many things, will be gone and all even marginally arable land will have been put under crops. In the foreseeable future there *will* be competition between food crops and *masi* for available space.

Clans have re-organised some of the allocation of land to keep the vegetable-growing areas together (in the richer soil, and closer to the village for ease of collecting food). *Masi* plantations become more distant, and are more inaccessible for both the necessary regular cultivation and for harvesting crops. Whereas before it was customary for men to bring the requisite number of saplings to the village, today either men or women (or both) will go to the plantation and strip the saplings there, carrying home only the bark. This must be processed promptly, whereas the saplings could be left in a shady place for days before processing.¹ Discarding the sticks also wastes valuable kindling for their cooking fires, so they cut down trees.

¹ One day in July 1995, the woman of our house left at midday to collect *masi* from their plantation, which is about 2 miles distant, on the road to the hotel. She had a commission to complete and her husband was busy with other work and unable to collect the bark for her. She hoped to be ready in time to bring her load back on a late-afternoon truck which brings workers back to the village from the VIResort each day, but unfortunately she missed it. She therefore had to carry a heavy bundle of barks the whole distance, and arrived after dark, quite exhausted. Realising what must have happened, I prepared the evening meal, but this would never be done by Vatulelean men, and usually it would have been expected that she turn around and do that when she got home. After dinner she had to strip the outer bark off before it dried to the point where it would be impossible to remove. She finished this after midnight.

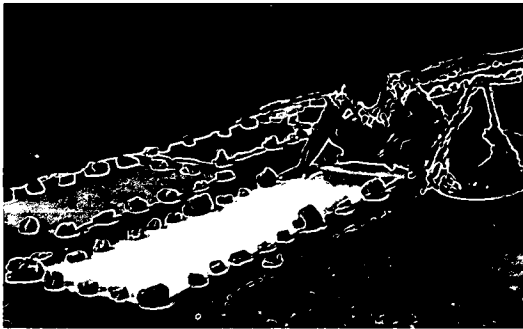


Plate 13. From tree to cloth.

(a) Harvesting. Ratu Mitieli harvesting *masi* in his plantation.

(b) Beating. 1981. Salote Rokete (13), Lavenia Lave (33) and Aliti Tuvu (32). Note that Salote is just starting the first stage of beating a single bark. Lave has already beaten this out to a moderate width, and Aliti has widened it still further and is shaking out a wrung-out pack to beat subsequent barks for felting. The width increase is clearly visible, but even so not complete.

(c) Drying. Spreading the complete, felted, units out to dry. The basket contains weight-stones. When dry, these units will either be cut up to make tourist-*tapa*, or edge- or end-joined to make larger components.

(d) Stencil-printing. The black structures are always laid-in first, then the red added, as here.



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The pressure of production also means that plants tend to be cut as soon as they reach the minimum height (about 2.5 metres) required to produce a 'component' piece of felted cloth of the desired one fathom (c. 2m) in length, even though they may still be considered immature. Formerly, two fairly large and thick (but not yet hard) barks, three years old or more, were used to produce a single finished piece. However, the bark of immature plants is thin and soft, and has a tendency to split during beating, so today the number of young barks used must be increased. Any number from three to eight may be used, very commonly six. While the *masi* produced by the old method was more 'cloth-like' and less bulky, it was more exacting. It required longer pre-beating preparation (long soaking and scraping off outer-bark residue), and required substantial mending of branch-holes, whereas the bulk of the multiple layers in the new method make it more 'forgiving.' However, the finished cloth is also often brownish because of the reduced soaking time and the fact that the bast is not scraped to remove outer bark impurities.

Thus women are producing cloth which is not as white, supple or carefully-made as it used to be, and are using more resources to do so. Although less skill is entailed, the fact that they are processing between twice and four times as many barks as before inevitably increases the actual labour involved. Thus their labour has become less skilled but more arduous. But though in 1980, when I first visited Vatulele, most women knew both methods, by 1995 only the women past middle-age even knew of the old method's existence, and young women expressed surprise when told that it was possible to make *masi* from only two barks.

Finally, the use of multiple barks in turn means that harvesting is not only more frequent but more intensive, requiring more land and fairly dense planting. The land is becoming exhausted more quickly because of the rapid crop turnover, and must be fallowed more frequently, further increasing the need for new cultivation areas. This involves the men in much extra work, first clearing forest and then preparing new sites for *masi* plantations (all by hand). The increased load on the men means that increasingly, women are again having to harvest their own bark, a task that men had taken over completely by the time I started fieldwork in Vatulele in 1980.

As population increases the time may come when there will be no further clan land to allocate to the young — as discussed in Chapter Four, there are already considerable tensions over land. This will force them to move away from the island since they will have no means of support on the island. The women are of course affected jointly with the men by all of the above, but are also affected selectively.

Figuring the cloth

Most figured *masi*, and all tourist-*tapa*, is printed with stencils, called *vāmata* (the same word used for motifs) or more commonly today *kojikoji*, referring to their being cut out with scissors (*i-koji*) (Plate 11a). By 1980, the pandanus leaf formerly used had become uncommon, and it has now been totally replaced by light card, brown paper, and when it can be obtained, X-ray film. These are folded and cut in the manner of paper-chains. Preliminary drawing is never done — the image of the final motif exists wholly in the mind of the craftswoman.

The paint is a red-coloured, tannin-rich infusion from bark prised off certain mangroves (*togo* — *Bruguiera gymnorrhiza*), scarce on Vatulele and almost all imported from Vitilevu. It is soaked in water for a week or more, the liquor being used straight for rubbing (*kumi* and *taunamu*) or for dyeing red-stained cloth (*kuvui*). For stencil-printing and doing the freehand drawings on *kumi*, the liquor is thickened by boiling for up to a day, making the paint called *keha*. This is rubbed through the stencil using a swab of scrap *masi*, or today more commonly a piece of foam plastic or rubber (Plates 11a, 13). Black paint is made by adding soot.

From 1992 on a small service industry sprang up. Women on the mainland, rather than giving their *togo* bark to their Vatulelean relatives who *kerekere* it, started preparing the *keha* and selling it in plastic bottles to the *masi*-makers. These are happy to pay the modest price asked and have more time free to make *masi*, while the *keha*-makers cannot make *masi*, so it is a symbiotic relationship. By 1993 no Vatuleleans were making *keha*, all were using the bought product.

Types and uses of *masi*

There are five categories of culturally-embedded barkcloth still made and used. Three of ancient origin, one introduced as a result of Christianisation, and one reportedly introduced about 1914. From these a further four categories have resulted from commercialisation — ‘Tourist-*tapa*’ and Fijian wall-friezes in the 1950s, both modifications of one type of traditional cloth, and two categories introduced in the late 1980s, one for Fijian, the other for Western, markets.

A. Pre-Western contact

1. Single-bark-thick plain cloths used for personal adornment (*veha*). White, or smoked to a red-brown colour for chiefs (*mahi kuvui* — see Ewins 1982a: 10). Used in ceremonial dress.

2. Felted cloth, one bark wide (about half a metre) and one, two or three barks in length (2-6m) depending on type, and all used as clothing, today as ceremonial dress: loin cloth (*malo* — not used far into this century); waistband or cummerbund (*i-oro*); chiefs' sash (*wabale* - Plates 1, 9b). All types could be made with filmy fringes, a variety called *mahi v ādrau*. Originally either white or smoked, since 1914 most are stencil-printed, called *mahi kolikoli*. This printed cloth has been 're-imagined' as tourist-*tapa* and decorative friezes (Fig.3).

3. Large cloths of layered/pasted cloth called *kumi*, rubbed with watery red-brown paint using the technology of Samoa and Tonga (Kooijman 1977: 109-32; Neich & Prendergast 1997: 41-4), and particularly associated with rites of birth and death. The most significant ritual cloth, both worn, ritually presented, sat on during ritual, and as body-shrouds. In Lau, very large pieces are made, called *gatu vakatoga*, in all respects comparable to the great rubbed cloths of Tonga, but the *kumi* of Vatulele more closely resemble those of Cakaudrove, with affinities with the *siapo elei* of Samoa and Uvea. Not sold in the Western market, but extensively to other Fijians (Plates 1, 5b, 11a and Fig.12).

B. Post-Christianisation (1848+)

4. Felted cloth, two barks wide (nearly a metre) and a minimum of two to three barks long (4-6m) but potentially as long as 20-30m, and worn as a wrap-around sarong or skirt (*i-hulu*) following Christian introduced practice (see Chapter Six). White or post-1914 almost always figured. Sometimes sold to Western market, formerly extensively to Fijian market for ceremonial dress, but today largely replaced here by type E7.

C. Post-1914 (see Chapter Six — Adi Arieta Tegei)

5. Felted and edge-joined, very large house-screens and ritual cloths, called *taunamu* (mosquito curtains) from their original use. The second-most significant cloth, after *kumi*. Formerly made extensively except in Western Fiji (including Vatulele and the interior of Vitilevu), but reportedly introduced to Vatulele about 1914. Vatulelean *taunamu* clearly derive from the great *gatu vakaviti*, or Fiji-Tonga amalgamated cloth of Lau, figured on one half with Fiji stencilling and on the other with Tonga-style rubbing (Kooijman 1977: 88-96; Hooper 1995). Of ritual importance second only to the *kumi*, most particularly in weddings where they are indispensable, but NOT as funerary shrouds, where if *kumi* are not available, white cloth must be used (Plates 1, 6, 7, 10, 11a & b, and Fig.14).

D. 1950s

6. Usually referred to locally by makers as *masi kesa*, but as *tapa* when speaking to Others, and throughout this thesis as **tourist-tapa** (esp. Chapter Three). Evolved from the printed form of A2 above, but limited to a few shapes and sizes. Design and motifs are fairly standardised today, symmetrical and/or concentric

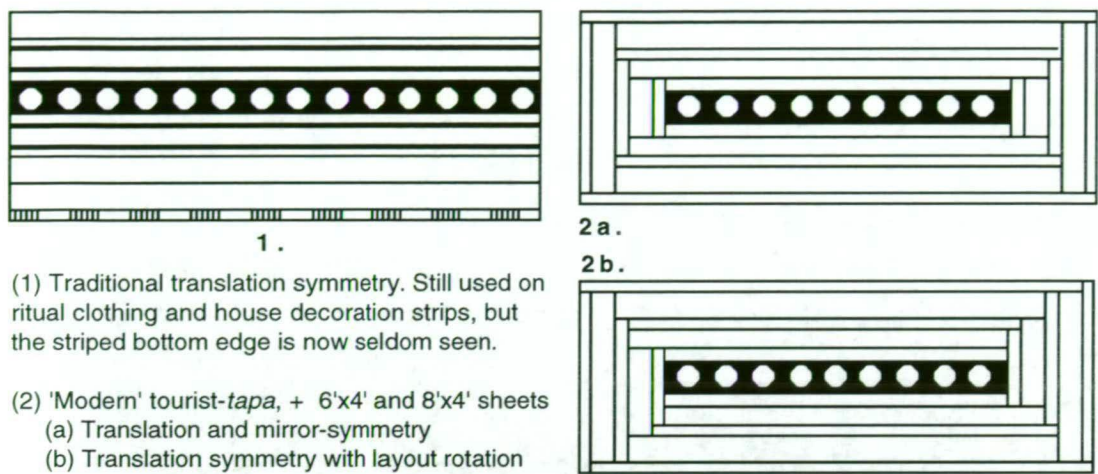


Fig.18. Design changes in tourist-tapa and some mahi kolikoli



Fig. 19. Printing mahi kolikoli in Taunovo in 1950

Translation symmetry house-decoration 'frieze.' Printers: Ravouvou Eseta, Lanieta Lutuyahavatu (identified by contemporaries from Fiji Museum photograph).

grids, all today including 'doily' and 'playing card' motifs copied from Moce. The great bulk of tourist-tapa consists of place-mats and doilies, either rectangular

(generally about 45cm x 30cm) or circular (45cm and 90cm diameter being preferred sizes). These are readily saleable because of their small size (suited aircraft weight limits and space in suitcases) and small price (they retail for a couple of dollars each). The pittance this returns to makers means they are generally poorly made. Longer pieces of *masi* from Category A2 are also part of the tourist-*tapa* stock, generally indistinguishable from ongoing culturally-embedded forms.

7. Very long narrow figured *masi* (Category A2 was utilised as a 'frieze' along the wall which came to partition the sleeping-quarters from the main room in the emergent timber and concrete houses. Called house-decoration (*i-uku-uku ni vale*), it is in fact vestigial of the traditional *taunamu* house-divider. Generally made in lengths not attractive to the Western market, but popular with other Fijians.

E. Late 1980s - early 1990s

8. Ceremonial dress is now commonly made in sets called *mataihulu*. Sets are named according to the number of component pieces: *mataihulu rua* for two, or *mataihulu tolu* for three. The widest piece (*i-hulu*) is only printed on its lower half since only that will be seen. The middle piece is not traditional, just an elaboration, and the top one, as narrow as but only half the length of the *i-oro* of old, is completely printed. These are never sold to tourist outlets, only through orders to the indigenous market.



Fig.20. Mataihulu tolu — 3-component set of ceremonial dress.

Left - *i-hulu* skirt, Centre — decorative overskirt, Right — *i oro* cummerbund or waist sash.

9. Larger rectangles of felted, printed cloths called *siksbaifoa* (6' x 4' — 1.8m x 1.2m) and *eitbaifoa* (8' x 4' — 2.4m x 1.2m) are based on a Lauan type called *solofua* (Kooijman 1977: 96-8). They are new to Vatulele, now made because Westerners showed a liking for Moce ones, presumably to use as wall-pieces (see Plate 3). Generally made with more care than small tourist-*tapa*, they provide a large 'canvas' and the result is often handsome, while far more manageable than the enormous, heavy, *taunamu*. Also, since they are not socially significant, their pricing is more in line with tourist-*tapa* than *taunamu*. They are also bought by some Fijians as bedcovers or decorations, but are seldom found in ritual prestations because, well-made as they are, they have not yet been assigned sign-functions.

Appendix 5

**1995 SURVEY: INTERVIEW OF EKUBU/TAUNOVO WOMEN
ON MAKING, USE AND SALES OF *MASI***

Method: The sampling method (17 of 167 houses — 11.6%) was random. I walked around each village with my host, and whenever I saw a woman through an open door, asked him to introduce us and then, when she expressed a willingness to talk to me (none refused) to leave us alone for half an hour. I then explained to the woman that the sample was anonymous, that I would not record her name (in all except two cases I never knew it) nor reveal her answers to anyone else in the village. They were all happy with these assurances since they cling to whatever little privacy there is in the village. I then asked the questions in Standard Fijian, clarifying if necessary.

THE QUESTIONS:

1. How many are there currently living in your household (including children at school on the mainland)
•X Males •X females •Schooling(<19) •Retired (>65)
2. (a) Do all of the women in your household make *masi*? •Yes •Only me •Other
(b) Do the men in the household •Maintain *masi* •Harvest •Simple beating?
3. How often do you make *masi* on average? •Daily (25hpw) •15-20hpw •10-15 hpw •Occasionally
4. What is the main use of your *masi*? •Ceremonial •Veisā (goods/cash) •Self-selling •Middleman
5. How much did you sell this year (Types/unit prices/total money).
6. (a)Do you always keep *masi* on hand for sale/rituals? (b)If so, what sort?
7. (a) Does anyone in your household make any other *i-yau*? (b)If so, what sort?
8. (a) Do you normally keep any other *i-yau* on hand?
(b) If so, what sort? (c) How did you obtain it?
9. What contributions have you been asked to give this year (types, quantities), and to whom?
10. Is *masi* the main source of income in your household? Yes/No
11. What other sources and amounts of income are there in your household?
12. (a) Do you have your own *masi* plantation? Yes/No
(b) What is your estimate of its size?
13. (a) Do you have your own vegetable garden? Yes/No
(b) What is your estimate of its size?
(c) What do you grow?

SURVEY RESULTS — Period covered: Jan-June 1995

1. Households surveyed

(a) Ekubu:

#	Total	Males 25	Females 23	Schooling (<19) 8M9F	Retired (>65)
1E	4	2	2	1 (1F)	
2E	5	3	2	2 (1M, 1F)	
3E	4	2	2	2 (1M, 1F)	
4E	6	2	4	-	
5E	4	2	2	2 (1M, 1F)	
6E	10	6	4	5 (3M, 2F)	
7E	5	2	3	3 (1M, 2F)	
8E	2	1	1	-	
9E	6	4	2	2 (1M, 1F)	
10E	2	1	1	-	

(b) Taunovo:

#	Total	Males 14	Females 24	Schooling (<19)4M11F	Retired (>65)
1T	3	1	2	1 (1F)	
2T	7	1	6	3 (3F)	1F
3T	5	3	2	-	1M
4T	6	2	4	2 (1M, 1F)	
5T	2	1	1	-	1F
6T	6	1	5	4 (4F)	
7T	9	5	4	5 (3M, 2F)	

NOTES: Average of 2 men, 2.76 adult women, 0.7 boys and 1.18 girls per household. Only 3 retirement-age people in the survey, 2 women and 1 man, but both women were still making *masi*.

2. Who makes the *masi* ?

(1) Ekubu (10)

(a) Do all adult women make *masi*? Yes Not all

(b) Man helps? All gardening Collects saplings Simple beating

(2) Taunovo (7)

• Do all of the women make *masi*? Yes Not all

• Man helps? All gardening Collects saplings Simple beating

NOTE: Of the two women in the survey who did not make *masi* at all, one was breast-feeding and was 'resting' from beating *masi* for a year until the baby was

weaned, the other was a store-keeper in conjunction with her husband and no longer made her living as a *masi*-maker, only making it for ritual needs.

3. How often? ('Daily' is a relative term. In practice, it means whenever there are not other pressing duties such as rituals, which there often are. Also, it varies in the number of hours. It is difficult to pin such things down. Some women work a solid 8-hour day whenever they pick up their *ike*, others take a more leisurely approach and work about a 5-hour day, visiting friends to gossip etc. This relates to both the need they perceive and their own industriousness or lack of it. Their output and consequent earnings obviously reflect these differences. I have taken their perception as it stands, and estimate that a realistic average 'daily' figure would imply 25 hours/week or more.)

(a) Ekubu

Daily (25 hpw+) 4 15-20 hpw 3 10-15hpw 3 Sometimes 0

(b) Taunovo

Daily (25 hpw+) 9 15-20 hpw 0 10-15hpw 3 Sometimes 0

CONCLUSION: For 60% of the women whose work-patterns were given to me (including second members of households not included in other parts of the survey), *masi*-making can be regarded as a full-time job. For 14% it was about a half-time job, and for the remaining 26% it was at least a 2-day/week job. None of the women in the survey considered themselves merely occasional makers.

4. Main use? (Estimates of makers, expressed as percentage)

(a) Ekubu

	Ritual	<i>Vihā</i> goods	<i>Ota</i> for cash	Self sales	Middleman
1E	60%		10%		30%
2E	10%		85%		5%
3E	20%				80%
4E	50%				50%
5E	20%	10%	70%		
6E				100% -T'rst	
7E	40%		30%		30%
8E	5%	5%		90% -Fijians	
9E	5%		95%		
10E	5%		85%		10%

(b) Taunovo

	Ritual	Vih ā goods	Ota for cash	Self sales	Middleman
1T	75%				25%
2T	70%				30%
3T	10%		80%		10%
4T	20%		65%		15%
5T	10%		55%		35%
6T	5%		20%	75% Mixed	
7T	5%		85%		10%

TOTAL	23.5%	0.9%	40.0%	W8.1, F7.4	19.4%
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Total to Fijian market: >71.8% Total to Western market: <27.5%

Note: > and < estimates because an undefinable amount of the material going via middlemen to shops would be bought by urban Fijians.

5. Value and types of *masi* sold, and type of transaction

(KEY: TRANS = transaction, V=*veis ā*, O = order (*ota*), S = sale to agent or retailer, SD = direct sale. *I-hulu* = *mataihulu* sets of clothing. *I-uku* = *i-ukukunivlae* (house wall-frieze lengths).

1E = c. \$2,000 [c.\$4,000 p.a.]

2E	TYPE	Taunamu	Kumi	I-hulu	I-uku	Kolikoli	Vadrau	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	O	O	O V			V		S	S
	QTY	1 1	3 1	2 2			3 3		1	30
	UNIT \$	150 200	70 20	70 70			10 15		12	1
	TOTAL	350	230	280			75		12	30

= \$ 977 [c.\$2,000 p.a.]

3E = c. \$2,000 [c.\$4,000 p.a.]

4E	TYPE	Taunamu	Kumi	I-hulu	I-uku	Kolikoli	Vadrau	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS		O			O	O		O	S
	QTY		2			4	1		1	80
	UNIT \$		70			30	30		20	1
	TOTAL		140			120	30		20	80

= \$ 390 [c.\$800 p.a.] Note: Elderly woman, semi-retired, occasional maker

5E	TYPE	Taunamu	Kumi	I-hulu	I-uku	Kolikoli	Vadrau	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	O V O	O	O V						
	QTY	12+1 4	5	10 2						
	UNIT \$	100 150	150	65 65						
	TOTAL	1900	750	780						

= \$3,300 [c.\$6,600 p.a.]

6E	TYPE	<i>Taunamu</i>	<i>Kumi</i>	<i>I-hulu</i>	<i>I-uku</i>	<i>Kolikoli</i>	<i>Vadrau</i>	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS									S
	QTY									36
	UNIT \$									12
	TOTAL									432

= \$ 432 [c.\$850 p.a.] Note: Elderly, semi-retired, lives with well-off son

7E No figures provided

8E	TYPE	<i>Taunamu</i>	<i>Kumi</i>	<i>I-hulu</i>	<i>I-uku</i>	<i>Kolikoli</i>	<i>Vadrau</i>	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	S	S	S				S		S
	QTY	4	2	3 5				5		27
	UNIT \$	150	70	70 20				18		12
	TOTAL	600	140	310				90		330

= \$1,470 [c.\$3,000 p.a.]

9E	TYPE	<i>Taunamu</i>	<i>Kumi</i>	<i>I-hulu</i>	<i>I-uku</i>	<i>Kolikoli</i>	<i>Vadrau</i>	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	O	O	O						
	QTY	6	8	4						
	UNIT \$	150	70	120						
	TOTAL	900	560	480						

= \$1,940 [c.\$4,000 p.a.] Note: This woman buys white *masi* of other women for re-sale, so most of her income is as a 'middleman' in this way. The pieces mentioned she stencilled and sold on, using other women's *masi*

10E	TYPE	<i>Taunamu</i>	<i>Kumi</i>	<i>I-hulu</i>	<i>I-uku</i>	<i>Kolikoli</i>	<i>Vadrau</i>	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	O		O						
	QTY	5		3	10		12	4	20	60 6
	UNIT \$	150		70	10		40	20	10	2 5
	TOTAL	750		210	100		480	80	200	150

= \$1,970 [c.\$4,000 p.a.]

1T = c. \$3,000 [c.\$6,000 p.a.]

2T = c. \$2,000 [c.\$4,000 p.a.]

3T	TYPE	<i>Taunamu</i>	<i>Kumi</i>	<i>I-hulu</i>	<i>I-uku</i>	<i>Kolikoli</i>	<i>Vadrau</i>	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	S	S	O	O		S	S		S
	QTY	3	5	4 4	2		2	2		150
	UNIT \$	150	70	60 80	50		70	6		1
	TOTAL	450	350	560	100		140	12		150

= \$ 1,762 [c.\$3,500 p.a.]

4T	TYPE	<i>Taunamu</i>	<i>Kumi</i>	<i>I-hulu</i>	<i>I-uku</i>	<i>Kolikoli</i>	<i>Vadrau</i>	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	S	S	S				S		S
	QTY	3	2	2				4 3		12
	UNIT \$	150	60	60				14 10		4.50
	TOTAL	450	120	120				86		54

= \$ 830 [c.\$1,700 p.a.]

5T	TYPE	Taunamu	Kumi	I-hulu	I-uku	Kolikoli	Vadrau	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	S	S	S	S			S	S	
	QTY	1	2 2	2	3			2 2	2	
	UNIT \$	150	100 80	70	30			45 60	35	
	TOTAL	150	360	140	90			210	70	

= \$ 1,020 [c.\$2,000 p.a.]

6T	TYPE	Taunamu	Kumi	I-hulu	I-uku	Kolikoli	Vadrau	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	S V		S					S	
	QTY	8 2		10					100	
	UNIT \$	200 200		70					15	
	TOTAL	2,000		700					1500	

= \$ 4,200 [c.\$8,500 p.a.]

7T	TYPE	Taunamu	Kumi	I-hulu	I-uku	Kolikoli	Vadrau	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	S5V1	V1	S	S	S V			S	S6 V6
	QTY	6	1	7	2	2 1			10	6 6
	UNIT \$	150	100	80	30	15			13	25 5
	TOTAL	900	100	560	60	45			130	180

= \$ 1,975 [c.\$4,000 p.a.]

AVERAGE FIGURES FOR TOTAL SAMPLE:

	TYPE	Taunamu	Kumi	I-hulu	I-uku	Kolikoli	Vadrau	6x4 etc	White	Tourist
	TRANS	S24=43% V5 = 9% O16= 29%	S21 = 64% V4=12 O16= 39%	S29= 45% V4= 1% O31= 48%	S5=29% O12= 71%					
	QTY	13,31,15	33	64	17	7	21	22	134	413
	UNIT \$	1,1.5,200	85	65 av	21 av	24 av	35	20	15	3
	TOTAL	8,950	2,805	4,140	350	165	725	478	1,932	1,406

Plus unspecified \$9, 390 and one with no figures

TOTAL = \$30,341 (including in-kind), or \$29,071 cash
 $\div 16 = \$1,896$ (incl. i-k)/woman or \$1,817 (cash)/woman

PER YEAR = SAY \$3,650/yr (cash) and \$160 (in-kind) per woman

It is difficult to be sure whether the 6x4 and other such are going to indigenous or tourist patrons, similarly the white *masi* and 'sold' *mahi kolikoli*. Adding these to what the makers recognise as 'tourist-tapa,' the figures are as follows:

Indigenous market = 87% in dollar value

Tourist market = 13% in dollar value.

The tourist figure may be swelled if some of the private sale cloths are added to it, but is unlikely to be more than **20%**. The proportions estimated by makers in response to Question 4 were somewhat different from those arrived at here, but that is not surprising since they were not using specific figures. The actual numbers of pieces they documented for Question 5 probably provide the more accurate ratio.

6. *Masi* kept on hand

• 70% (12) of the 17 women surveyed always kept made-up *masi* on hand. This is a high proportion, sufficient to guarantee that whoever in the village did not have it would know who had some available and where they could quickly buy, borrow-against-return (*dinau*), or cadge without definite return (*kerekere*) from close relatives, if they had an emergency. The proportion of provident ones is high enough to accommodate overlapping kinship ties.

• 20% (3 women) kept large ritual cloths on hand.

• 30% did not keep any on hand. 2 said they would buy such cloth if a ritual came up suddenly (though one of them indicated she would do so by barter, with a bag of sugar which was worth four 12'x2' *masis*. 3 said they would borrow (by *dinau* rather than *kerekere*), 1 that she would *kerekere* from her mother.

• 50% (9 others) kept various amounts on hand, invariably white as it could quickly (in an evening if need be) be made into the required form and stencilled.

7. Is any other *i-yau* made in your household?

The only other *i-yau* made is scented oil, for personal use and prestation, but even that was only made by 4 of the women surveyed (less than 25%). This highlights the almost total dependence of Vatulele women on *masi* as their female *i-yau*.

One woman (48 years old) made the point that she and her husband collaborated on making the oil.

8. Do you have any other *i-yau* on hand? If so, how was it obtained?

(a) Ekubu

	<i>I-yau</i> type	How obtained
1E	1 <i>tabua</i>	No details
2E	1 <i>tabua</i>	If she needs mats she will do a <i>veisa</i> for them
3E	1 large floormat	Will keep for guests' use, not for ritual gift
4E	None at present	'Mats and <i>tabua</i> come in and go out constantly'
5E	None on hand	Had a sleeping mat, gave it away. Obtained in ritual in Somosomo.
6E	2 wool-fringe mats 2 sleeping mats 3 <i>tabua</i>	No details
7E	1 large floormat 3 <i>tabua</i>	No details

	<i>I-yau</i> type	How obtained
8E	2 large floormats 1 sleeping mat 3 wool-fringe mat 4 <i>tabua</i>	No details
9E	1 large floormat 1 sleeping mat 2 <i>tabua</i>	At a birthday in Galoa “ At a <i>sōlevu</i> in Bouwaga
10E	2 <i>tabua</i> 1 large floormat 1 wool-fringe mat	Being kept against the time of her elderly husband's death No acquisition details

(b) Taunovo

	<i>I-yau</i> type	How obtained
1T	None on hand	
2T	None on hand	
3T	None on hand	
4T	3 mats	No details
5T	1 sleeping mat 1 <i>kumi</i> 2 pillows&covers	Funeral Funeral Elopement ceremony gifts (family share)
6T	1 sleeping mat 2 wool-fringe mat	Mats obtained in <i>veisa</i> with woman from Lomaiviti
7T	1 bedcover mat	From funeral in Ekubu, at which she gave a sleeping mat obtained at a different funeral. Sometimes does mat <i>veisa</i> with Nadali (Verata)

NOTES:

- 65% of those surveyed had other ritual prestation goods on hand.
- Overwhelmingly these were mats.
- 70% of those in Ekubu told me they have *tabua* on hand, but none of those in Taunovo. Although the chiefly superclan Nalimolevu would be called upon more frequently to provide *tabua* for rituals, I believe 50-70% would be true of both villages — many *tabua* circulate in Taunovo. The Taunovo women are perhaps less trustful of me than the women of ‘my’ superclan Nalimolevu, and as remarked at the beginning, there is a reluctance to admit to holding *tabua*.
- Both mats and *tabua* were principally obtained in the course of rituals, not bought or traded for.
- Only two informants spoke of obtaining them by *veis ā*. It should be remembered, however, that this survey involved a particular 6 month period only. There was clear evidence in their remarks that if women found they were unable to easily obtain mats on the island for funerals and/or weddings, they would be more likely to use *veis ā* to obtain them rather than buying them.

9. What has your household given in *i-yau* and/or money this 6 mos?

	<i>I-yau</i> /food/cash	Circumstance of giving
1E	4 mats 1 small <i>kumi</i> c.\$540 cash	5 funerals (there were no weddings in Ekubu during this 6 months) “ Vatulele Day \$460, <i>Vakamisionari</i> tithe \$60, Church offertory c.\$20
2E	1 sleeping mats 1 wool-fringed mat \$400 cash	Funeral Funeral Vatulele Day
3E	3 sleeping mats 1 6x4 plain mat \$400 cash	Not specified Not specified Vatulele Day
4E	5 pieces <i>masi</i> c.\$400	Not specified Not specified (Vatulele Day?)
5E	5 large <i>masi</i>	Not specified. This woman did not mention Vatulele Day, but her household would, like every other on the island, have had to find at least \$200 per couple, plus other spending during the festivities.
6E	5 sleeping mats 40 metres of <i>kumi</i> \$375 cash	Not specified Not specified Gifts \$60, <i>Vakamisionari</i> tithe \$140, Church \$100, School \$75
7E	6 <i>kumi</i> \$416 cash	Intra-clan rituals Vatulele Day \$300, <i>Vakamisionari</i> tithe \$70, Funerals \$30, Schoolfees \$16
8E	7 small <i>kumi</i> 7 <i>mahi kolikoli</i> 2 large floormats 1 wool-fringed mat 3 sleeping mats 3 <i>tabua</i> Over \$1,000 cash	7 <i>soqo</i> - 5 funerals, 1 visit of the Tui Lawa, 1 meeting in Korolevu “ Note: All of the mats were obtained in <i>veisa</i> 3 ‘came back’ 3 ‘came back’ 1 ‘came back’ Note: High-ranking chiefly couple and much is expected of them
9E	1 large <i>kumi</i> 1 large floormat 1 large <i>tabua</i> 1 small <i>kumi</i> 2 blankets 8 pillows c.\$3,000 cash	1 of 3 Funerals “ “ Wedding Elolements “ Vatulele Day, boat of the <i>tokotoko</i> , school, rituals, deaths, weddings
10E	c.\$1,000 cash	Vatulele Day, Taunovo Day (natal village), various. High-ranking elder's family and woman high-ranking in Taunovo also, so considerable social obligation

1T	4 sleeping mats 1 wool-finged mat <i>Masi</i> wedding-clothes, 1M 1F \$1,270 cash	5 funerals (mats all <i>kerekere</i> , 2 cross-cousin, 2 sister, 1 mother) “ Wedding, given to relatives getting married Church conference \$400 (choir \$200 each), <i>Vakamisionari</i> tithe \$70, Taunovo Day \$400, Vatulele Day \$400
2T	2 White <i>masi</i> 1 Mat 6m bolting cloth 2 <i>kumi</i> \$700 cash	1 of 3 funerals, 1 = Vatulele Day “ “ 1 = Birth of grandchild, 1 = Vatulele Day Taunovo Day \$300, Vatulele Day \$400
3T	1 large white <i>masi</i> 2 <i>kumi</i> \$350 cash	Not specified Not specified Vatulele Day \$200, <i>Vakamisionari</i> tithe \$70, Funerals \$60, Church \$20

	<i>I-yau/food/cash</i>	Circumstance of giving
4T	3 sleeping mats 3 <i>kumi</i> 2 pillows/covers 3 drums kerosene 1 big sack <i>tavioka</i> \$560 cash	2 Funeral, 1 elopement Funerals Elopement ceremony gifts (family share) Lifting of mourning Lifting of mourning 5 funerals@\$10, \$10 schoolfees, \$300 Taunovo Day, \$200 VL Day
5T	1 sleeping mat 2 <i>kumi</i> 2 pillows/covers	Funeral 1 Funeral, 1 wedding Elopement ceremony gifts (family share) Note comment on 5E regarding \$200+ cash for Vatulele Day
6T	5 <i>kumi</i> 4 <i>taunamu</i> 5 large floormats	Funerals Unspecified (weddings?) 5 funerals. All obtained <i>veisa</i> with woman from Lomaiviti Note comment on 5E regarding \$200+ cash for Vatulele Day
7T	1 <i>kumi</i> 1 6 x 4 1 <i>mahi kolikoli</i> 1 <i>mahi vadrau</i> 1 sleeping mat Soap 1 basket yams 1 bunch plantains 1 sack <i>kasava</i> \$800+ cash	Funeral Gift to newborn child (<i>i-roqoroqo</i>) Unspecified " " Taunovo Day \$300, Vatulele Day \$460, clan ritual \$20, village \$5

NOTES:

- The smallest amount of cash outlay by anyone who discussed that was \$400, the largest over \$3,000. It should not be assumed that this figure would double for a whole year, as some things like Vatulele Day are annual events. Nonetheless, in light of the earning capacity of individual women shown in (5) above, many of them principal if not sole breadwinners, the cash outlay for rituals is clearly a sizeable percentage.
- Most gifts recalled were for weddings and/or funerals, and while some detailed their own produce, many listed mats. Given that these have to be obtained with far more difficulty than making *masi*, it shows clearly that they are a necessary adjunct.

10. Is *masi* your household's main income? 11. What other sources of income, and how much from each?

	<i>Masi</i> main	Fish	<i>Bêche de mer</i>	Garden prod.	Other
1E	Y		\$250 in June		
2E	Y		Some in June		Grass-cutting \$5/m
3E	Y		\$250 in June		
4E	Y	\$6-700/yr	\$400 in June, just doing it for VL Day		

	<i>Masi</i> main	Fish	<i>Bêche de mer</i>	Garden prod.	Other
5E	Y		\$600 in June	Watermelons \$1200 to mainland hotels	
6E	Y		\$700 in June		
7E	-		Some in June	Bananas to resort c. \$100/yr	
8E	Y	c.\$600/yr to resort			Raise cattle for ritual feasts c.\$600/yr M+F make and sell <i>kesa</i> paint, few \$
9E	N				M — Resort employee c.\$5,200/y
10E	Y				

1T	Y		\$250 in June		
2T	Y- sole i/c				
3T	Y				Older M — Resort worker contributes to housekeeping
4T	N		\$46		Lease rent \$2-3000
5T	Y- sole i/c				
6T	Y		\$1,000		
7T	Y	c.\$1,200/y (resort)	\$235 (m+f collect)		

12. Do you have your own *masi* plantation, and if so what size?

All except one respondent did have their own *masi* plantations. Most estimated that they had about half an acre (0.2 ha), but three had an acre and two one and a half acres. The average size was 0.8 acres (0.3 ha).

13. What do you grow? Do you sell any of the produce, or use it all?

All interviewees had vegetable gardens. Not surprisingly, in all except three cases these were said to be larger than their *masi* plantations. All except two eat all of their produce (see answers to Questions 10/11). The exceptions sold one particular item — watermelons and China bananas respectively. Diverse produce was grown: yams; cassava; sweet potatoes; plantain bananas; sweet yams; China bananas; eggplants; tomatoes; cabbages; hot chillies. Given that much of this produce would be shared through *kerekere*, it indicates Vatulele's high level of self-sufficiency.

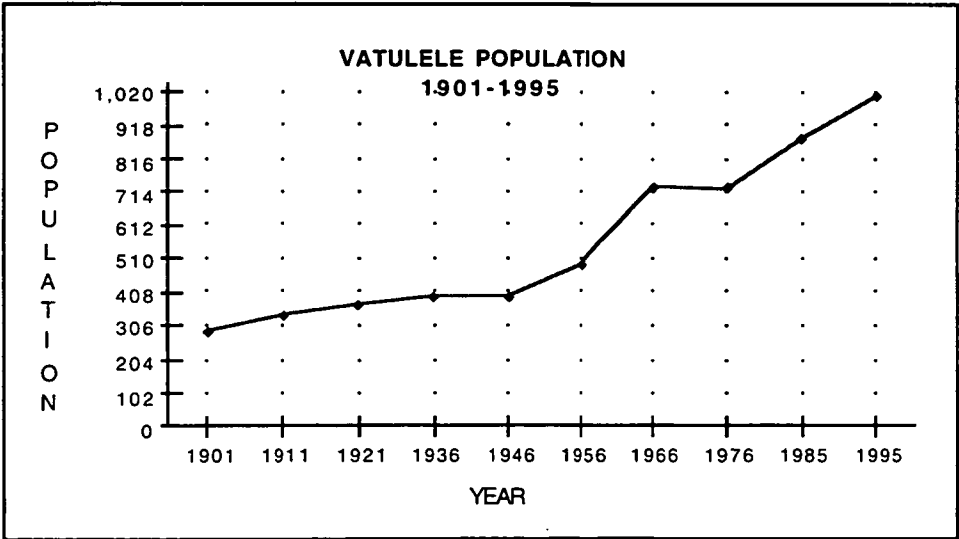
Appendix 7

VATULELE POPULATION FIGURES 1901-1995

Census figures are given up to 1976, then figures from the nursing station, in Ekubu for 1985-1995. 1995 figures do not include about 15 non-islanders at the VIResort.

YR	Bouwaqa		Lomanikaya		Ekubu		Taunovo		TOTAL	
1901									161M 131F	292
1911	18M 30F	48	23M 28F	51	112M 125F	237	Included with Ekubu		153 183F	336
1921	25M 3 3F	58	35M 28F	63	109M 141F	250	Included with Ekubu		179M 192F	371
1936									180M 215F	395
1946	30M 25F	55	30M 31F	61	64M 81F	145	60M 71F	131	184M 208F	392
1956	41M 26F	67	28M 37F	65	102M 114F	216	62M 84F	146	233M 261F	494
1966	54M 32F	86	44M 44F	88	141M 157F	298	117M 143F	260	233M 261F	732
1976	62M 41F	103	35M 24F	59	148M 174F	322	118M 127F	245	363M 366F	729
1985		127		103		393		257		880
1989		151		87		363		270		871
1993		166		88		398		332		984
1995		165		94		402		349		1010

Table 6 and Graph 2: Vatulele Population figures 1901-1995



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