The main polities: Vuda *tikina* (western part)—a geographical and political snapshot

Vuda New *tikina* includes the Old *tikina* of Vuda, Sabeto and Vitogo. The Old *tikina* of Vuda and Sabeto comprise the western part of Vuda New *tikina* and were covered in the course of my researches.

The main polities based in these Old *tikina* were, at the time of Cession in 1874, and are still recognised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of vanua</th>
<th>Leading yavusa</th>
<th>Title of paramount</th>
<th>No. of yavusa</th>
<th>Levels of hierarchy</th>
<th>No. of villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Vuda Old Tikina</td>
<td>Sabutoyatoya</td>
<td>Momo Levu or Tui Vuda</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Sabeto Old Tikina</td>
<td>Conua</td>
<td>Momo or Tui Sabeto</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Vuda Old *tikina*: the Vuda socio-political complex

I will now describe in more detail the origins and development of the *yavusa* which were based in the Old *tikina* of Vuda and which comprised the Vuda socio-political complex as it was at about the time of the 1871 Cakobau Government.

The following accounts of the origins and structure of each of the six *yavusa* of the Vuda polity emphasise the simple nature of the polity.

The *Vuda vanua* comprised the following elements:

(a) three *yavusa*, based at the present village of Viseisei, including:

(i) The leading *yavusa*, Sabutoyatoya, whose head is titled the Momo Levu of Vuda or, in eastern phraseology, Tui Vuda. Part of the Sabutoyatoya is based at Namara on the island of Waya Sewa.

(ii) The two *yavusa* of Tububere and Cawanisa—the latter is now based on the island of Malolo in the province of Nadroga. Part of the Tububere is based at Lomolomo, living with the Vunativi people (apparently once a *yavusa*, but now of anomalous status).

(b) the *yavusa* of Kai Vuda, based at the present village of Lauwaki, between Viseisei and the city of Lautoka. Part of the Kai Vuda is based at Tavakubu, formerly in the Old *tikina* of Vitogo.
The two yavusa of Navatulevu and Naviyagoisaukova, based at the present village of Abaca (was Nagwagwa). The latter yavusa is now almost extinct.

Myths of origin

General

According to the myths of origin of these people, the Sabutoyatoya and the Tububere are closely related by spiritual descent, and trace a common ancestry from Sagavulanavuda, son of Lutunasobasoba who was a member of the crew of the mythical ship, the Kaunitoni, which brought the original ancestors of the Fijians from the west to Fiji, where they landed at Vuda. These two yavusa claim a common mythical origin and maintain a close myth-based bond with the Cawanisa and the Kai Vuda, because the original ancestors of the Cawanisa and the Kai Vuda also arrived in Fiji on the Kaunitoni. The descendants of the four original ancestral spirits comprising these four yavusa were essentially coastal people and regarded themselves as the original inhabitants not only of Vuda but also of the whole of Fiji. In fact there are ideological parallels between the bonds uniting these shipmates on the Kaunitoni and the bonds which developed between indentured Indian labourers who came to Fiji from India on board the same ship and who created the relationship commonly referred to as jehaji. There was thus a close mythical and spiritual bond between the Sabutoyatoya, the Tububere, the Cawanisa and the Kai Vuda, based largely on the arrival of the ancestors aboard the Kaunitoni at Vuda. On the other hand, the Navatulevu and the Naviyagoisaukova came from the south side of the Tualeita range from the original settlement of Navatulevu and settled north of the range at Nagwagwa (whence came the ancestors of the Navatulevu yavusa of Nadi). They were essentially inland people and newcomers to Vuda territory. Their myths of origin before they were at Nagwagwa associate them with Vitogo.

The Kaunitoni myth

The telling of the myths of the origins and arrival in Fiji of a ship known as the Kaunitoni sailing from far to the west of Fiji and arriving at Vuda, and of the original ancestral spirits of the Vuda people and indeed of the Fijian people generally, has not been confined to the Vuda people. As Peter France (1966:107) so elegantly put it:

This is the legend of the Kaunitoni migration; unlike most Fijian oral traditions, which relate to the exploits of local gods and heroes, it is told from one end of the group to the other. It has been given a place in authoritative books on Fijian history and custom, and has been used as corroborative evidence for the speculations of ethnographer and archaeologist in their reconstructions of Fijian history.

France went on to point out that the early missionaries (Williams, 1858; Carey, 1865 as noted in France 1966:109) or others (Heffernan in the 1880s as also noted in France 1966:109) who were interested in the traditions of the Fijians could find no such origin myth, although there were very early references to Degei and the Nakauvadra. I should add to France’s evidence that of Richard Lyth, missionary, who wrote about Degei (1836–1844:87) but nothing about the Kaunitoni. The first reference to the Kaunitoni myth appears to be that given to sometimes-imaginative Basil Thomson by his Fijian clerk in 1895. Since then the myth was related in detail by Osea Matakorovatu, the Sabutoyatoya representative before the 1914 Native Lands Commission (NLC), in response to questioning by investigators into the origins of the Fijian people.

1 (Editors’ note) Parke gave the reference as 1844:87 and in the bibliography originally had this as Buk Rotumah. This 8-page primer, a copy is in the National Library of Australia in Canberra, seems an unlikely source and so we have substituted the more likely reference to his journals of 1836–1844.
France concluded (1966:112–113):

So the Kaunitoni legend was born, of missionary parentage, and nurtured by the enquiries of the Native Lands Commission. Its general acceptance at the present time is one of the products of Fiji’s transition from a geographical expression to a nation; it had the same socially cohesive qualities as the national coat of arms and the flag. But it is no more closely related to Fijian culture than they; it does not apparently antedate them.

Linguists may also point out that the name ‘Kaunitoni’ must be suspect as a Bauan invention, because the initial element in the name, *kau*, is standard Fijian, whereas the western communalect equivalent is *kai*. Vuda people refer to the name always as Kaunitoni, not Kainitoni which is what they should say if the name is a genuine Vuda term. I can only say, in comparison, that the Nakauvadra is always so pronounced in Rakiraki and in Vuda; that again the communalect form of *kai* is the same in Rakiraki as it is in Vuda; and that no-one to my knowledge has suggested that the Nakauvadra and its associated myths are Bauan inventions. I think that any such argument to throw doubt on the *Kaunitoni* myth is but a linguistic quibble.

The explorations with which this part of the monograph is concerned relate to Vuda and its origins and development as seen by the Vuda people. So the primary version of the myth which is related here is the Vuda account given to me orally in 1995 by the late Ratu Epeli Vukinamoceyawa, iTaukei Nakelo, the then recognised expert on the affairs of the Sabutoyatoya. He was born in 1910. This account was checked with him against, first, an account which he had written many years before as part of a more general account of the affairs of the *yavusa* for future generations; and, secondly, the ‘official’ account given by Osea, the Sabutoyatoya representative, as recorded by the NLC in 1914.

The iTaukei Nakelo said that:

Tura from Turkestan (Turakisitani, Esia) married Ranadi of Thebes (Cevi, Itipita), and they had two children, Lutunasobasoba and Kubunavanua. Tura’s second wife was Naiovabasali, and their children were Degei, Waicalanavanua, Nakumilevu, Rokola and Erovu. They moved to Tanganyika.

Three ships, the *Kaunitoni*, the *Kaunitera* and the *Duiyabaki*, later set out from Tanganyika and sailed east until they came to the Solomons. Lutunasobasoba was captain of the *Kaunitoni*, Kumilevu of the *Kaunitera* and Kubunavanua of the *Duiyabaki*. While at the Solomons, they quarrelled over a turtle the crew of the *Kaunitoni* had eaten and not shared with the other crews. Kumilevu and his crew were left behind in the Solomons, and the other two ships left. The *Duiyabaki*, with Kubunavanua, went ahead and sailed to Lomaloma in the Lau group.

The *Kaunitoni* followed, with many on board including Lutunasobasoba, Degei, Waicalanavanua, Rokola, Erovu and a number of women and children. The ship sailed on until they reached the land now known as Fiji. When they arrived, it was night and, as the moon was rising, they came opposite to a headland which they called Muainavula (Moon Point). They went on and struck the edge of the reef, and the canoe was holed (*lamu*), and so they called this edge of the reef Nalamu.

The 1914 NLC added that:

when they passed through the passage in the reef which they called Lomoci, what is referred to as their *kato ni vola* fell overboard. It is said that this was a stone box in which there was an *ivola ni kawa* or account of the kin of Lutunasobasoba, engraved in stone. [iTaukei Nakelo referred to the box as a box of *tabua* or whales’ teeth].
They sailed on and when they approached land they saw a place where coconuts were growing. Here they anchored, and the *Kaunitoni* was beached. The NLC said that the place where they landed was called Yavuni, and this is considered to be the very first place where the Fijians stayed, albeit briefly.

Ciba and his father, of the Kai Vuda at Lauwaki, told me that:

Lutunasobasoba told the crew to go and pile up (*koronia* in communalect; *binia* in standard) some coconuts, and they called the place where they anchored Naikorokoro. When ashore, they sent Bulouniwasawasa to Rotuma.

This has an interesting parallel in a Rotuma myth (Parke 2001:43) that when the *Kaunitoni* passed by the island of Rotuma a woman was put ashore and became Hanitema’us, the wild woman of the woods and perhaps representing the earliest inhabitants of Rotuma. She tried to stop Raho (the first of the people from Tonga and Samoa who allegedly founded the Rotuman population) from breaking up the island. Rotuma, though culturally and linguistically different from Fiji, became part of the Crown Colony of Fiji in 1881, and such legends may have arisen as a pseudo-traditional connection to create some emotional relationship between these Government-created bedfellows.

*iTaukei Nakelo* went on to say that:

they brought Lutunasobasoba ashore by carrying him in their arms (*kabe* in communalect; *keve* in standard), and they called the place Kabekokira (*kina* being the old communalect word for a man of high rank. [The NLC account said that Kiria was a woman, and that it was she who was brought ashore in someone’s arms]. They followed the coast southwards till they came to a river mouth. Lutunasobasoba was carried across on someone’s back (*likoti* in local communalect; *dreketi* in standard Fijian). The place is now known as Dreketi, but iTaukei Nakelo said that it was formerly called Likoti. They then followed along the coast until they came to a place where some *tabua* had been washed up after the box of *tabua* had fallen overboard at Lomoci. So they called the place Kasanatabua (the *tabua* drifted to shore). Then they all went to Vuda where they founded their settlement, and a house for Lutunasobasoba was built called Naciriyawa (to commemorate their long sea travel). Meanwhile the *Kaunitoni* was repaired on the beach at Yavuni.

Lutunasobasoba was very upset about his box, and sent some of the crew to look for the box. They made two searches, once as far as the Yasawa (*sa yawa* means ‘far’) but failed to find it. Lutunasobasoba became angry and sent Degei and some of the crew to look for a place for themselves. So the place where they split up was called Viseisei (meaning ‘split up’). Later Lutunasobasoba moved east and founded the village of Vuda.

On the way, he rested at Naisasaro, a little islet in the mangroves south of the present village of Viseisei. He maintained his rage about the loss of his box; and his younger children including Rokomoutu and Rokomatu fled east to a place called Vatubabasaga, referring to the splitting up (*basaga*) of the chief’s family.

The NLC added that:

the second time the *Kaunitoni* had gone to look for the box, the wind had blown strongly and the ship had drifted away as far east as the island of Malake. Degei and Waicala and the others whom Lutunasobasoba had sent away to explore the countryside followed the coast to Tavua and then climbed up to the Nakuavadra Range from where they saw the *Kaunitoni* had arrived off Malake. They went down to await the *Kaunitoni* at Nacilaumomo Point, where they joined up with the crew. They discussed what they had found and agreed to tell Lutunasobasoba that they had discovered a good site for a settlement on the Nakuavadra. So the *Kaunitoni* returned to Vuda.
iTaukei Nakelo continued that:

when the message came that a good site for a village had been found on the Nakauvadra Range, Lutunasobasoba told them to go ahead and clear the land and build houses there. When all was ready there, someone should come back and tell those at Vuda who should then go on up there. So the site was cleared and the houses were built; and the Mata ni Vanua (ceremonial spokesman) was sent from Nakauvadra to inform Lutunasobasoba who was at his house called Naciri�awa.

When the message came that all was ready on the Nakauvadra, Lutunasobasoba’s children at Vatubabasaga were brought back. The chief said that Sagavulunavuda (the eldest) and some others should continue to occupy the original house mound of Fiji at Vuda but that the others should go up to the Nakauvadra.

So began the chiefly journey to the Nakauvadra. The land party began by climbing the point at Edronu at the west end of the Tualeita Range and then followed the Range eastwards to the Nakauvadra Range. As they went, some went ahead breaking off (viti) the branches. They reached a hill where they rested, and the leader said that the land should be called Viti or Fiji. The hill where they rested was called Naisauniwaqa. From here the party moved on, until they came to a place where Lutunasobasoba called together his children and the other members of the party and told them that he was very weak. He bade farewell to his children and told them not to go to Degei. They should divide up and go and look for different places where they might settle. Then he died, and was buried. The place where he died was called Cibutanagodrodro or Magodro. The hill where he was buried was called Nawecavu in Magodro, and to this day no grass will grow on the traditional site of his grave.

So his children divided up. Buisavulu went to Bureta, Moturiki; Rokomoutu went to Verata; Tuinayau went to Batiki; Rokomatu went to Rewa; Daunisai went to Kabara. Of Lutunasobasoba’s other children, Kaliɔva Revurevu had been born prematurely (lutudole) as the Kaunitoni passed the islet of Narokorokoyawa, to the south of the Yasawas, and here he stayed. Sagavulunavuda, the eldest son of Lutunasobasoba, remained at Vuda, and was regarded as the original ancestral spirit of the Sabutoyatoya yavusa.

The NLC, on the other hand, said that:

when the message had been received that a good site for a settlement had been found on the Nakauvadra Range, Lutunasobasoba said that Rokola and Waqabalabala should sail along the coast with his children (Buisavulu (fem), Rokomoutu, Vueti, Ratu and Daunisai); and that Degei and Waicala should go by land to Nakauvadra. So the Kaunitoni sailed off whilst Degei and Waicala climbed up from Edronu and followed the Tualeita (one of the spirit paths known as the Wakanivugayali) along the continuous ridge to Nakauvadra. Lutunasobasoba, Erovu and Sagavulu remained behind at Vuda.

When the Tunimata (communalect) or Matanivanua (standard) reported that the houses on the Nakauvadra had been completed, Lutunasobasoba said that Rokola (the original ancestor of the carpenters who settled at Narauyaba on the Nakauvadra) should make a wooden drum on the Nakauvadra as the lali ni vanua (drum for vanua messages to be sent from Nakauvadra to Vuda). The drum was called Rogorogo i Vuda ( reporting to Vuda).

Lutunasobasoba remained at Vuda with his son, Sagavulunavuda, but as he became very weak, he thought a great deal about those on the Nakauvadra and planned to go there. He gathered together those who remained with him at Vuda, bade them farewell (Gifford [1952:349] said that a large rock fenced in at the present village of Lomolomo was the scene of this farewell, but this is nowadays denied at Lomolomo) and set off inland towards the Nakauvadra. When he was close to death on the Nakauvadra, he told his
daughter Buisavulu (who was his eldest child on the Nakauvadra) that when he died, she and her brothers should not remain on Nakauvadra with Degei, because Degei was a hard (kaukauwa) man and always opposed to his elder brother’s (Lutunasobasoba’s) wishes. Then Lutunasobasoba died and was buried at Bua, Nakauvadra.

Buisavulu said to Rokola that they should all leave the Nakauvadra and go off in the *Kaunitoni*. So they went back on board with Rokola and Waqabalabala, to look for land. The *Kaunitoni* eventually reached Bureta. Degei and Waicala remained on the Nakauvadra.

**Development of the Vuda *vanua***

The Vuda *vanua* as it developed was based on the descendants of those who remained behind. These descendants were:

- the spiritually related *yavusa* of Sabutoyatoya and Tububere descended from Lutunasobasoba’s son Sagavulunavuda, who established the old village of Lomolomo;
- the anomalous *yavusa* of Vunativi, claiming descent from Sagavulunavuda through his son Draulunavua and his grandson Natuira but maintaining formal association with the Cawanisa at Naqoqa. They were first living at Lomolomo;
- the *yavusa* of Cawanisa descended from Sadidi, a member of the crew of the *Kaunitoni*, who were once living at Lomolomo with the descendants of Sagavulunavuda but who later established the old inland village of Naqoqa; and
- the *yavusa* of Kai Vuda descended from Erovu, half-brother of Lutunasobasoba, who established the village of Vuda below Korovatu crag.

In the course of time, while the Sabutoyatoya and the Tububere remained at Lomolomo, and the Kai Vuda stayed at Vuda (Korovatu), the Cawanisa moved inland to Naqoqa. The Navatulevu and the Naviyagoisaukova *yavusas* moved across the Tualeita Range from Navatulevu (near Navilawa, below Koroiyanitu peak) to the northern slopes, ending up at Nagwagwa. These *yavusa* heeded the authority of the Sabutoyatoya, as at that time the strongest polity in the area.

The NLC of 1914 said that:

Sagavulunavuda, the eldest child of Lutunasobasoba and Naiobasali, came with his father and siblings on the *Kaunitoni*, and settled with his father at Vuda at Korovatu crag. He married Uqetenavanua, the daughter of Erovu (the original ancestral spirit of the Kai Vuda, whose *yavu*, Natamayawa, was also at Vuda), and they had three children, Uludranavanua, Naivilawasa and Qera.

Sagavulunavuda remained at Vuda, but established at Lomolomo a settlement for Draulunavuana, whose house there was called Naturubasaga. Naivilawasa and Qera also went to stay at Lomolomo, together with the offspring of Sadidi, a member of the crew of the *Kaunitoni*, whose descendants were the Cawanisa *yavusa*. Later, Naivilawasa was sent by Sagavulunavuda to Rakiraki (the Rakiraki account was that Naivilawasa was a woman who came down from the Nakauvadra and, according to one account, married Waqabalabala, the original ancestor of the Navatu people); and Qera was sent to Nadroga where his descendants comprised the Leweiqera group.

Draulunavanua married Nasaubuli (whom iTaukai Nakelo said was his mother), and they had two sons, Natuira and Natuilevu.

Natuilevu went to Malolo. He married Lewatulekeleke of Vitogo, and their daughter was Sobu, (with a macron over the u). Their descendants at Solevu, Malolo, comprised the Kai Lawa (the leading group of the Malolo *yavusa*, whose paramount was titled Tui Lawa).
Natuira remained at Lomolomo, and married Munudranaqo, and they had a number of children, the descendants of the first five being the Sabutoyatoya yavusa. The descendants of the sixth, Vurabere, comprised the Tububere yavusa. Another yavusa, the Vunativi, also claimed to be descended from another son of Natuira, whom they said was the second eldest.

So far as the origins and development of each of the yavusa named earlier and of Vuda vanua generally, with their fission and fusion and their interrelationship between themselves and with polities outside Vuda are concerned, it matters little from this point of view whether Lutunasobasoba died on the Nakauvadra or in Magodro on his way up to the Nakauvadra. What is important is to remember the myths of origin of those yavusa which claimed descent from either Lutunasobasoba’s son, Sagavunavuda (that is, the Sabutoyatoya and the Tububere), or Erovu, Lutunasobasoba’s half-brother (that is, the Kai Vuda) or Sadidi, who sailed on the Kaunitoni with the half-brothers, Lutunasobasoba and Erovu, (that is, the Cawanisa) who, according to the Kaunitoni myths as given above, landed together at Vuda.

Since the Sabutoyatoya were recorded by the 1914 NLC to be the leading yavusa at the time of Cession, it is their myth as given by the Commission and checked with the iTaukei Nakelo which will be given and discussed first. Not surprisingly, the early mythical genealogical evidence given by the NLC differs in detail from the account given by iTaukei Nakelo; but a general picture emerges as the basis for a useful discussion of how the Sabutoyatoya now understand or devise their mythical origins and the development of their yavusa; its position in the Vuda vanua; its relationship with other polities in the contexts of neighbours in the west and Fijian polities generally and indeed with the outside world.

**Sabutoyatoya origin myth**

iTaukei Nakelo agreed in discussion, that:

Sagavulu was the son of Lutunasobasoba and Naiobasali. Although he had one written account that said that Sagavunavuda had married Naiobasali, he claimed that this was wrong and that he had married Nasaubuli, and they had a son, Draulunavanua, who married Uqetenavanua, daughter of Erovu.

iTaukei Nakelo said that there were various accounts about the descendants of Draulunavuda. One was to the effect that he had five children—Tabutovatova, who stayed at Vuda and married Nadradra; Tuilevu who went to Malolo; Tutuvanua who went to Nadi; Qera who went to Nadroga; and Naivilawasa who went to Rakiraki. It was from these five brothers that the matanitu ni Ra vakara originated, that is, a western confederation stretching from Rakiraki to Nadroga and comprising the present coastal areas of the provinces of Ra, Ba and Nadroga. Within this overall confederation there was the so-called Ra ni (Y)Abola, comprising the vanua of Vuda, Sabeto, Vitogo, Malolo, Waya, Naviti, Viwa and Yakete; as well as Vaturu, Saunaka (the Kai Ua) and the Kovacaki. The leader of Ra ni (Y)Abola was the Vuda vanua. iTaukei Nakelo, following his preferred account, went on to say that:

Draulunavanua and Uqetenavanua had two children—Natuira who married Munudranaqo and remained at Lomolomo and Natuilevu who married Lewatulekeleke of Vitogo and went to the island of Malolo (their daughter was Sobu, see below).

The descendants of Natuira were the Sabutoyatoya yavusa of Vuda vanua; and the descendants of Natuilevu were the Leweilawa who became the leading yavusa in Malolo under the paramountcy of the Tui Lawa. Natuira had six children, all of whom were born at Lomolomo. The five eldest were the progenitors of five mataqali of the Sabutoyatoya yavusa. The eldest was called LeiSabutoyatoya and his descendants were the Elevuka mataqali, being the leading mataqali of the Sabutoyatoya yavusa. Lei is the old Vuda equivalent
of taukei or 'owner of'—in this case, the 'owner of Sabutoyatoya' or chiefly yavu of the Sabutoyatoya and thereby the chief of the Sabutoyatoya. As Natuira was on the point of death, his wife touched his arm and she became pregnant and duly gave birth to the sixth child, Vurabere (meaning 'appeared late'), whose descendants became the Tububere yavusa.

Leisabutoyatoya married, first, Savere, a woman of the Leweiwavuwavu of Sabeto, and, secondly Sobu, the daughter of Natuilevu who had gone to Malolo, and there were sons born from each wife. Rasilasila and Vuluma were sons of the first, and Bogisa and Uqeuqe were sons of the second.

The younger brother appointed leader: clouds on the horizon?

iTaukei Sawaieke went on to explain that:

it was decided that a leader of the Sabutoyatoya should be appointed, and the descendants of Natuilevu from Malolo, the Kai Vuda and the Cawanisa came and carried out a ceremony for the installation of Bogisa, the son of the second wife of Leisabutoyatoya, in the presence of Rasilasila, the son of the first wife.

The iTaukei Nakelo, a ninth generation descendant of Bogisa, explained to me that it was sometimes the practice for the younger son to be installed so that he could be concerned with secular matters of the yavusa, while the eldest son was concerned with keeping in good communication with the spirit of the original ancestor and so maintaining the well-being and power of the yavusa, through his sau or mana. I have noted that in some other cases where the younger brother is appointed leader, the practice led to family arguments. However, in this case, the position may have been accepted during this generation, although the two second sons went to Sabeto, where Vuluma’s descendants were the Naceru, and Uqeuqe’s descendants were the Nasigatoka. It is not clear why they split away from their families at Lomolomo, but their departure may have reflected some underlying ill-feeling of jealousy developing from the installation of the younger half-brother as the leader of the Sabutoyatoya.

Bila, son of Bogisa, was next to be installed as leader of the Sabutoyatoya. iTaukei Nakelo said that he was installed at Lomolomo, presumably before the split up at Lomolomo discussed below.

The NLC recorded that Rasilasila had two sons, Natuwawa and Ledra’uwaqa; whereas another account I have been given by iTaukei Nakelo claimed that he had one son, Batimoko, whose sons were Natuwawa and Ledruwaqa; and a third account claimed that he had one son, Masibalavu, whose sons were Ledruwaqa and Batimoko. iTaukei Nakelo’s preferred version was the second, and since it corresponds with the NLC account, except for the detail of the paternity of the two brothers, this is the version I record here.

Veibenu Vea—the breadfruit fight: serious trouble

The account given to me by iTaukei Nakelo claims that Bogisa had two sons, Bila, and Tuiweli, and also that Naereilagi was a son of Bogisa. It also says that Naereilagi was the son of Rasilasila. So what followed was a quarrel either between sons of the half-brothers, Rasilasila and Bogisa, or between two brothers. iTaukei Nakelo said that they were sons of the half-brothers, and it makes more sense to see the quarrel as between the sons of two half-brothers, the younger of whom, Bogisa, had been given the leadership of the Sabutoyatoya.

Be that as it may, iTaukei Nakelo said that:

Following the deaths of Rasilasila and Bogisa, hatred arose between Ledruwaqa and Naereilagi, two of their sons, which erupted in the incident referred to widely in Vuda as the Veibenu Vea. These two made a mess of each other by smearing overripe breadfruit over each other’s heads (veibenu vea). This was a terrible insult from two aspects. First, it was a serious matter for anyone to touch and even more so, to disturb the
head of a person of rank. [One reason that has been suggested as to why the Reverend Thomas Baker was killed and eaten, up in the mountainous interior of Viti Levu, in 1867 was that he had touched the head of the local chief]. Secondly, the *tabu kai* or sacred tree of these people was the breadfruit, the name of which could be hardly mentioned without serious consequences. The use of breadfruit for such a quarrel would have been unthinkable and could only have led to the gravest of trouble. Such an incident could well have been an outward manifestation of deep-seated jealousy being felt by the descendant of Rasilasila, the elder son who had apparently been passed over for leadership. The Sabutoyatoya *yavusa* split up, and scattered with the others living at Lomolomo.

The elder son of Rasilasila, Natuwawa, went to Naqoqa with the Cawanisa (descendants of Sadidi). His descendants were the Nadravua or Ketenatukani (descendants of the elder brother) and that is where they remained.

Ledruwaqa, the second son of Rasilasila, had married a woman from Vitogo, and he went to Vitogo together with Navunicagi, elder son of Bila (the eldest son of Bogisa). Ledruwaqa’s descendants were the Nakurryawa, and Navunicagi’s descendants were the Navicaki sub-division of the Eluvuka *mataqali* of the Sabutoyatoya *yavusa*. The younger son of Bila, Tuiweli went to Votua, Ba. His descendants were the Nasalivakarua.

Then the chief of the Kai Vuda at Korovatu, Vuda, said that those of the Sabutoyatoya who had scattered from Lomolomo should be brought to Vuda. So Ledruwaqa, Navunicagi and, apparently, Naereilagi went to Korovatu.

The NLC stated that:

Bila as head of the Sabutoyatoya also went to Vuda. When his party came to Korovatu, they entered the *beto* or spirit house where a fan made of *masei* (symbol of paramountcy) was hanging. Bila was sweating, and the chief of the Kai Vuda said that the fan should be taken down and Bila should be fanned with it [I was told when Bila entered the *beto*, the question of paramountcy was being discussed by the Kai Vuda; and the fan which was hanging up turned and pointed in the direction of the Sabutoyatoya chief, indicating its sanction for his appointment as paramount].

Another account from the Kai Vuda to me said that Bila was already dead and that it was his son, Navunicagi, who was appointed paramount over the Kai Vuda. There is no way of reconciling these two accounts, and iTaukei Nakelo was ambivalent. It probably does not matter. What is important is that the Kai Vuda who, before, were probably the leading *yavusa*, now agreed to accept the Sabutoyatoya as paramounts.

Irrespective of the precise nature of the incident of the fan, the symbolic gesture either by the fan or by the chief of the Kai Vuda indicated recognition by the Kai Vuda that Bila (or Navunicagi) of the Sabutoyatoya should be made the paramount and that the Kai Vuda would heed his authority. Whatever the socio-political reasons may have been, the choice was hallowed by *mana* or *sau*, by the symbolism of paramountcy in the west, the *masei* fan. Whatever the accounts may be saying, there is still an underlying implication as well as occasional hints that the Kai Vuda were at one stage the paramounts in the area and that the Sabutoyatoya were either subservient to the Kai Vuda, or were peripheral to the Vuda heartland and became paramounts either through force of arms or through superior political ambition and ability. The current myths may well be hiding a military defeat of the Kai Vuda, and both the iTaukei Nakelo and the Kai Vuda people with whom I discussed the matter agreed that it was indeed a possibility.
Leadership challenge

To recap, Leisabutoyatoya had two wives, the elder son of the first being Bogisa, and the elder son of the second being Rasilasila. After the deaths of Bogisa’s son, Bila, and his grandson, Navunicagi, both of whom had held the leadership of the Sabutoyatoya, the children of Navunicagi had met and agreed that the eldest, Natavuke, should succeed to the leadership. This was not acceptable to the Nakuruyawa, descendants of Ledruwaqa, the son of Rasilasila, and they challenged the appointment. The following account is based on that by the NLC and on lengthy discussions I held with the iTaukei Nakelo:

The Tububere people had been growing coconuts, but it was noticed the nuts were being taken; so they asked Natavuke to put a *tabu* on the trees. Such a *tabu* was indicated by the placing of reeds by the trees. The Nakuruyawa removed the reeds and took them to Natavuke’s younger brother, Nasorowale, in order to show their disagreement about the appointment of Natavuke and to indicate their preference for him. Natavuke was in Nadroga at the time, and when he came back to Vuda, he was told what had happened to the *tabu* he had imposed. The removal of the *tabu* represented a symbolic challenge to his appointment. He acceded to the challenge, and Nasorowale was installed as leader of the Sabutoyatoya, and paramount of the Vuda *vanua*. Another account said that Nasorowale was appointed successor to Navunicagi, and that his son, Natavukeniwalla, was accepted as ‘probationary’ (*wawa*) leader but was never confirmed. The appointment went instead to his son Ratu Josaia Natoko No.1, who was the first to be installed after Cession in 1874.

iTaukei Nakelo accepted the second account to the NLC. This account may well be more politically acceptable nowadays, when people like iTaukai Nakelo are trying so hard to give an impression of solidarity among the Sabutoyatoya, an impression which they saw as rudely negated by what they regarded as the treacherous behaviour of Dr. Timoci Bavadra in accepting in 1987 the post of Prime Minister of what they regarded as a pro-Indian and largely anti-Fijian Government. Bavadra was a member of the chiefly Eluvuka *mataqali*, and of Werevakaca sub-division, a group whose traditional responsibility was to protect the Momo Levu of Vuda. Bavadra died medically of cancer, or, as I was told, he got his just desserts through the revengeful powers of the insulted spirits of Vuda.

Interaction with other *vanua*: Sabeto, Bau and Nadi

Sabeto

The Sabutoyatoya *yavusa* was related to the Leweiwavuwavu (at an early time the leading *yavusa* of the Sabeto *vanua*), through the marriage between Leisabotoyatoya and Savere. Connections were furthered when the Naceru (descendants of Rasilasila’s brother, Vuluma) and the Nasilatoka (descendants of Bogisa’s brother, Uqeuqe) came to settle with the Sabutoyatoya. When Nayalobo, the son of Mataitoga, the paramount of Sabeto, plotted to kill his father, Mataitoga found out and Nayalobo took refuge with the Sabutoyatoya. Mataitoga sent *tabua* seeking the death of Nayalobo. Some wanted to protect him but others tricked him into going to Naqoqa. Nasorowale, leader of the Sabutoyatoya, ordered Sabori, a *qaqa* or strong man of the Werevakaca (the protectors of the Sabutoyatoya), to take a gun and shoot him in his house at Naqoqa. The shot hit his thigh and as Nayalobo rushed out of the house, he was struck dead by a spear. The Nasilatoka people came from Sabeto and collected the body and took it to Sabeto. Mataitoga wept.

Bau

Deryck Scarr (personal communication) tells me that there was a traditional path between Vuda and Bau, but I have not been able to determine its origin. Nevertheless this would explain how
Cakobau came to seek assistance once from Vuda. On this occasion, Cakobau was attacking the rebellious Lovoni people on the island of Ovalau. He tried again and again but could not achieve his aims. Sabori of Werevakaca, Sabutoyatoya, was renowned even in Bau as an exceptionally strong warrior, and Cakobau sent for Sabori to bring an army to help him. I was told by Ratu Vuki that Sabori went alone with his dog, and such was his repute than the people all fled. Sabori burned the village and killed one man with his gun and the dog sat in the blood. Cakobau would not believe his story until he brought the head of the man and the dog all covered with blood. Cakobau rewarded Sabori but never gave anything to the dog. In spite of the latter omission, from this time relations between Vuda and Bau were such that when Cakobau came to attack the west and especially Sabeto (see below), he apparently did not treat Vuda with anything but respect.

**Nadi**

Nakadrudru, a woman of the Nabati or leading group of Nadi, came to marry Wiliame Tuiwele, one of the highest-ranking chiefs of the Eluvuka mataqali and Sabutoyatoya. She lived with Tuiwele and duly became pregnant. However, in Tuiwele’s absence on a visit to the Mamanuca islands, his elder brother, Ratu Jone Tavai, told the woman to marry him and not to marry Tuiwele. Tuiwele, on his return, was upset and told the woman to go back to Nadi and live with a certain man there. She went back and gave birth to Tevita Nawaqa. Later these two got married in Nadi.

Tuiwele and the Vuda people went to Nadi to laki veikovaraki or show their wishes that Tuiwele’s son should come under the protection of the Nadi people. Tevita was never invited to return to Vuda, and he never participated in Vuda ceremonies. Thus Tevita Tavai came to be counted as a member of the Nakuruvarua chiefly group of the Navatulevu of Nadi, and not of the Nakelo (second most chiefly group of the Eluvuka of Sabutoyatoya); eventually he became the Momo Levu of Nadi.

**Final movements**

The Sabutoyatoya who were still at Vuda moved to a settlement at Basagarua, where the two rivers, the Varaqe and the Vuda meet. This became a war village at the time when Nayalobo was seeking refuge from Mataitoga of Sabeto. It then changed its name to Mereke, to commemorate, so the tradition goes, the arrival of an American ship in 1835, bringing Christianity and leaving a Bible with the Momo Levu. It was duly buried with him. Thus the Vuda people claim that Christianity came first to Vuda before the missionaries arrived from the east to settle in Lakeba later in the same year.

After Cession, the Sabutoyatoya moved back to the site claimed to be where the crew of the Kaunitoni split up (viseisei). The present village is known as Viseisei. At the time of the NLC in 1914, the Sabutoyatoya except those who had left long ago, were divided as follows:

- Rasilasila’s descendants were split up, some at Naviyago (Vitogo), some remained at Viseisei and some at the new village of Lomolomo.
- Vuluma’s descendants were still at Sabeto.
- Bogisa’s descendants were at Viseisei.
- Uqueuqe’s descendants were still at Sabeto.

*The wanderings of the descendants of the other sons of Natuira*

**The Navocotia, now at Lomolomo**

Leinavocotia, the second son of Natuira and brother of Leisabutoyatoya, had two sons, Ralevu and Naoicoivalu, whose descendants were the Ruma and the Nalavanitawa respectively. At the time of the quarrels revolving round the Veibenu Vea incident at Lomolomo, the senior group,
the Ruma, scattered and were settled at Vuda while the ‘younger brothers’, the Nainavanitawa, were sent by the Kai Vuda to live at Dreketi, a site in the mangroves at the coast. Here they lived with the Vuda people known as the Kai Kuruvalu and they were given planting land (ivakova). The behaviour of the Ruma was so arrogant that they were sent away to join the others at Dreketi. This behaviour continued and culminated when one of the Ruma made pregnant one of the wives of Nasorowale, the Momo Levu of the Sabutoyatoya yavusa and of Vuda vanua. Nasorowale burned Dreketi and the Ruma fled to Vitogo. Here they stayed until ceremonies of apology and reconciliation (soro) were performed, and the Ruma were brought back to Dreketi. From here they shifted inland to Nasauva, because of water shortages, and there they stayed until Cession. After Cession, they moved from Nasauva to the new village of Lomolomo, where they associated themselves (kabi) with the Vunativi.

The Naciriyawa, now at Viseisei

Leinawaka, the third son of Natuira, and his descendants lived in that part of the village of Lomolomo known as Nabalei. Following the Veibenu Vea incident, the descendants went to join the Kai Vuda at Vuda, where the yavu of the eldest son, Vuluma, was called Naciriyawa, reflecting the name of the yavu of Lutunasobasoba. Later they moved to Mereke and then to Viseisei. One of the most interesting features of the account of the Leinawaka is that it may help to solve an archaeological mystery. The NLC recorded that the third of the sons of Leinawaka was called Leinagucia and that his yavu was named Naqacua. Gifford (1951b: 202) who carried out excavations at Korovatu, Vuda, referred to a visit to ‘the site of the temple of Nagathia, an oracular god represented by a stone 5 ft high and about 1½ ft in diameter’. In the 1990s we searched in vain for this stone, and those living in the area of old Lomolomo had never heard of it. Solomone, the bete or priest who lived at Lomolomo and was my chief guide, knew nothing of the stone or of Nagacia. It is quite likely that the names Nagacia and Naqacua are in fact the same, and that the site which Gifford was shown was the yavu Naqacua. The placing of a monolith on a yavu associated with ancestral spirits was a common practice, and while it may have existed on Nagacia when Gifford saw it, the likely site of the yavu has been a cane-field for a long time, and the monolith may well have been buried or removed.

The Boutolu at Namara, Waya Sewa

The descendants of the fourth son of Natuira, Leiboutolu, were the Boutolu who are now mostly on the island of Waya Sewa, north of the island of Tokoriki and south of the island of Yasawa in the main Yasawa archipelago. Leiboutolu had one son, Tavutunawailala, who would keep on talking to his elders at Lomolomo until they sent him away. Seeing smoke there, he went to Navakai on Malolo, where his talkative manner persisted. The Malolo people asked the Vuda people to take him back but the Vuda people refused. So the Malolo people built him a village on the island of Mana, between the Malolo and the Mamanuca islands, and gave him the island on which to settle. Those on the nearby island of Tokoriki saw him and, as a member of the highly respected Sabutoyatoya yavusa, invited him to join them and be their chief. So he stayed at Tokoriki and married a local woman.

Following a split in the leadership among the Yabola people of Vuda, a group went to Waya Sewa where they settled. Not long after, two chiefly people of Solevu, Malolo went exploring and came to Waya Sewa. Having seen that the island was inhabited, one went back to Solevu, and the other stayed and was invited to join the Yabola (later known as the Waya Sewa) group. They divided the island between them. The Waya Sewa learnt that Tavutunawailala was on Tokoriki, and because he was a member of the paramount group at their place of origin at Vuda, invited (lakovi) him.
to come and be their chief. They presented him with some earth to indicate that both the people and the land were his. So he and his wife went there, and their descendants are still known as the Boutolu and were living in the village of Namara at the time of my main visits.

**The Leweilomo, at Nabila, Nadroga**

Very little is known in Vuda about the descendants of Tuisavere, the fifth son of Natuira, except that his two sons left Lomolomo and drifted south to Likuri where they were shipwrecked. They were found and taken to Malolo, having left Vuda for good. Their descendants, according to iTaukei Nakelo, now live at Nabila, Nadroga, where they are known as the Leweilomo.

**The Vunativi, at Lomolomo**

The surviving elements of the Vunativi are presently living in the village of Lomolomo, together with that part of the Tububere who are not living at Viseisei. It is problematic whether the Vunativi are descendants of Sadidi (and thus connected by descent with the Cawanisa, see below); or from Sagavulunavuda through his son, Natuira. Natuira had several sons from whom were descended the Sabutoyatoya yavusa, and the Vunativi may have been descended from the second son, Leivunativi.

The Vunativi at some stage seem to have had yavusa status, and were divided into three mataqali, the Kacowaqa (including a sub-group known as the Dele), Koronikalai and Tokoriki. When Gifford was working at Korovatu, he excavated a yavu known as Dele, which had been the mound of the house of Navoleone, who died in 1887 and was buried in Lomolomo cemetery (Gifford 1951b:199).

The NLC of Wilkinson in the 1890s recorded the original ancestor of the Vunativi as Sadidi. During the 1914 Commission investigations of Maxwell, the Vunativi explained to the Sabutoyatoya chief that their real original ancestor was not Sadidi but Sagavulunavuda, as claimed above. They presented a tabua of request to the Sabutoyatoya chief, asking that their true position as a mataqali of the Sabutoyatoya be not revealed. They wished to continue to be associated with the Cawanisa with whom they had been living for so long since leaving the rest of the Sabutoyatoya after the Veibenu Vea. The 1914 NLC confirmed the decision of Wilkinson that the original ancestor of the Vunativi was Sadidi but that they were a separate yavusa from the Cawanisa and not a mataqali of the Sabutoyatoya. Solomone of the Sabutoyatoya in Lomolomo, who was the bete or priest, told me that the current tradition is that the Vunativi were a separate yavusa descended from Sagavulunavuda and closely associated with the Sabutoyatoya, being descended from Leivunativi who was probably a son of Natuira. I have therefore discussed them here, following my discussion of the sons of Natuira, rather than after the discussion on the Cawanisa, in spite of what the NLC recorded. Officers working at present in the NLC are somewhat dubious about the accounts of the Vuda people, because they were recorded in circumstances of non-cooperation and refusal to answer questions. I therefore question their findings in respect of the Vunativi, and consider that Solomone’s account may accord with what the Vuda people considered to be the position but which was hidden from the NLC.

I was given another account in Lomolomo to the effect the Vunativi were the first to settle at Naqoqa, inland from Lomolomo, followed by the Tububere who heeded the authority of the Vunativi. Finally the Cawanisa arrived to settle at Naqoqa, and they too heeded the authority of the Vunativi. It is probable that the origins and development of the Vunativi cannot be resolved with any degree of certainty. Unfortunately the iTaukei Vunativi, the head of the Vunativi, was too ill or unwilling to be able to discuss the matter with me, and no one else of the Vunativi was prepared to represent the group in discussions. The chiefly yavu of Vunativi is preserved in
Lomolomo, where, as in the case of the Kai Vuda, there are two installation stones lying on top of the *yavu*. They are half-covered with grass, and will probably soon become as completely obscured as will be the origins of the Vunativi themselves, the latter perhaps deliberately so.

**The Tububere**

The Tububere at present live in the villages of Viseisei and Lomolomo. iTaukei Sawaieke is the title of the head of the Tububere generally and of the Viseisei branch in particular. The head of the Lomolomo branch heeds the authority of the iTaukei Sawaieke, who in turn heeds the authority of the Momo Levu of Vuda. It should be noted that the paramount of the Naua people of Saunaka, south of Vuda and east of Nadi, is also titled iTaukei Sawaieke. Neither the Naua people nor the Tububere people could offer any explanation for any socio-political connection between the two *vanua* reflecting the similarity of title, nor indeed were they aware of any connection with Sawaieke on the island of Gau in the Lomaiviti group of islands.

The exact relationship between the Tububere and the Sabutoyatoya is not clear. As far as the Sabutoyatoya representatives at the NLC were concerned, Vurabere (the original ancestor, see below) was as much a descendant of Natuira as were the other five (or six, if Leitavui is included) sons, and therefore the Tububere were, by descent, part of the Sabutoyatoya *yavusa*. Nevertheless, in the event, the 1914 NLC registered the Tububere as a separate *yavusa*, for reasons which they did not record. It is possible that the symbolism of the account of the curious circumstances of the birth of Vurabere, recorded below, reflects an understanding by the informants to the Commission that the Tububere were not really descended from Natuira and that they were therefore a separate *yavusa* from the Sabutoyatoya. However, the informants probably wanted to ensure an intimate socio-political connection with the Tububere, whilst indicating their inferior status, by making them the descendants of the sixth son). Evidence that the Tububere and the Sabutoyatoya were at one level the same but at another level of descent they were different is provided by the symbols of unity and identification. The *vuti aca* of the Tububere were the *tovu lisilisi* (a kind of native sugar-cane), as the *kai* or tree; the *qoqi* (a kind of breadfruit) as the *magiti* or vegetable food; and the *miqa* or small river fish as the *ilava* or concomitant for the vegetable. On the other hand, those of the Sabutoyatoya were the *kulu du* or real breadfruit as the *kai*; and the *miqa* as the *ilava*. They did not have a separate *kai*. Instead they also had the *qoqi* as the symbol of the genital organs; and, being paramounts, the *dule* or trevally as the *ika ni sau* or chiefly fish. The differences were small but I think significant. iTaukei Nakelo thought that this was possible, but iTaukei Sawieke had no views on this interpretation of his origins, about which he was interested but not very knowledgeable. One line of future research on this matter could be to explore the possible connection between the occurrences of the name Sawaieke, whether the Naua and the Tububere had, at any rate in part, some common origin, and whether there is a connection with Gau.

**Tububere origin myth**

The original ancestral spirit of the Tububere was Vurabere who was born at Lomolomo. The 1914 NLC accounts recorded that Vurabere was the sixth son of Natuira, elder son of Draulunavuda (son of Sagavulunavuda and grandson of Lutunasobasoba). As Natuira was on the point of death, his wife just touched his arm and she became pregnant and duly gave birth to Vurabere (meaning 'late arrival'). Vurabere married a woman of the Cawanisa and they had three children, all of whom were born at Lomolomo.
Fission

At the time of the Veibenu Vea troubles, three groups representing the grandsons of Tububere and their relations scattered in two different directions. They did not go together in unified groups of descendants from each of the three sons, but some went to Naqoqa at the time when the Cawanisa were leaders of the settlement. They had the common name of Tububere, and heeded the immediate authority of the Vunativi. They later moved to the new village of Lomolomo where they are at present.

The others went to Vuda and also retained the common name of Tububere. Later they moved to Mereke and then to Viseisei. With those at Vuda were a separate mataqali of the Tububere known as the Navole, which in turn was divided into three. By the time of the NLC, the Navole had become almost extinct, and they were registered not as a separate mataqali but as a division of the senior mataqali of the Tububere. In this way, they maintained their traditional name, if not their status. As a result, their land was preserved for their use and, if they were to become extinct, for the surrogate parent mataqali. The implication of this decision is that if they were registered as mataqali and so a land-holding unit, their land would have reverted to the Crown if they were to become extinct. This is an interesting use of the practice of fission and fusion recognised traditionally, but used as a modern device for the benefit of the Tububere people, especially if they were faced with land-shortages.

The Kai Vuda

Kai Vuda origin myth

The 1914 NLC account said that Erovu was a member of the crew of the first vessel which came to Vuda. I was told that he was the half-brother of Lutunasobasoba and that their father was Tura who married firstly the mother of Lutunasobasoba, and secondly the mother of Erovu. Erovu came with his brother, Rainima, who was the original ancestral spirit of the people of Viwa, the westernmost island of the Yasawas lying 32 km to the west of Waya and Naviti. The NLC went on to say that Erovu settled at Vuda, at Korovatu. He married Ratu who also came on the canoe and they had two children, Leitavui and Uqetenavanua. The latter married Sagavulunavuda of Sabutoyatoya.

Leitavui married Kira who also came over on the canoe (I was told that her full name was Kiraelevu), and they had five children born at Vuda. Their descendants comprised the Kai Vuda yavusa. Their sons were Leivuda whose descendants are the mataqali (Na) Tabua; Naraviravi whose descendants are the Nakete; Sadranu whose descendants are the mataqali Sadranu; Tabakinavatu whose descendants are the Navitarutaru; and the youngest, Wakanimolikula, whose descendants are the Nanuku mataqali (see below). Leitavui may also have had a daughter called Nai who may have married Sadidi, who may have been the original ancestral spirit of the Cawanisa (see under the Cawanisa account).

Development of the Kai Vuda

Their first settlement was at Vuda, below the magnificent Korovatu crag. On top of the crag I have been shown the yavu of Erovu, the original ancestral spirit, as well as those of his bete and members of his household. These have been discussed earlier. The first to leave the Vuda site were the members of the Tabua mataqali for reasons unclear, whilst the rest remained at Vuda. Later, following a quarrel between the chiefs at Lomolomo, the Navocotia of Tububere (see under Tububere) and the Navibalawa group of the Eluvuka of Sabutoyatoya (see under Sabutoyatoya) scattered to Dreketi near Lauwaki and to Vuda respectively.
At the time of the NLC, the Kai Vuda were recorded as comprising the four mataqali of Vitarutaru, Nabasara, Natabua and Nakete. Traditions of the Kai Vuda provide good examples of fusion and of fission as factors in the mechanics of the development of a polity at the yavusa level.

Fusion. The Nakete Join up

The circumstances in which the Nakete became part of the Kai Vuda are not certain. Following discussions at Lauwaki with Ciba and his father, both interested in the origins and development of their yavusa, it is clear from my study of their respective vuti yaca or symbols of identity that the Nakete were of different origin from the Kai Vuda. The Kai Vuda had the yabia or arrowroot and the dole or trevally, whereas the Nakete had the mami or plantain, the kumia or tiny red prawn, and the tola or mangrove lobster. I was told by Ciba that the Nakete were originally part of the Vunativi, a nearly extinct group at Lomolomo.

Fission. The Nanuku Split away

The circumstances in which the Nanuku broke way from the Kai Vuda and became part of the Vidilo of Vitogo are clearer. They manifested their separation from the Kai Vuda by adopting separate vuti yaca. Instead of the yabia and the dole, they adopted the tuwaci or red cockle; the ivi mali or kind of edible chestnut; and the bitu ni ema or kind of bamboo.

The Kai Vuda obtained a bokola (body to be eaten) during a war. When the Kai Vuda came to eat it, the Nanuku had failed to bake it properly for them and they found that it was raw. So they were angry and chased away the Nanuku who fled to Saru. Later the Nanuku moved and established the village of Tavakubu just south of Lautoka, near where the Vitogo vanua had given them land for planting at an area then known as Natabua.

It is interesting that whenever I was at Tavakubu in the 1990s, and discussed their provenance, the Nanuku would smile enigmatically when I referred to the bokola incident, change the subject and explain instead that when the Kai Vuda were living at Odro, a small island south of the present village of Lawaki, two brothers of the Nanuku mataqali quarrelled about some vudi or plantains which were brought for one brother but the other brother wanted. So the latter chased his brother away. He went to Saru with his companions, and while living there associated with some Vidilo (Vitogo) people at Namoli, near Lautoka. The Vuda chief tried to get the Nanuku back but they preferred to vakararavi or depend on the Vidilo people. The Vidilo said that they should join them but form a separate group to be known as the Kai Saru. During the discussions with the NLC beginning in 1897 and ending in 1914, the Vidilo chief wanted to have one yavusa, the Vidilo, of which the Kai Saru (the Nanuku) would be a mataqali. The Kai Saru should be allowed to eat off the Vidilo land but should not be counted as owners. They should act as their own spokesmen before the NLC. When the moment came for them to come before the Commission, the Vidilo people presented a pig with a tabua in its stomach as a magic to deceive the Commission. They made the Nanuku so drunk that they were unable to explain properly where they had come from. This was regarded as vere vakaBau or Bauan trickery, because the Vidilo chief was related to the Bauans through Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi (of the family of the spiritual chief of Bau, the Roko Tui Bau). In the event the true origin of the Nanuku was hidden, and the NLC recorded the Kai Saru as a mataqali of the Vidilo yavusa. They were divided into two parts, the Nanuku and the Nadakuvatu.

Fission. The Nanuku Split up

Later the Nanuku split up, because the Nadakuvatu part whose planting land was down stream from that
of the Nanuku part were insulted when excreta from the Nanuku came floating down the stream to the Nadakavatu.

As a result of the split, many of the Nanuku dispersed to Waya (Yasawas), Nagado (where they formed the Nanuku of the Vaturu people), and to Lebaleba and Bemanu in inland Nadroga. Those who remained were known as the Moromoroilagi, meaning either 'white mucus under the foreskin' or a 'number of people'—perhaps it depended on who was using the term, the insulted Nadakuvatu part or other people.

Leadership and Changes in Leadership of the Kai Vuda

At first, the leadership of the Kai Vuda rested with the Natabua, the senior mataqali descended from the eldest son of Erovu. Later, while still at Vuda, the people chose to pass the leadership to the head of the descendants of the third son of Leitavui.

In course of time, the leadership of the Kai Vuda was passed to the iTaukei Vitarutaru, the head of the Vitarutaru, being the descendants of the fourth son of Erovu.

During the time of the 1871 Cakobau Government the Kai Vuda were moved from Vuda and nearby Tavanaki to the island of Odro. From there, after Cession they moved to the present village of Lauwaki because of a shortage of drinking water and of readily accessible planting land.

The Installation Stones

When the leader was installed (veibuli), he sat on a large stone and placed his feet on a smaller stone. These two stones were taken to Korovatu, Vuda, from a place called Sayake, at the river junction known as Basagarua (divided into two). The smaller stone is known as Sayake and the larger one as Dakuvatu. When the Vuda people moved to Odro they took the stones with them; and when the Nanuku were chased away from Odro to Saru they took the larger stone with them. The smaller stone remained at Odro and was later taken to Lauwaki where it rests beside the yavu of iTaukei Sayake, a Kai Vuda chief. The larger one remained at Saru when the Nanuku went to Tavakubu, Vitogo. Later two young men of Nanuku went with a lorry from Tavakubu and presented yaqona and a tabua to Sagavulunavuda, their ancestral spirit, to ask him for help in taking the stone to Tavakubu. When they came to lift the stone into the lorry, it was so light that they could carry it with ease and brought it back to Tavakubu where it lies at present beside the yavu of iTaukei Dakuvatu. It is a very heavy long stone, shaped like a shark and covered with man-made grooves. It is in two pieces, after it was broken by an Indian bulldozer driver. The bulldozer was damaged, and the driver was taken to hospital where he died.

Sabutoyatoya and Kai Vuda Relationships

The incident of the Veibenu Vea at Lomolomo had resulted in a split in the Sabutoyatoya yavusa, and the chief of the Kai Vuda had said that the Sabutoyatoya who had scattered should be brought to Vuda (see under Sabutoyatoya for the circumstances). Then the Kai Vuda agreed that they should acknowledge the authority of the leader of the Sabutoyatoya, and the latter was accordingly given a fan and a walking stick as symbols of paramountcy.
The Cawanisa

Cawanisa origin myth

The 1914 NLC account said that:

Sadidi, a member of the crew of the Kaunitoni, had been at Vuda with Lutunasobasoba. He does not appear to be related to Lutunasobasoba or to any other of the main spiritual heroes who arrived in Fiji on board Kaunitoni. He went to Nacokoti near Korovatu, Vuda, and married Nai, daughter of Leitavui who was the eldest son of Erovu, the original ancestral spirit of the Kai Vuda. Sadidi’s descendants were the Cawanisa yavusa.

His son, Kalanasiga, married Dawai, a woman of Nabasara, the second group of the Kai Vuda and they had three children, whose descendants comprised the members of the three mataqali of the Cawanisa yavusa, the Namatua, Dovia and Yaubahba respectively.

The elder son of Rasilasila, Natuwawa, went to Naqoqa with the Cawanisa (descendants of Sadidi). His descendants were the Nadravua or Ketanatukani (descendants of the elder brother) and they remained there.

Splits and Movements

Later, the senior mataqali of the Cawanisa, the Namatua, remained at Nacokoti, but the other two mataqali went to Naqoqa, inland from Lomolomo, where they established a settlement.

It was at the time that, following the split at Lomolomo resulting from the incident of the Veibenu Vea involving Natuwawa, eldest son of Nasilasila (the elder brother who was not made leader of the Sabutoyatoya), that the descendants of Natuwawa, the Nadravua or Ketanatukani (descendants of the elder brother), joined with the Cawanisa at Naqoqa and here they remained.

Also, following the Veibenu Vea, the Vunativi and part of the Tububere (descendants of the last son of Sagavalunavuda, who had settled at Lomolomo) came together with Natuwawa, and settled with the Cawanisa at Naqoqa. The Cawanisa gave them all permanent rights of usage of some of the Cawanisa land and they stayed together there until Cession.

At about the time of Cession in 1874 the Cawanisa moved to the present village of Lomolomo, where the Vunativi and part of the Tububere were already settled. The Vunativi and the Tububere there became known as the Lomolomo. Their lands lay between the point of Edronu and the point of Lomolomo—the Lomolomo land lying to seawards and the Cawanisa to landwards. Bukatavatava, chief of the Sabato people, sold much of the Lomolomo land to European settlers, and presumably for this reason, most of the Cawanisa moved to the island of Malolo, though some moved to Nadarivatu in the interior of Viti Levu. I have not been able to obtain information directly from the Cawanisa. The iTaukei Sawaieke, chief of the Tububere at inland Viseisei, as well as the iTaukei Nakelo, spokesman of the Sabutoyatoya, told me that some Cawanisa (the Namatua who were the senior group) remained at Lomolomo. Here they have been fused with the Vunativi who are almost certainly, by descent, part of the Sabutoyatoya; although the NLC records the Namatua as part of the Cawanisa. I should record that none of the people with whom I discussed the NLC account disagreed with what was recorded there.
The Navatulevu and Viyagoisaukova

Myths of origin

Labasara came from Vuda to Nase, Vitogo, near the coast, where he married a woman of the Tunuloa group of the Vitogo people. They had two sons, Lewaqamuqamu and Siganiera, who were the original ancestors of the Navatulevu and the Viyagoisaukova respectively. One account said that their sons, Lewaqamuqamu and Siganiera, were born at Nase, and that one day Lewaqamuqamu went looking for land in the interior until he came to Navatulevu, near the present villages of Navigawa and Nalotawa on the south side of the Tuaileita range below the massive peak of Koroiyanitu. Here he built a house and married Lewatu, a woman of the Tunuloa group of Vitogo, and they had three children, Salaba, Sau and Yataninavatucili, all born at Navatulevu. His descendants were called the Navatulevu ('the big rock'), after a magical big rock where he built his house. This rock reputedly rises up high at night and sinks down low again at daybreak. I have not been able to visit it, as it is in an inaccessible position for me.

Another account said that Labasara went himself to Navatulevu, and that his sons were born there.

Siganiera married and had two children, Saukova and Yatanitoga. His descendants were the Viyagoisaukova, meaning the grandchildren of Saukova. They first lived at Navatulevu.

Fusion and fission

The families of the three sons of Lewaqamuqamu, who was said to have been the first of the two brothers to arrive from Vitogo to Navatulevu, had a dispute over yaqona. As a result, Wakanivukalou, son of Yatunivatucili, the youngest son of Lewaqamuqamu, fled to the island of Waya where he remained, and his descendants comprise the Vatucili. Those who remained agreed to recognise Koiluva who was the third son of Salaba, the eldest son of Lewaqamuqamu, as their leader. Koiluva's part of the village was called Natuvamasi.

However, those who claimed that the two sons were born at Nase said that it was at this time that Siganiera arrived. The settlement at Navatulevu was then divided into two: one part for Lewaqamuqamu which was called Navatulevu; and one part for Siganiera which was called Nasorovakatini.

Siganiera’s elder son, Saukova, quarrelled with his younger brother, Yatanitoga, because the yavu or housemound of the latter was higher (a sign of arrogance and lack of respect). So Yatanitoga was chased away and he went first to his relations, the Nasara yavusa of Sabeto. Yatanitoga and his group of the Navatulevu then went to Nadi, where he had some relations, and was settled at Waqana, where he married Neileqe, a woman of rank of the Nabati people, then leaders of Nadi. Because these hill folk were recognised as strong and powerful people the Navatulevu were duly given the leadership of the Nadi vanua (referred to as the Nabati and the Yavusatini). The rest of the Viyagoisaukova, the descendants of Siganieri, remained at Navatulevu, and were later joined by the Yavoli of Ne (the inland people of the Sabeto valley) who went to settle with them at the Nasorovakatini part of Navatulevu.

Then news came that an army from Qalinabulu was arriving from the Colo, or mountainous inlands of Ba, with the intention of attacking the Navatulevu and the Viyagoisaukova who remained at Navatulevu together with the Yavoli people of Ne, Vitogo. So in order to avoid the strong Qalinabulu army, they left Navatulevu and crossed over the Tuaileita Range and sheltered in Vuda territory at Nagwagwa on the north slopes of the range. Here they heeded the authority of the Momo Levu of Vuda. I was told at Abaca, the present village of these people, that they went first from Navatulevu to Naduguivalu below the mighty fastness of Navuivui (a prominent landmark inland from Lautoka), and then to Nagwagwa which was
difficult of access and where there were caves in which to shelter. Naduguivalu may be the same as the place now known as Navatulevu near the road to Abaca from Lautoka.

While at Nagwagwa, the Navatulevu split up because of a quarrel, and some went to settle in Vitogo and established a village at Yaukawa on Vitogo land at the head of the Vitawa River. Here they quarrelled over a pig, and the Nasau mataqali (being descendants of the Sau, second son of Lewaqamuqamu) of the Navatulevu fled to Namoli, Lautoka, while the rest fled back to Nagwagwa.

Some time after the Qalinabulu army had returned from the attack, the Navatulevu and the Viyagoisaukova went back to their original site at Navatulevu. After some local wanderings, they returned after Cession in 1874 to Nagwagwa where they remained until 1930 when the village was destroyed by a landslide. Only three brothers survived, and they moved to the village of Abaca (named after the first three letters of the alphabet which, so the story goes, were found engraved on a rock at the old site). I discussed these matters with the son of the late iTaukei Navatulevu, Ratu Rupeni, who was one of the three surviving brothers who came down from the ruins of Nagwagwa.

One yavusa or two?

A criticism of the NLC has been that separate yavusa were created by the Commission which were not based on traditional groupings. This criticism is not entirely valid from the point of view of the reality of the situation with which the NLC was faced. In the case of the Navatulevu, it may be shown that those at Nadi and those at Nagwagwa were one descent group, having been based together at Navatulevu, (Navilawa, Nalotawa), and that they therefore comprised one major descent group, a yavusa. The reality of the situation was that they had split irrevocably, that they were associated with quite separate areas of land at Nadi and at Nagwagwa, that they had quite separate socio-political associations, and that it was simply common sense to register them as two separate yavusa. On the other hand, the Navatulevu and the Viyagoisaukova at Navatulevu (Navilawa) and Nagwagwa were registered as two separate yavusa; and though, on the symbolic level, the NLC recorded the manifestation of the original spirits of both groups as the kuma or a kind of moth, it distinguished between a white kuma for one yavusa and a black kuma for the other. The reasoning behind this decision to register two separate yavusa is not clear, as both groups appeared to have freely acknowledged descent from two brothers and a common grandfather; and recognised one group, the Wainile, as bete or common priests. The representative of the Navatulevu before the NLC claimed that they were one group and that their ancestors used to have formal connections by lakovi (adoption). However the other representative, descended from the younger brother, said that, though they were both descended from Labasara, at the next level they had different ancestors and that they were two groups and did not have a common chief. This may have been a case of the younger brother’s descendants not wishing to be liable to meeting the demands of the other, senior group, whose authority they did not wish to heed. They were typical of the independent mountaineers.

Sabeto Old tikina: the Sabeto socio-political complex

The Old tikina of Sabeto lies to the south of the Old tikina of Vuda, from which it is geographically divided by the Tualeita range. The western end of the Tualeita is not far from the coastline and is marked by a rocky headland at Edronu, a mysterious site of considerable significance both mythically and archaeologically. To the east, it finally ends at the Nakauvadra Range with which it is mythically connected as a spirit path, referred to as the Wakanivugayali. This is similar, first to the mythical spirit path from the Nakauvadra to Verata also referred to as the Wakanivugayali (see account of Verata); and secondly to the path across the sea to Bua, to the headland called
Naicobocobo (the jumping-off place of the spirits of Vanua Levu on their way to the Nakauvadra). To the west lies the sea. The southern boundary marches with that of the lands of the Nadi tikina, including the Naua people of Vagadra (whose present village is Saunaka). To the east, in the uplands, is the territory of the Old tikina of Vaturu (Nawaka). To the north-east are the mountains of Magodro.

The Old tikina of Sabeto is of particular interest for three reasons. First, it illustrates typical simple federations and a series of independent yavusa similar to those characterising the socio-political situation described for the tikina of Nawaka. Secondly, the Conua yavusa which became the leading yavusa, had a quite different origin geographically, politically and mythically from that of the other yavusa—both the piedmont yavusa of the Sabeto heartland, and the group of independent upland yavusa at the top of the Sabeto valley. Thirdly, the myths of origin of the Fijian people as accepted by the various yavusa other than the 'stranger' yavusa, the Conua, were different in interesting detail from that accepted not only by the Vuda people but also (pace Peter France), for whatever the reason, much more generally in many parts of Fiji. I will first record the Sabeto myths of origin, symbolised, as in the case of the Kaunitoni myth, by the arrival of the first vessel.

A canoe first came to Nasoso at the mouth of the Sabeto River and sailed up the river as far as NeiSosovu, which lay on the right bank of the river (travelling upstream). Here they came ashore—the name meaning 'the place where the vu (original ancestral spirits) came ashore' (soso is the communalect equivalent of sobu or 'come ashore'). Opposite this site there are two sites called Leleti Levu and Leleti Sewa, where feasts were then prepared, the Levu (big) for the chiefs and the Sewa (little) for the people. Leleti means tatuvu or 'broil'. The chiefs and crew members of the vessel went with Degei to settle first at Edronu, where there are two caves, the Qwara ni Yau which was Degei’s, and the Qwara ni Masumasu, which was that of a spirit called Balawakula. Balawa is a communalect word for vadra or screwpine/pandanus. There used to be a balawakula tree on the flat area outside the cave, to which people would go to seek favours or good fortune. First they had to present offerings at the tree which hid the path to the cave. If the offerings were acceptable, the tree would reveal where the path to the cave lay. If not, it hid the path. Similarly, people would present offerings at Degei’s cave, the Qwara ni Yau, and would typically place a club in the cave and leave it for blessing before going to war or to a meke. The last people on record as having gone to the caves for sau or mana (spiritual strength) were members of the Fiji Military Forces before they left for the Solomons campaign during the Second World War. Under the influence of the Methodist Church, the local chiefs have said that no more ceremonies should be performed at the caves. The balawakula was cut down at the same time, ostensibly to allow for the construction of some public works.

From Edronu the ancestors spread to Vuda, including Sagavulunavuda whose residence at Edronu was evidenced by a petroglyph pointed out as representing his genital organs. Degei remained until someone stole his dalo, and he was so upset that he left for the Nakauvadra. As for the rest, they and their descendants in course of time occupied all the south side of the Tualeita as far as Ulu i Conua, far up in the interior.

I will now describe in more detail the origins and development of the yavusa found in the Old tikina of Sabeto. These included, first, the four yavusa which comprised the Sabeto socio-political complex as it was at about the time of the Cakobau Government; and secondly, the three (there were originally six) independent upland yavusa known generally as the Ne. The following accounts, based on the myths and traditions given to me, relate to the origins and structure of each of these seven yavusa (the other three are discussed elsewhere). They emphasise the uncomplicated nature of the socio-political situation in the Sabeto valley and the independence of the yavusa in the uplands.
The Sabeto socio-political complex or vanua includes the following elements:

(a) the three yavusa, based on the present villages of Koroiyaca/Narokorokoyawa (nowadays referred to collectively as the village of Koroiyaca or loosely as Sabeto), including:

- the leading yavusa, Conua, the chief of which has the title of iTaukei Erenavula. That person is also given, as the paramount of the Sabeto vanua, the title of Momo Levu of Sabeto or, in eastern phraseology, Tui Sabeto. Part of the Conua is based in the present sub-village of Naboutini, up the Sabeto valley.
- the two yavusa of Leweiwavuwavu and Nasara, whose heads hold the titles of iTaukei Navakalolo and iTaukei Nasara respectively.

(b) the yavusa of Waruta, based in the present village of Natalau, the chief of which has the title of iTau Nacekwaya.

The Leweiwavawavu, the Nasara and the Waruta are so closely related that they are referred to collectively as Na Yavusa Balavu or The Extended Yavusa.

The Ne group of independent yavusa formerly included the following yavusa:

(a) the three yavusa of Ne, Leweidrasa and Leweikoro, presently based in the village of Korobebe (formerly Nadele) and now known collectively as the Ne. The Rarawaqa yavusa formerly associated with the Ne group, before going to Vaturu. I cannot trace its present whereabouts (see under Vaturu, Nawaka).

(b) the two yavusa of Navatulevu and Viyagoisaukova, now based in the village of Abaca (formerly Nagwagwa) and included in the socio-political federation of Vuda (see under Vuda Old tikina).

The Sabeto vanua

I spent much time, especially in the 1990s, first with Ratu Kaliova, the Momo of Sabeto and other members of the Conua yavusa; secondly, with Timoci Saukuru, the grand old man of the Leweiwavuwavu; thirdly, with Paula, a former policeman representing the iTaukei Nasara whom I was only able to farewell as he lay on his deathbed; and fourthly, with Apisai (Mohammed) Tora and representatives of the Waruta. What I record here is what they told me while I compared their personal knowledge with the accounts recorded by the 1914 NLC, which I would read to them. They all agreed on the myths of origin, though sometimes differing on details which did not alter significantly the main picture.

Myths of origin: Vuniqele and Raiqelo

Among those who landed in the first canoe at NeiSosovu and went on to settle with Degei at Edronu were Vuniqele and his younger brother, Raiqelo (recorded as Nauci by the NLC). Raiqelo’s yavu or housemound was called Yavukoso.

The two brothers later went to Betoraurau, beside the Waruta stream in the Sabeto Valley. It was there that Raiqelo went and stole Degei’s dalo at Edronu—an incident which resulted in Degei leaving in anger for the Nakauvadra (see above).

Betoraurau is now the ceremonial name for Sabeto land, though the actual settlement was pointed out to me to be on the slopes of the Tualeita. Its name means ‘leafy or shaded spirit house’, referring to the first spirit house on the tree-covered slopes. It is interesting that in 1840 the United States Exploring Expedition under Wilkes (1845: 261) ‘anchored under Vitilevu shore, off the point called Viti-rau-rau, where we lay until 2 A.M.’ before proceeding to the island of Malolo. This place name is surely the same as Betoraurau, and either the latter term has
been changed from Vitiraurau (meaning 'breaking off branches') over the century and a half, or, as is more likely, Wilkes misheard it or miswrote it. Those who have been concerned with the origins of the meaning of the name of Fiji (Tongan for Viti) which in Standard Fijian could mean 'breaking off' may well have picked on this reference in Wilkes' narrative, and elaborated the myth of Degei and his party going along the Tualeita to Nakauvadra, claiming that they broke off branches as they journeyed along. This could well be a suitable ex post facto explanation. Be that as it may, the myth continues.

First Settlements:

Descendants of Vuniqele, the Elder Brother

Vuniqele, at Betoraurau, married a woman of Vitogo, and they had two sons, Varorairiba and Varonaqai. The descendants of the elder were the Leweiwavuwavu, and those of the younger were the Nasara. These two brothers went and settled at the mouth of the Sabeta river at Navakalolo where they were until the flood (see below). The descendants of Varorairiba, the elder brother, remained at Navakalolo, but those of the younger brother later went to Drakoro, where they settled until the flood.

Some time later, at the time of the Nadi war known as the Volo Levu (see under Nadi), the Naua people (of Vagadra, now at Saunaka) were attacked and some scattered to Drakoro where they were given planting land (vakovu) by the descendants of Varonaqai, the younger brother.

Leadership. Descendants of Vuniqele

At Navakalolo, the third son of Varorairiba, elder son of Vuniqele, was made their leader by the descendants of both sons of Vuniqele, and was installed on a specially made mound of earth, and given yaqona to drink.

Descendants of Raiqelo, the Younger Brother

Raiqelo, younger brother of Vuniqele, married a woman of the Cawanisa (descendants of Sadidi, who came on the Kaunitoni to Vuda and settled first at Lomolomo before going to Naqoqa). Their descendants were the Waruta, also known as the Tacini (younger brothers, because of their progenitor). They had two sons, the elder going to Waruta nearby, and the younger remaining at Betoraurau.

Later both groups joined up at Raracici in the mangroves, where most of them were until the flood. Some split off, either because of drought or from an angry quarrel over a woman; and they went to Qaru. From here, they went to Dramata were they were until the flood.

The Conua. Origin Myth and Arrival at Sabeta

Ravuravu came from the Nakauvadra to Yauyau, Ba. He had two sons, and one day these two went to work in the gardens. When they returned, the elder, Tawake, ate all the oco or food provided for them both, and the younger, Nagilolevu, was very angry. Tawake was ashamed, and kept moving away from Ba until he could see it no more. Then he settled in the hills at Conua at the top of the Sabeta valley, where he married Lauvatu, one of the descendants of Varonaqai (the younger son of Vuniqele), who were living at Drakoro. They had a son, Ratu, who as vasu to the Leweiwavuwavu and the Nasara, was sometimes looked after by them.

The Yavusa Balavu, being those two yavusa and the Waruta, were so impressed with their vasu, Ratu, that they lakovi or ceremonially invited him to come and live with them. He and his followers were settled
at Luvuni near where the descendants of Varonaqai lived. Ratu’s descendants were known as the Conua, 
bringing the name from their settlement in the hills.

Installation of First Momo Levu

The Yavusa Balavu invited the people of the uplands, the Ne, to come and participate in the installation 
of Ratu as the paramount chief, with the title of Momo Levu, of the Sabeto socio-political federation or 
vamua of the four yavusa, Leweiwavuwavu, Nasara, Waruta and Conua. Two round stones were brought 
from Drakoro where Ratu’s mother lived. One was used for Ratu to sit on (the vatu ni vibuli) and one 
was the vatu ni vitataunaki which, when given to Ratu to hold, symbolised the handing over to him of 
the control of the land and of the people of Sabeto. These stones appeared to have gone missing, but I 
eventually found them secreted behind a curtain in the chiefly house on Erenavula yavu; at least they were 
said by Ratu Kaliova, the present Momo Levu, to be the same as the original ones. Credant qui velint.

Ratu had three sons, and the two elder agreed that Leiluvuni, the youngest, should be installed as 
paramount chief. So it came about that the group of the descendants of the youngest son, known as the 
Luvuni, became the leading group and obtained and retained the position of Momo Levu of the Sabeto 
polity. The Conua were at Luvuni until the flood.

The Great Flood and all Move to Sabeto

A great flood destroyed the villages of Navakalolo, Drakoro, Raracici, Dramata and Luvuni; and most of 
the people went to a new village site at Sabeto (closer to the Sabeto River than the present village. Some 
Conua people went to relations in Vaturu and in Vagadra (the Naua); and the Nabau group of the Conua 
got to Koronisau.

Wars

The Conua were involved in three remembered local wars with which the neighbouring polity of Nadi (to 
the south of Sabeto) were concerned. These were known as the Cebuwalu (eight anuses), the Volo Levu 
and the Tola (the mana or mangrove lobster). In the Tola, the then-leaders of Nadi, the Navatulevu, were 
driven away from Nadi as being too arrogant. They sought refuge with the Sabeto people, sending messages 
to the Nadroga people with requests for assistance.

The Navatulevu were settled at Lomolomo under the protection of Mataitoga, the Sabeto war chief, while 
the Navatulevu chief, Rokomatu, stayed with Mataitoga at Sabeto. Mataitoga was at that stage under the 
authority of Nasolo, the spiritual chief of Sabeto. He and Rokomatu plotted and Rokomatu’s warrior 
companions, the Bolaciri, chased Naloto away to the Colo (the mountainous interior) and burned his 
village.

Rokomatu, as a chief of the powerful Navatulevu neighbours, then regularised Mataitoga’s position as 
leader in place of the absent Naloto, and installed him as spiritual paramount chief of the Sabeto, before 
returning to Nadi. Mataitoga was the first to have the spiritual and secular power as well as the ambition 
and competence to forge the Sabeto groups into a locally strong and stable socio-political complex. At 
his installation, the Leweiwavuwavu/ Nasara, as the original inhabitants of the valley, carried out the 
installation ceremonies, preparing the yaqona and offering it to him to drink. A house for the purpose had 
been built by the upland Ne groups, using timber supplied by the Waruta.
Mataitoga further established his position through judicious marriage with his powerful neighbours at Vuda. He married first a woman of Tububere and secondly Natukula, a woman of rank from the Sabutoyatoya. The Oi group from the Eluvuka mataqali of the Sabutoyatoya came to look after Natukula, their relation. They were given land for planting by the Wārūta and came under their protection until they were later included among the Luvuni mataqali of the Conua.

After the Nadroga army had driven away the upstart Yakuilau from Nadi, and successfully prepared for the return of the Navatulevu to a position of paramountcy in Nadi, Rokomatu returned to Nadi, with most of the Navatulevu. Meanwhile some of the Yakuilau had taken advantage of their relationships in Sabeto, and had settled for a while with the Conua until peace returned to Nadi and most of them were later brought back.

This is discussed further under the Nadi account, but it is interesting to see how relationships had developed and were built up between these coastal polities to the extent that they could seek refuge with each other, and request and give military aid from and to each other when the occasion demanded or when they saw it to their advantage. Such mutual assistance was perhaps ephemeral, but it could give rise to a situation of considerable obligation on the part of the assisted, especially if the assisted polity failed to thank the assisting polity to the extent that was expected.

Mataitoga’s power was such that he was in a position to unite the Leweiwavuwavu/Nasara, the Wārūta and some Ne and (because of his marital relationships) to invite some Vuda people to go and attack and burn Vitogo. This was in order to avenge an insult occasioned when his son, Yalobo, had asked the Vitogo people for a chiefly necklace of sovui shells and his request had been refused. In due course, Mataitoga showed his power and chiefly behaviour further, when not only did he arrange for the houses in Vitogo to be rebuilt and for the people to be brought back, but also at the time when he had accepted Christianity, he made a presentation of a malo or chiefly loincloth to buluta na dra or bury the blood as reparations for the burning of Vitogo.

It must have been soon after this that Yalobo plotted against his father. When Mataitoga learnt of the plot, Yalobo fled to the Vuda people and was given refuge at Mereke. He was betrayed by the Sabutoyatoya people and taken to Naqoqa where he was killed (see the Vuda account of the killing and its aftermath of Mataitoga’s grief). Mataitoga must have been a very arrogant, even if successful, leader because he was subjected to a series of plots apart from Yalobo’s plot.

The chief of the Taladrau (a sub-group of the Luvuni mataqali of the Conua yavusa) stood up to Mataitoga who ordered his death. He was killed and the Taladrau people fled to Dramata where they established a village of their own. Another plot was devised by a chief of the Naduruvatu group of the Conua in order to reduce (tabaka sobu) his power. Mataitoga again ordered his death and he fled but was killed. The Nadurumata fled to Koronisau where they established a village.

On another occasion, the Wārūta planned to kill Mataitoga, in order to become leaders of the Sabeto polity. The Wārūta were regarded as especially dangerous people, specialising in caka sawasai/mana, or sorcery, and the practices of the luveniwai cult, concerned with the little people of the sea. When Mataitoga went to visit the Wārūta, he went with a chief of the Oi who had come from Vuda with his second wife, Natukula, and had been looked after by the Wārūta. The Wārūta hid by the roadside in order to club Mataitoga. When they came to club him, his saw/mana was so strong that the clubs simply struck without doing any damage. The Oi chief, out of gratitude for the Wārūta’s protection of his people, sought to save the Wārūta from revenge, and because Mataitoga was related to the Oi through his wife, he could not refuse this request.
There seems to have been perpetual rivalry between the Waruta, perhaps regarding themselves as spiritually powerful local inhabitants and guardians of Betoraurau (aided by the spiritual guardian of Sabeto, Bituwewe, with whom they were in close association), and the Conua whom the Waruta perhaps regarded as arrogant strangers. Be that as it may, another incident between the Waruta and the Conua took place when the Waruta who were living next to the Momo Levu of Sabeto, stole his daughter, Adi Waqa. They were told to go away. They moved to the Leweiwauwau/Nasara, but the Momo could still see them. So they moved to Koroisue, to Nasara lands where the Natova sector office of the Sugar Company is now situated. The Momo could still hear their voices, so they moved on to Natalau where they are at present. I was told that this took place before the arrival in Sabeto of the Cakobau army in 1873.

I was very aware of this feeling of near-hostility between the two yavusa, when I was there in the 1990s, and found that Natalau was a village with a mysterious atmosphere of its own. This atmosphere was manifested by the very neat appearance of the village and its cemetery (perhaps due to the great influence of Apisai Tora who was then traditional head of the Waruta). There was notably a great quietness that prevailed especially near the house of Tora and the traditional beto or spirit house which was used for special meetings and into which I was eventually permitted to enter. Speaking in it except at a whisper is not allowed. It stood on a yavu, at the corner of which was a monolith brought from original settlement of the Waruta at Yavukoso, as a memorial imbued with mana from the original ancestral spirits. The Waruta are a much-feared group even now, closely associated with the spirit centre at Edronu. I do not think this is due to Tora himself, but it appears likely that Tora has assumed the mantle of the magical powers of the Waruta in order to foster his own ambitions in politics.

The Cakobau attack

Although the Sabeto had accepted Christianity at an early period, Mataitoga later quarrelled with the ivakavuvul or lay preacher who had been assigned to Sabeto. So he then rejected Christianity. One result of this was that although some Sabeto people continued to accept Christianity and later sided with the Cakobau Government, others joined with the Karawa pagans in the Colo of Ba (see below). They aided the Karawa people when, in February 1873, they murdered a family of European settlers, the Burns, who lived in a most precarious place at Vunisamaloa, some distance up the river from Ba.

The European settlers then called on Cakobau, leader of the 1871 Cakobau Government which some of them had insisted should be established as a focus point to whom they could address their complaints and as a power to look after their own interests and problems with lesser Fijian chiefs. They wrongly thought that Cakobau’s traditional powers extended over all Fiji and so he was given the title of Tui Viti. Cakobau rejoiced in such a concept, being especially aware that his neighbour King George the First was King over all Tonga. So Cakobau sent his army to Ba, in what proved to be a test of strength. This was vital if he was to justify his position of Tui Viti and Cakobau Rex, especially after his purposely delayed (he quite rightly doubted his own powers) and eventually unsuccessful attempts in 1868 to avenge the 1865 murder of the Reverend Baker in the interior of Viti Levu. By the early 1870s many Europeans doubted his claims (albeit partly European-generated) of omnipotence. Indeed in the west, the Europeans including the self-named Nadi Swells had no faith in him and in fact openly opposed him, preferring to rely on their own strengths to deal with the recalcitrant locals, especially as he had refused to take punitive action after the murder of Spiers and Macintosh in the Ba area in 1871. He had lost face, especially when some virtually insignificant but nevertheless overt form of revenge was finally
attempted not by his troops but by the local Europeans who took the law into their own hands against the advice of the British Consul, and with the aid of some warriors of Tui Ba stormed the hill-folk, achieving little and burning the wrong village.

When the Burns family was murdered in 1873, Cakobau took action and sent his army to Ba, only to find that the Europeans had assembled themselves and on the basis of past experience had no faith in the Cakobau army which they were prepared to resist with firearms. To avoid such a clash, the government troops under Major Fitzgerald re-embarked and headed back to Levuka, the seat of the Cakobau Government.

Fortune favoured Cakobau. At Drauniivi (see Ra account under Vatukaloko), news came of the murder of a Bauan by the Kalokolevu people. The army went ashore and took revenge at the battle of Korowaiwai in early 1873. Flush with success at last, the Cakobau Government army returned to Ba and proceeded to attack with some success the murderers of the Burns family. They burned the village of the murderers at Karawa who duly returned with a huge pig, tabua and yaqona as their soro or apology. Having achieved their objective of vengeance for the murder, the army pressed on, no longer as a punitive force but intent on bringing the independent and wild hillfolk under the control of the Government. This may well have been the official reason, but the coastal chiefs were aiding the army and they had their own ambitions and interests to pursue in the Colo.

Having achieved some success in the Colo of Ba, the Cakobau Government army was ordered to go to Sabeto. It had been discovered that some Sabeto had been involved in the murder and the defence of Karawa. In February, the people of Nubutautau, Magodro, Sabeto and Vaturu had met in the Vaturu villages of Natawa and Namagimagagi on the banks of the Nadi River at the Vaturu gorge, and had bound themselves to resist any encroachment on their domains by the Cakobau Government. Then they were to continue from Sabeto up into the Colo with the same intent as during the attack from Ba.

So the Government army left Ba and, going along the coast past Vuda, went inland to the Sabeto piedmont. Here they attacked and burned the villages of Sabeto, Dramata and Koronisau where the Conua, the Leweiwavuwavu/Nasara, and the Waruta were living. Some scattered to their relations at Vuda, some were taken prisoner and sent to Bau where Cakobau could sell them as labour to Europeans and thus recoup part of the cost of the war, while others were sent to Nakelo (with which polity the Sabeto retain a close association). Mataitoga was publicly executed as an example for all to witness, especially those who thought to continue to oppose the Cakobau Government. His son, Bukatavatava, and the rest of the Sabeto people were deported to the island of Koro. These included those who protested (and, as they made quite clear to me, they are still protesting against such treatment) on the grounds that they had supported Cakobau by showing his army the way to the hills, when the Cakobau army went on to attack the Colo, including at first the independent group of yavusa known collectively as the Ne.

During a council of war, it was decided that once the Sabeto people had been all brought in or had surrendered and had been deported, there should be no re-occupation of the Sabeto lands except under direct order of the government. A discussion of their return from Koro would be held later at the same time as the return of the Ne who, in the event, suffered the same fate as the Sabeto.

The later attack of the Ne will be discussed when I describe and discuss these people (see below). Meanwhile the Cakobau army established Sabeto as a base for a drive into the interior and as a place where auxiliary contingents of volunteers from the neighbouring districts could assemble. For instance, Navula, the war leader from Nadi, and Ratu Kini, the Kwa Levu from Nadroga,
came to join the Cakobau army, not necessarily or totally out of loyalty to Christianity and Cakobau. These coastal chiefs could see material gains for themselves, as well as chances to cut down to size the impudent hill folk who for too long had shown little respect for these chiefs.

The Ne group of independent yavusa

The Ne lived well up the Sabeto valley under the shadow of their fortress on the mighty peak of UluiNe. When I first knew these people in the early 1950s, they were living in the village of Nadele which was destroyed by Hurricane Bebe in the early 1970s. When I returned in the late 1990s to discuss their origins and development with the remaining people of Ne, they were living at the new village of Korobebe. The village was so named by Sir Robert Foster, the last Governor of Fiji and the first Governor-General; and the people were not slow to point out to me that the village of Koroiyaca (Arthur’s village) where they were first settled on their return from exile (see below) was so named by the first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon. The Sabeto valley was proud of its first and last gubernatorial connections; and they were eagerly awaiting the formal opening of their electricity scheme to which I was invited. Unfortunately I was no longer in the area when what must have been an amazing occasion for these formerly wild and independent mountaineers. For ease of reference, I repeat the summary of the Ne yavusa which I stated earlier:

(a) the three yavusa of Ne, Leweidrasa and Leweikoro, presently based in the village of Korobebe (formerly at Nadele). The Rarawaqa yavusa was formerly associated with the Ne group, before going to Vaturu. Its present whereabouts are unknown to me (see under Vaturu, Nawaka).

(b) the two yavusa of Navatulevu and Viyagoisaukova, now based in the village of Abaca (formerly at Nagwagwa) and included in the socio-political federation of Vuda (see under Vuda Old tikina).

I was told at Korobebe that the people now living there represent two groupings: the Ne grouping (divided by the NLC into the three yavusa of Ne, Leweidrasa and Rarawaqa); and the Leweikoro. Here I will discuss only these four yavusa. The other two yavusa, the Navatulevu and the Viyagoisaukova, used to live in the vicinity of UluiNe but now live at Abaca, Vuda. They are discussed under Vuda, and mythically their origins from the other side of the Tualeita from Vitogo, are different from those of the other four yavusa which are from Edronu. The myths and traditions of the four yavusa were told to me at Korobebe, and differ in detail from those recorded by the NLC.

Myths of origin

Among those who came by vessel to the mouth of the Sabeto River, sailed up the river and landed at NeiSosovu were three brothers, Momoriqwa, Leva or Lave (recorded by the NLC as the son of Nayau), and Navakayau, as well as Matabiau who was no relation to the brothers. These four first settled with Degei at Edronu at the west end of the Tualeita. Then they all went inland up the Sabeto valley to land lying below the south slopes of the Tualeita in the region of the peak of UluiNe.

Momoriqwa went to Ne and married a woman of Vunamaoli, and they had four sons. The fourth son was Riqwa who went to Nawaka where he became the progenitor of the Senibua yavusa (see the Nawaka account). The remaining sons chose the middle one to be leader. Momoriqwa’s descendants were the Ne yavusa.

Leva or Lave went to Koromaka and also married a woman of Vunamaoli, and they had two children, the younger of whom was recognised by the elder as leader and settled in that part of the village of Koromaka called Drasa. Leva’s descendants were the Leweidrasa.
Navakayau (whom the NLC recorded as coming from the Nakauvadra) settled nearby at Rarawaqa. His elder brothers quarrelled with him about the size of his *yavu* (the relative height of a person’s *yavu* was symbolic of his status in a hierarchy—in this case a hierarchy based on the relative age of brothers), and Navakayau ran away to where he could not see his brothers. The NLC, however, recorded that while still at Rarawaqa, an old man of Rarawaqa had manhandled and chased away a woman of the Leweidrasa who had come to steal some of his *dalo*. She complained to her people and they attacked and drove away those at Rarawaqa. Whatever the reason, Navakayau and his people left his brothers and settled in Vaturu, and his descendants were known as the Rarawaqa *yavusa* (see under Vaturu account).

The *vuti yaca* or symbols of identity and unification were the same for both the Ne and the Leweidrasa, indicating that they were once a single group. This supports what I was told, that the NLC had separated the Ne people into different *yavusa*. Unfortunately my informants knew as little about the *vuti yaca* of the Rarawaqa as they did about their present whereabouts. The *vuti yaca* of the Leweikoro were different from those of the Ne and Leweidrasa, as might be expected since they were different descent groups as the following account claims.

Matabiau came separately from the three brothers of whom he was no relation, only a shipmate. He followed the Tualeita and then climbed down and settled on the slopes at Raraikoro. He married a woman of Vitogo and they had three children. The children agreed among themselves that the middle son should be leader. The youngest built a *yavu* which was higher than that of the other two. This was *viavialevu* (presumptuous and arrogant), and so they chased him away. Matabiau’s descendants were the Leweikoro, named after the last element in the name of the place where they first settled.

**Leadership**

Once the Ne, Leweidrasa, Leweikoro, Navatulevu and Viyagoisaukova were settled around UluiNe, they agreed that while remaining independent of each other, they should recognise the head of the Ne *yavusa* to be their leader. This would be for the purposes of any communal activities, such as the installation of the Momo Levu of Sabeto, in which they would be involved. Although they would respect the head of the Ne *yavusa*, and indeed, the Momo Levu, they would not heed the authority of these chiefs.

Apart from such quarrels as I have referred to, these groups do not appear to have been involved greatly in local warfare. Perhaps their neighbours were aware of their almost impregnable positions of defence on the Tualeita; and when, for instance, the Qalinabulu from the Ba Colo attacked, the Ne groups went first to their war villages on the slopes and then to their fortress on the peak of UluiNe. From here they repelled the Qalinabulu. Meanwhile, the Navatulevu and the Viyagoisaukova had avoided the Qalinabulu by crossing the Tualeita and settling on the north side at Nagwagwa, not far inland from Vitogo whence they had first come.

**The Cakobau attack continued**

As was the case following the punitive attack on the Karawa people who had murdered the Burns family at Ba, the Cakobau army did not stop after punishing the Sabeto. For the same reasons as before, the army was determined to show its power in support of Cakobau, and to convince the people of the Colo that they must accept the supremacy of Cakobau and his, to them, alien form of government, with perhaps the implied acceptance of the associated religion of Christianity. Further it was reported that the people of Nubutautau had caused the murder of Spiers and Macintosh, and here was a chance to take revenge.

So when the Cakobau army had overcome the Sabeto people, they followed up the valley and at first successfully attacked the Ne, Leweidrasa and Leweikoro. There was at first a spirited
defence of a Ne village, before the villagers burned it and retired to their almost inaccessible stronghold at the peak of KoroiNe. The Ne defenders used slings and hurled stones with great force and wounded some attackers. Next day, on 20 June 1873, the government army scaled the heights only to find that the defenders had escaped during the night, perhaps aided by the Vuda contingent. Some of these were later captured. Of those captured, some went to Vuda, some as prisoners to work for the Nadi people and the rest were deported to the island of Koro. As in the case of the Sabeto deportees, it was agreed that the Ne people should not be allowed to return and occupy their lands without the direct order of the government.

The Sabeto and the Ne return from Koro

Those of the Sabeto and the Ne groups who were deported by the Cakobau Government to Koro remained there until after Cession which had taken place on 10 October 1874. In due course, the Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, established the new village which he named after himself as Koroiyaca. He then authorised the return of these people from Koro and settled them all together under Mataitoga’s son, Bukatavatava, at Koroiyaca. From this time, the Ne agreed to heed the authority of the Momo of Sabeto, and the Old tikina of Sabeto was created under the first Buli Sabeto who was Bukatavatava. So he had traditional and official authority over the returned people.

Bukatavatava duly settled the Conua at Koroiyaca; the Leweiwavuwavu/Nasara at Narokorokoyawa (immediately adjacent to where the Conua were); the Waruta at Nakoroiyaca where they remained for a while until at their request they were allowed to return to Natalau; the Naduruvatu (who had plotted against Mataitoga, see above) at Naboutini; and the Ne groups at Nalesutale. Because of certain deaths there, the Ne later left Nalesutale and were settled at Nadele by Nemani Driu, the great Nadi leader (see under Nadi) who became the first local chief to be RokoTui Ba.

The Sabeto people are still very proud and independent. This is manifested in their myths of origin (no Kaunitoni landing at Vuda for them, but instead a first arrival together with Degei, no less, at the Sabeto River mouth, and a first spiritual settlement at Edronu, not Vuda). It is also manifested in Erenavula, their magnificent Were Levu or ceremonial house, which is equal to, if not bigger than, Vunisei, and the Were Levu of the Sabutoyatoya of Vuda.

The Ne people are equally proud because of their very independence and the struggles they put up against the Cakobau army. They successfully resisted the army and managed to escape defeat by the very acceptable traditional practice of trickery (vere) through their honourable escape at night, even if they were captured eventually.
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