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The Prehistory of Suva

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Introduction

‘Prehistory’ refers to the time before written records, but this chapter will cover the history of Suva from earliest times to after written records began, up until the move of the people of Suva across the bay to their present home in Suvavou in 1882, and will also follow briefly the ancient Rokotui Suva line until its demise in 1920.

Archaeology

As is well known, Fiji has been occupied for approximately 3,000 years, since the arrival of its first inhabitants, now known as the ‘Lapita people’ after their distinctive pottery style.² While there are a number of archaeological sites from the Lapita period in places such as Natunuku, Bourewa and Sigatoka in western Fiji and Moturiki, Naigani and Lakeba in eastern Fiji, none has been found in or near Suva. This does not necessarily mean that Suva was not occupied 3,000 years ago – indeed, its extensive harbour and inviting reef passage would have made it attractive

1 I would like to acknowledge the assistance of many people of Suvavou and nearby villages in my research, and thank Christina Toren for her transcript of Hocart’s ‘Heart of Fiji’. Thanks also to Tui Rakuita and Frank Thomas for helpful comments. All translations and mistakes are my own.

2 Frank Thomas, Paul Geraghty and Elizabeth Matisoo-Smith, ‘Lapita archaeology in the Southwest Pacific’, in *Encyclopedia of global archeology*, ed. Claire Smith (New York: Springer, 2020), doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51726-1_3410-1.

to Lapita people – but the explanation for the lack of Lapita sites may lie in sea-level change or topography, or indeed simply that sites may have been built over in Suva’s 140-year history as a capital city, before laws on preserving archaeological heritage came into force.

Parry studied aerial photographs and determined that there were many ring-ditch fortifications (*korowaiwai*) on and near the Suva peninsula, dating from the mid-nineteenth century or earlier.³ Parry gives details for each, such as size, shape, number of ditches and site type, but only one (‘Suva’, probably Solia) is identified by name. Table 1.1 lists the details from Parry’s mapping.

Table 1.1: Ring-ditch fortifications on the Suva peninsula.

Location	Size	Shape	Ditches	Site type
Solia	4	annular	1	beach ridge or strand
Muanikau	2	annular	1	beach ridge or strand
Muanikau	4	annular	1	beach ridge or strand
Vatuwaqa	2	annular	1	knoll
Waidamudamu	2	annular	1	beach ridge or strand
Waidamudamu	2	annular	1	beach ridge or strand
Waidamudamu	2	annular	1	beach ridge or strand

Source: After Parry (1977).

The Solia fort is referred to by Wall: ‘Twenty-five years ago [1894] the moat and rampart were practically intact, but now there are no traces of them left.’⁴ This is confirmed by the American artist John La Farge who wrote in June 1891 that:

the [botanical] garden follows a line of moats, once belonging to a fortified town ... This is the first recognizable trace that we have yet seen of the fortified place protected by ditches ... the laying out of the lines seems to have been determined with some engineering intelligence.⁵

3 John T Parry, *Ring-ditch fortifications in the Rewa Delta, Fiji: Air photo interpretation and analysis*, Bulletin of the Fiji Museum 3 (Suva: Fiji Museum, 1977).

4 Colman Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’, *Transactions of the Fijian Society* (1919), republished as Colman Wall, ‘Historical notes on Suva’, ed. Paul Geraghty, *Domodomo* 10, no. 2 (1996): 37.

5 John La Farge, *Reminiscences of the South Seas* (London: Grant Richards, 1914), 398–99.

Of Muanikau, he writes:

Round near the old race-course [now part of University of the South Pacific, or USP] ... still stands the old moat and rampart (once surmounted by a war fence) of the town of Muanikau ... an old settlement of Fiji carpenters who cut out here the planks, keel-pieces, and steering-oars that were afterwards put together on the white beach inside Quarantine Island.⁶

In addition to these ring-ditch fortifications, there were a number of hillforts on the Suva peninsula, as will be discussed below.

Evidence of Placenames: Suva

Placenames can be important indicators of history, tending to be retained especially when there is continuous occupation and they refer to a relatively large area.⁷ So, while we do not know when the placename Suva was coined, if it was used by the earliest settlers – and there are good reasons for believing that they spoke a language ancestral to contemporary Fijian communalects – then their descendants and subsequent immigrants would have most likely preserved that name.

The most popular etymology of the name Suva – and one I consider more plausible than many popular etymologies – is that it originates from the word *suva* meaning ‘cairn (pile of stones) or mound marking a boundary’. The earliest evidence for this meaning is from Hazlewood’s dictionary:

Suva, *Suvasuva, n. a mound; sometimes thrown up as a monument, sometimes to intrench behind, as in a siege.⁸

Denicagilaba uses *suvasuva* to mean a mound of earth that mystically grows into an island, while Mokunitulevu Na Rai uses *suva* as a synonym of *buke*, meaning ‘yam mound’ and *suvasuva* as ‘boundary marker’.⁹

6 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 36. ‘Quarantine Island’ presumably refers to Nukulau.

7 Paul Geraghty, ‘Suffixation as a place naming strategy in the Central Pacific and its implications for prehistory’, *Names* 65, no. 4 (2017): 235–44, doi.org/10.1080/00277738.2017.1370069.

8 The asterisk indicates that *suvasuva* is ‘not properly a word of the Bau dialect ... but more extensively known and used throughout the group than the corresponding Bau word’. David Hazlewood, *A Feejeean and English dictionary: With examples of common and peculiar modes of expression* (Viwa: Wesleyan Mission Press, 1850).

9 Denicagilaba [Ilai Motonicocoka], ‘A veisisivi talanoa makawa: Ai tukuni ni vanua eda vu maikina’, *Na Mata* 1892–1894; Mokunitulevu Na Rai [Epeli Rokowaqa], *Ai tukutuku kei Viti* (Suva: Methodist Church in Fiji, 1928).

Neyret (1935) gives a definition that is more in line with the current understanding:

SUVA. –n, A mound, a heap of earth, serving as a land-mark.

SUVASUVA. –n, Dim[inuative]. of above. A smaller mound.¹⁰

Capell, as was sadly often the case, merely copied Neyret without acknowledgement.¹¹

Given this meaning, it is not surprising that there are a number of other places in Fiji with related names. For example, there are places called Suva or Nasuva in Matailobau (Wainimala), Nakorotubu (Ra), Sēqāqā (Macuata) and Udu (north-east Vanualevu) and a village named Suva or Suvalailai (literally ‘small Suva’) in Rewa. This does not mean that the people of Suva are necessarily related to these places, rather that the placenames have the same origin. However the village name Colo-i-Suva, north of the Suva peninsula, is related, meaning simply ‘the hills of Suva’, as is Dokanaisuva, ‘the ridge of Suva’.

As to why the peninsula was given this name, some say that the ancestor god Rokomautu of Verata placed a *suva* there to mark the boundary of his lands with those of his brother Rō Melāsiga, the Rokotui Dreketi, high chief of Rewa.¹² Another explanation, also with a connection to Verata and not altogether incompatible with the former, is offered by Wall:

To the old Fijians Suva (a little hill) was the mound on which the temple of Ro Vonu stood, and in which was concealed the sacred stone Vatubulia brought from Vatuwaqa, on which their chiefs were seated at their inauguration, and this mound gave its name to the town – originally the stone was supposed to have been carried by genii from Ucunivanua in Verata. But the name of Suva was never applied by them to any other place.¹³

10 J Neyret, ‘Fijian dictionary’, MS, Fiji Government Archives, 1935.

11 Arthur Capell, *A new Fijian dictionary* (Sydney: Australasian Medical Publishing Co., 1941).

12 Kitione Vesikula, *Tawavanua: Transcription of a series of talks on Radio Fiji One* (Suva: Fiji Broadcasting Commission, 1974), 6.

13 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 38.

Other Early Placenames

The earliest approximation to a ‘gazetteer’ of the Suva area was that compiled by French explorer Dumont d’Urville in 1827 from information supplied by the King of Nadrogā.¹⁴ In the following table, arranged approximately from west to east, the first column is the original, and the second is the probable pronunciation using contemporary Fijian spelling, taking into account French spelling conventions. Additional information is given in notes below the table. Note that in the first placename, the article *o* has been recorded incorrectly as part of the name, as commonly occurred around that time.¹⁵

Table 1.2: Inhabited places¹⁶ in the vicinity of Suva according to the King of Nadrogā.

Olan-Hani	Lagani
Oucilan-Houa	Gusuilagwa
Lacé-Lacé	Laselase
Tama-Boua	Tamavua
Lami	Lami
Souba	Suva
Nakoro-lébou	Nakorolevu
Néréré-Ouanga	Nairairaiwaqa
Solia	Solia
Kalambou	Kalabu
Réken-Réké	Drekedreke

Source: Recorded by Dumont d’Urville (1827).

Notes to Table 1.2:

- Lagani was the old village of the *yavusa* Bativudi, now living in Kalokolevu,¹⁷ described as a hilltop from which the sea is visible.
- Gusuilagwa (also recorded as Gusuinalaga and Gusunilaga) is another former village of the *yavusa* Bativudi,¹⁸ which was also occupied by the people of Navatuvula, now on the Waimanu, and of Burenivalu, now in Nadoi, Rewa.

14 Jules SC Dumont d’Urville, *Voyage de Découvertes de l’Astrolabe exécuté par ordre du Roi pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829* (Paris: Ministère de la Marine, 1834), 715.

15 Paul Geraghty, ‘Maps and the understanding of Fiji’s toponymy 1643–1840’, *The Globe* 88, no. 43 (2020): 45.

16 Dumont d’Urville states that this was a list of islands, but clearly it is of inhabited places, mostly on the island of Vitilevu.

17 Seveci Naisilisili, *Tikutuku Rānaba* (henceforth *TR*) *Bativudi* (Suva: Native Lands Commission, n.d. [1921?]), 3.

18 *Ibid.*, 4.

- Laselase was the village of Tuisolia on the Naikorokoro river, between Naqara and Suva, burnt along with Namulo by men from the American sloop of war *John Adams* in 1855¹⁹ as reprisal for an attack on Americans living on the offshore island of Namuka. Lady Gordon (wife of the first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon) visited it in January, 1876, and wrote that it was ‘the nicest and cleanest [native town] I have seen yet’.²⁰ The people of Laselase are now classified as the fishers of the yavusa Navakavu.²¹
- Suva probably refers to Nauluvatu, see below.
- Nakorolevu is cited, as Korolevu, by Wall as the name of the main part of Vatuwaqa, the hilltop fort near Flagstaff/Kaunikuila marked on some maps as Nacovu.²²
- Nairairaiwaqa is where Borron House now stands, close to Samabula, the second highest point on the Suva peninsula, after Nauluvatu.
- Solia is said by Hocart and the people of Suvavou to be now the grounds of Government House and the adjacent botanical gardens.²³ The connection with Tuisolia of Laselase and *mataqali* Solia in Maū (Namosi) and Sawani and Navatuvula (Naitāsiri) is unclear.
- Drekedreke is a former village of the Lami people on the Waimanu River;²⁴ it was still occupied in early colonial times.

This table indicates that, in 1827, there were at least four habitations on the Suva peninsula: Solia, probably a ring-ditch fortification on the west coast, and three hillforts, Nauluvatu (referred to as Suva), Nairairaiwaqa and Vatuwaqa (referred to as Nakorolevu).

In parts of eastern Fiji, names of landings, usually beginning with Matai-, can also be suggestive of relative political importance. The fact that there is a place on the western coast of Rewa called Mataisuva ‘Suva landing’ suggests that Suva was independent of Rewa, and relatively important.²⁵ Wall was told that the beach where canoes from Bau landed, near what is now the Government Buildings, was called Ucukobau, based on *ucu* ‘headland’.²⁶

19 Franklin Pierce, *Sloop of War ‘John Adams’ at Feejee Islands: Message from the President of the United States communicating the report of Captain Boutwell, relative to the operations of the sloop of war ‘John Adams’ at the Feejee Islands* ([Washington]: House of Representatives Ex Doc No 115, 34th Congress, 1st Session, 1856), 73,75–76; Berthold Seemann, *Viti: An account of a government mission to the Vitian or Fijian Islands in the years 1860–61* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1862), 107–8, doi.org/10.5962/bhl.title.54719.

20 Lord (Sir Arthur Gordon) Stanmore, *Fiji: Records of private and of public life 1875–1880*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: self-pub., 1897–1912) 392.

21 Samu Toge, *TR Navakavu* (Suva: Native Lands Commission, 1927).

22 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 33.

23 Arthur Hocart, ‘The heart of Fiji’, MS, Turnbull Library, Wellington, 3774c, n.d.

24 Vetaia Seni, *TR Nakurukuru* (Suva: Native Lands Commission, 1927).

25 Other named landings in Rewa include Mataibau ‘Bau landing’ and Mataikalabu ‘Kalabu landing’.

26 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 37.

Language

Suva is, unusually, a *vanua* of one village with two communalects.²⁷ Typically, a *vanua* comprises a number of villages speaking the same communalect, but in Suva, nowadays the village of Suvavou, there are two communalects – Suva and Walu – neither of which is spoken anywhere else and one of which (Walu) is now extinct.

Walu was spoken by the *kaiwai* (fishers) and *mataisau* (carpenters) who lived in or near what is now the industrial area called Walu Bay, of whom more below. From what little is known, the language of Walu appears to be similar to Rewa, the communalect group to the east of Suva. The Suva communalect is closest to Lami, and they (Suva–Lami) in turn are roughly equidistant from Navakavu (Waiqanake, Muaivusu) and Tamavua-Kalabu. All these communalects belong to the Southeast Vitilevu communalect group,²⁸ characterised by the transitive suffix *-e* (e.g. *cakave* ‘do it’, contrast Standard Fijian *cakava*) and a set of labiovelar stops (e.g. *gwalo* ‘evening’) that are, however, in the case of Suva, obsolescent.

So, in general, the language of Suva is considerably closer to communalects to the west and north – all of which are in or came from the *colo* (hill country) – than to those of Rewa to the east, whereas for Walu the reverse is true. A possible historical inference is that most of the current inhabitants of Suva are relative newcomers from the *colo*, while the Walu people comprised fishers who had been there for longer and carpenters who came from Rewa after the *vanua* of Suva had been established in fairly recent prehistory, over 200 years ago.

A lexical curiosity of the communalect of Suva (and its neighbour to the west, Navakavu) is that the word for reef heron (*Egretta sacra*) is not *belō*, as everywhere else in Fiji, but *sakō*. This word features in the name of a small island to the west of the Navakavu peninsula, Koronisakō ‘village (or mountain) of herons’.

27 A communalect is a variety of language spoken by people who claim to speak the same.

28 Paul A Geraghty, *The history of the Fijian languages*, Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication 19 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1983), 317–20.

Incidentally, the roadside sign welcoming travellers on the Queens Road to Suvavou ‘Ni bula maleka’ (for Standard Fijian ‘Nī bula vinaka’) is a mixture: *maleka* is indeed Suva for ‘good’, Standard *vinaka*, but the Suva second-person respectful subject pronoun is not *nī* but *nū*, so the sign should read: ‘Nū bula maleka’.

The Legends of Di Vivilitabua

Two similar legends relating to Suva were recorded by Pritchard and Brewster.²⁹ Both feature the beautiful princess of Davetalevu and her many suitors. Davetalevu is the name of the main passage in the reef into Suva Harbour, but also of a village on its western shore where the princess lives, according to Brewster, while in Pritchard’s version she lives in Suva. In Pritchard’s version, she is wooed by Tongans from Lakeba and is on her way with them when she is extricated by ‘Dadarakai’ (probably Dādarikai) the ancestor god of Lami, who pursued her in a canoe made of fruit trees, which diverted the Tongans’ attention when the ripe fruit fell on their canoe, with the help of his grandmother ‘Levatu’ (probably Lewatū). In Brewster’s version she is forced by her evil grandmother into marriage with the decrepit Rokotui Dreketi, but manages to escape with her true love to his village under Rāmā (Joske’s Thumb), so probably Laselase or thereabouts.

Records of Prehistory

Suva is relatively rich in records of prehistory. The main sources I will be referring to – in chronological order – are missionary journals and publications from the mid-nineteenth century;³⁰ missionary-inspired histories of Fiji in Fijian by Ilai Motonicocoka,³¹ Epeli Rokowaqa³² and Kitone Vesikula;³³ anthropologist Arthur Hocart’s unpublished

29 WT Pritchard, *Polynesian reminiscences, or life in the South Pacific islands* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1866), 384–7; AB Brewster, *King of the Cannibal Isles* (London: Robert Hales and Company, 1937), 57–61.

30 For example, James Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians*, vol. 2, *Mission history* (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858); Thomas James Jaggard, *Unto the perfect day: The journal of Thomas James Jaggard, Feejee 1838–1845*, ed. Esther and William Keesing-Styles (Auckland: Solent, 1988).

31 Denicagilaba, ‘A veisisivi talanoa makawa’.

32 Mokunitulevu Na Rai, *Ai tukutuku kei Viti*.

33 Vesikula, *Tawavanua*.

manuscript from 1912 (see Appendix 2); Colman Wall's 1919 article in *Transactions of the Fiji Society*, based on conversations with the people of Suvavou, reprinted and annotated in *Domodomo*; ³⁴ records of the Native Lands Commission in the early twentieth century (see Appendixes 3 and 5) ³⁵ and oral material I collected from Suvavou in the 1980s and 1990s. ³⁶

Certain facts about the *matanitū* (state) of Suva are consistent in all records, for instance that the ceremonial name (*icavu* or *icavuti*) is Nadonumai and that the title of the chief is, or has been in recent times, Rokotui Suva (also spelt Roko Tui Suva). When it became known to Westerners, Suva was a moderately powerful *matanitū* with links to both major kingdoms of recent prehistory, Rewa and Bau, but closer to the latter, and associated clans of *mataisau* (carpenters) who also served as fishermen. The *vanua* of Navakavu to the west are the *bati* (warriors) of Suva, and appropriate food taboos are observed between the two *vanua*. All records also agree in general that major components of the population are groups called Nauluvatu, Vatuwaqa and Nayavumata (or Navumata).

This leads to a question of importance for the prehistory of Suva: given that the people of Nauluvatu originated from Ra, that Vatuwaqa was either an offshoot of Nauluvatu ³⁷ or also from Ra ³⁸ (see discussion below), and that Nayavumata were relatively late arrivals from Nacokaikwā in Naitāsiri, does that mean that, unlikely as it sounds, Suva was vacant before their arrival? The answer is no, but that, as along much if not all of the coast of Vitilevu, the earlier inhabitants were absorbed into these larger, more recently arrived groups, at least for official purposes. Their distinct origin is usually given away by their designation as *gonedau* 'fishers', or *kaiwai* or *qalivakawai* 'sea people' and/or the fact that they observe food restrictions typical of sea people, such as being allowed pork but prohibited fish when in the presence of 'land people'.

34 Colman Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history', *Transactions of the Fijian Society* (1919) republished and annotated as Colman Wall, 'Historical notes on Suva', ed. Paul Geraghty, *Domodomo* 10, no. 2 (1996): 28–39; 11, no. 2 (1997): 15–37; 12, no. 2 (1999): 49–58.

35 Seruvelevi Dakai, *TR Nayavumata* (Suva: Native Lands Commission, 1921); Kaminieli Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu* (Suva: Native Lands Commission, 1921); Seni, *TR Nakurukuru*; A Savenaca Seniloli, letter to the Native Lands Commissioner, 30 January 1919, iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission, National Archives of Fiji; Toge, *TR Navakavu*; Amenisitai Waqadai, *TR Vatuwaqa* (Suva: Native Lands Commission, 1921); Native Lands Commission, *Final report by chairman on the provinces of Tailevu (North), Rewa, Naitasiri and Colo East* (Suva: Native Lands Commission, 1959).

36 Waisake Tokaduadua, 'Tukutuku ki Vatuwaqa' (transcript of interview in possession of author, 1984); Apete Rokotuiwai Dumarua, 'Suva makawa' (computer file in possession of the author, 1999).

37 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1996), 31.

38 Tokaduadua, 'Tukutuku ki Vatuwaqa'.

There are numerous parallels around the coast of Vitilevu, but I will point out just one in the neighbouring *vanua* of Navakavu (currently the villages Waiqanake, Nabaka and Muaivuso), immediately to the west of Suva and Lami. According to the official report,³⁹ all the people belong to the *yavusa* Navakavu, of which one *mataqali*, Laselase, are stated to be *gonedau* ‘fishers’. Recalling that the list of places in the vicinity of Suva recorded by Dumont d’Urville in 1827 included Laselase, but not any of the current coastal villages, it is reasonable to infer that at that time the people of Laselase were coastal villagers, who were joined afterwards by Navakavu people descending from the Waidina river valley. So, while they are officially of the one *yavusa*, and now speak the same language and have the same customs, they have separate origins.

Walu

It appears, then, that the earliest occupied site we have secure knowledge of is Walu, the stretch of coast at the foot of Nauluvatu where the Walu Bay industrial area now is. Hocart was told that the original people of Walu, the *kai* Walu, were the fishers of Suva, their leader holding the title of Daunisuva.⁴⁰ Wall was told:

[a]ll the land lying between the Waimanu Road and Walu Bay was in olden days called Waluwalu, from the *kai* Walu, or fisher clan, who used it constantly, though they dwelt in the town above.⁴¹

Presumably they lived in Nauluvatu during times of peril, but had a settlement by the beach at other times.

The *kai* Walu however became extinct, but not before teaching the arts of fishing to the carpenters (*mataisau*) who had come to live near them, presumably from Rewa, as an offshoot of the Rewa carpenters now resident in Nukutubu.⁴² So in addition to canoe-builders, the carpenters became turtle-fishers. Whether the now extinct communalect of Walu, discussed previously, was the original language of Walu or introduced by the carpenters from Rewa, is now difficult to determine.

39 Toge, *TR Navakavu*.

40 Hocart, ‘The heart of Fiji’, 374D.

41 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 32.

42 Recall that the carpenters also had a settlement at Muanikau, as noted above.

In a further intriguing parallel with Verata, Walu is also the name of a coastal area to the west of the chiefly village of Ucunivanua formerly inhabited by the *kaiwai* (fisher clan) of Verata, the *kai* Macoi.

Nauluvatu

Nauluvatu is the name of the massive rock that rises above Walu Bay, near the present settlement of the same name. Its name means something like ‘rocky summit’, and there is no necessary connection to the many other places of the same name such as in Waidina, Tawava (Kadavu), or Vanuavatu, Cicia and Totoya (Lau).

While the *Tukutuku Rāraba* (historical report for the Native Lands Commission⁴³) of the Nauluvatu people states that Nauluvatu was their *yavutū* (ancestral home), Wall states that the first people to settle there came from Saivou in what is now Ra province, led by a man called Tabanimakoveve who was the son of a descendant of Degei, the most revered ancestor god of eastern Fiji, residing in the Nakauvadra mountains, and a princess of the *veli* (short people living in the forest).⁴⁴ On the other hand, Suva people told Hocart that they originated from Matailobau, close to the junction of the Wainibuka and Wainimala, which may indeed have been a stop on the way from Saivou, but may also have been an inference they drew based on the presence there of a *yavusa* named Suva.⁴⁵

Hocart further recorded that they disembarked at Naivisere in what is now Vuna in Naitāsiri, though there were no Vuna men there at the time.⁴⁶ Eventually, according to Wall, they came under pressure from the hostile Vuna tribe arriving from the north, so moved south to Nauluvatu.⁴⁷ There, they sent a man to survey the area, and he stopped at a place called Nairairai (the looking-place) because he could see all the canoes from there.⁴⁸ This is a plausible etymology, appearing to be an abbreviation of the name Nairairaiwaqa (‘the place for looking out for canoes’), as recorded by Dumont d’Urville in 1827 and still used today, referring to the site of Borron House.

43 Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*.

44 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 28.

45 Hocart, ‘The heart of Fiji’, 374B.

46 Ibid.

47 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1997), 16.

48 Hocart, ‘The heart of Fiji’, 374B.

Wall provides many fascinating details of the hilltop citadel of Nauluvatu, including the fact that the house-mounds were circular, indicating that the buildings were of the ‘old conical design’⁴⁹ – see Freeman for a discussion of house types in Vitilevu.⁵⁰ Their chief was titled ‘Vunivalu’ (‘expert in war’), as were originally the chiefs of all three main components of Suva, and they were served by and lived with a group of *mataisau* (carpenters) called Vuaniwī.⁵¹

Eventually, most of the people of Nauluvatu moved to Vatuwaqa, but the Naqīōmila remained there for a while before joining the rest in the coastal settlement of Solia.⁵²

Vatuwaqa

Wall states that Vatuwaqa was an overflow town of Nauluvatu, and that the ‘king’ of Suva resided in Nauluvatu while his son and heir lived in Vatuwaqa.⁵³ However, the report of the Native Lands Commission⁵⁴ states that the *yavusa* Vatuwaqa never lived anywhere other than Vatuwaqa. Tokaduadua paints a more interesting, and largely more plausible, picture. Recalling the account given him by his father, he relates that they came on a canoe from Nakauvadra in Ra and anchored at Muanivatu (current site of USP).⁵⁵ Wall was told:

at the mouth of the creek in the pool where the canoes formerly anchored, is a large flat rock ... and having some fanciful resemblance to a boat it was termed Vatuwaqa; it gave its name to the creek and to the great town above.⁵⁶

After spending some time in a cave near the shore, they climbed up to Nacovu and settled there. Here they installed a young chief (Roko Saketa) as Tui Vatuwaqa and went to Bau to ask for the hand of Di Elenoa (also known as Adi Lewatū, Elenoa being presumably the name she, or her namesake, adopted on becoming Christian). They were married, and the

49 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 28–29.

50 Susan Freeman, ‘The centre-poled houses of western Vitilevu’, *Domodomo* 4, no. 1 (1986): 2–19.

51 Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*, 1.

52 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 32.

53 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 33; ([1919] 1997), 18.

54 Waqadau, *TR Vatuwaqa*.

55 Tokaduadua, ‘Tukutuku kī Vatuwaqa’.

56 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1996), 35.

Bau lady asked to move closer to the shore so she and her retinue could fish and collect shellfish, so they moved to a site on the western shore of the peninsula, which other sources name as Solia.

Hocart was told that there is a *vatu ni irevo* (oven stone) in Vatuwaqa, the god of the Vatuwaqa clan.⁵⁷ It was forbidden to chip it else the crops would perish. Hocart was unable to obtain the name of the god, but was told that his animal is the *kisikisi*, a small sea crab (PG: *Matuta* sp.) known as the ‘turtle’ of Vatuwaqa. This is presumably the same ‘coronation stone’, named Vatabulia, that was mentioned by Wall as having been moved to the mound of the temple of Rō Vonu in Suva. Given that ‘Vonū’ means turtle, it is likely that this Rō Vonu was the name of the god of Vatuwaqa that Hocart was unable to discover.

Nairairaiwaqa

Some of the population of Nauluvatu spilled over to the two other hillforts, Nairairaiwaqa and Vatuwaqa. When they were joined by the Nayavumata people originally from Nacokaikwā, a village in Naitāsiri on the banks of the Wailevu (Rewa River), but more immediately from Tamavua, they were told to live in Nairairaiwaqa.⁵⁸ They had with them two groups of *mataisau* (carpenters), the *matanibure* Beranabuka and Daunivuwai.⁵⁹

The name of this place was clearly Nairairaiwaqa, which was recorded by Dumont d’Urville in 1827 and is also etymologically plausible, meaning ‘place for seeing ships/canoes’, or shortened to Rairaiwaqa. Inexplicably, Wall consistently referred to it as Rairainawaqa and other versions include Narairainiwaqa and Nairairainiwaqa.⁶⁰

Roko Saketa

Wall was told that the earliest ‘King of Suva’ recalled in oral traditions at the time was Batileka:

⁵⁷ Hocart, ‘The heart of Fiji’, 374G.

⁵⁸ Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*, 1; Dakai, *TR Nayavumata*, 1.

⁵⁹ *Matanibure* or *matabure* is an extended family, a subdivision of a *mataqali*, hence corresponding to the official term *tokatoka*. Dakai, *TR Nayavumata*, 1.

⁶⁰ Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1997); ([1919] 1999).

who married Radi Savasava [perhaps Radi Savusavu], and had by her two children, Ro Kesa, who died childless, and Ro Tanoa, or Tuivuya, who married Ro Limawaqa of Rewa, by whom he had a son called Ro Saketa.⁶¹

No other accounts mention these people, though a later Rokotui Suva bore the name Tuivuya, so was presumably named after the one mentioned here, and the name Batileka or Batilekaleka also reappears.

The first Vunivalu (chief) of Nauluvatu of whom anything is related in the reports of the Veitarogivanua was this Roko Saketa (also written as one word, and as Rō Saketa), who was married to a Bau lady by the name of Lewatū⁶² or Adi Moave,⁶³ or Adi Kainona according to Bauan traditions, a daughter of Tānoa the Vunivalu with a lady of Vusaradave, hence half-sister of Cakobau. Dumont d'Urville mentions her as one of Tānoa's two daughters, giving her title as Dini Suva, thus indicating that in 1827 she was alive and reigning as the Queen of Suva.⁶⁴ Previously, Suva had intermarried mostly with Rewa.⁶⁵ This lady brought with her a god of Bau, Cagawalu, who had one temple in Bau, Vatanitawake, and another in (or close to) Solia, the site of the combined village of Suva on the coast near the present botanical gardens.

The *mataqali* Naceva of the *yavusa* Vatuwaqa, on the other hand,⁶⁶ believe that Roko Saketa was a Bauan, the son of Raiwālui⁶⁷ of the Vusarātū, and Adi Salauca of Somosomo, Taveuni. While this is a minority view, it is not without merit. Requesting a chief (*kere tūraga*) from Bau has parallels in places such as Nairai (Mokunitulevu Na Rai 1928), and a closer relationship than *vasu* may be indicated by the particular affection that both Tānoa and Cakobau had for Suva⁶⁸ as well as the fact that Roko Saketa's son, Ravulo, was buried not in Suva but in the temple of

61 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 18.

62 Waqadau, *TR Vatuwaqa*, 1.

63 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 18.

64 Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de Découvertes de l'Astrolabe*, 700.

65 Hocart, 'The heart of Fiji', 374C.

66 Epeli Qerea Koroitamudu, letter to Paula Qereti [Paul Geraghty], in possession of the author (2007).

67 A Raiwālui, of the *mataqali* Vuanivi, was the last to be installed as Rokotui Bau, when Naulivou was Vunivalu; whether this is the same one is unclear.

68 Jaggard MMS Letters 5/7/1845, cited in Marshall Sahlins, *The return of the event, again: With reflections on the beginnings of the great Fijian war of 1843 to 1855 between the kingdoms of Bau and Rewa* (Washington DC: Biersack, 1991), 57; Mary Wallis, *Life in Feejee: Five years among the cannibals. By a lady* (Boston: William Heath, 1851), 163, doi.org/10.4324/9781003113485-5.

Navatanitawake in Bau and his widow and children moved there after his death. The missionary John Hunt also reported that Cakobau had promised to make the younger brother of the Rokotui Dreketi, Cokānauto (also known as Phillips and Komai Namanā), his Rewa *vasu* and ally, the king of rebuilt Suva after the war.⁶⁹

Roko Saketa had at least two sons, Batilekaleka, also known as Tuivuya⁷⁰ and Tabakaucoro, also known as Rō Ravulo or simply Ravulo. While Batileka and Tuivuya are not Bauan names, both Tabakaucoro and Ravulo are, Tabakaucoro being his great-grandfather Bānuve's oldest son and Ravulo a son of his grandfather's older brother Naulivou by Bābokola. When they were still young, their father became attached to a lady of Tamavua, named by Wall as Adi Savasava,⁷¹ upon which their mother fled to Vatuwaqa with the boys, and after a while there they went to Rewa to complain to Rokotui Dreketi about Roko Saketa's behaviour. He followed his wife and sons to Rewa, where he was 'clubbed to death on his canoe at the present landing place at Naililili, and his body is said to have drifted down to Nukulau', rendering vacant the position of Vunivalu of Nauluvatu.⁷²

Adi Lewatū took Batilekaleka to Bau, leaving Ravulo in Rewa. She then married into Lakeba and after a short while Batilekaleka asked to go back to Vatuwaqa (Suva). Waqadau states that Batilekaleka returned from Lakeba to Vatuwaqa and that it was he who founded the new village of Suva on the west coast of the peninsula, but before long he was killed by the Rewa people.⁷³ Wall gives a different account of the fate of Batilekaleka, stating that his mother married in Nayau, as did he. He then settled in Kinoya and sailed to the Ra coast on a *bêche-de-mer* ship, where he was killed.⁷⁴

However Batilekaleka met his fate, it is agreed that Ravulo was his successor as Rokotui Suva, evidently at a very young age. Cargill estimated his age at 18 when he met him in 1840.⁷⁵

69 Alan R Tippett, *Aspects of Pacific ethnohistory* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973), 46.

70 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 18.

71 Ibid.

72 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1999), 54, mentions a 'brother' of Ravulo named Vakalailaibula who claimed to be the true chief of Suva, and Ravulo had murdered in Kaukalou on the Tamavua River.

73 Waqadau, *TR Vatuwaqa*, 2.

74 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 19.

75 Albert J Schütz (ed.), *The diaries and correspondence of David Cargill, 1832–1843* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1977), 178.

Consolidation in Suva/Solia

All accounts agree that Solia was a new settlement and a ring-ditch fort, and that it was inhabited by all, or most, of the people from Nauluvatu, Vatuwaqa and Nairairaiwaqa. While its founding is usually attributed to Ravulo, at least one account states that it was his older brother Batilekaleka. Reasons for its founding vary. Persistent rumours of attack by the army of Vuna is one, and it was indeed well enough fortified to repel an attack from a large Rewa army (see below).⁷⁶ Another reason given is that when Roko Saketa's wife was brought from Bau to Vatuwaqa, she asked to move closer to the shore so she could fish and collect shellfish more easily.⁷⁷

Wall gives a detailed description of the village of Suva/Solia as remembered by the people of Suvavou, while some details are to be found in the account of Englishman William Diaper who visited it briefly in 1842.⁷⁸

Arrival of Christianity

Methodist missionaries arrived in Fiji in 1835, and a mission was set up in Rewa, east of Suva, in 1839. One of the missionaries there, Thomas Jaggar, recorded that a Suva man became Christian on 22 February 1840, and his colleague David Cargill recorded the conversion of the 'King of Suva' (Ravulo) and two of his people on 17 May, followed soon by 'a few' of his people.⁷⁹ Ravulo arranged for some very good houseposts to be sent to the missionaries,⁸⁰ then on 13 June he visited the mission premises in Rewa and was presented with a coat, a hymnbook and other gifts; Jaggar remarked that he had been threatened by Bau chiefs because of his becoming Christian, but remained steadfast. In September, Tepola, the Tongan catechist's wife, reported that one man had reverted to heathenism. On 2 February 1841 Jaggar lamented that the king did not encourage his people to convert, and was lax in his observance of religion, but attributed this to his youth – the king being about 19 years of age.⁸¹

76 Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*, 1.

77 Waqadaw, *TR Vatuwaqa*; Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 19.

78 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1996), 37–38; [William Diaper] 'Jackson's narrative', in John Elphinstone Erskine, *Journal of a cruise among the islands of the Western Pacific* (London: John Murray, 1853), 475–77.

79 Schütz, *The diaries and correspondence of David Cargill*, 178, 182.

80 Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians*, 161.

81 Jaggar, *Unto the perfect day*.

Suva's First Resident European – and His Visitor

The same fine *dakua* (*Agathis macrophylla*, similar to *kauri*) timber that Ravulo gave to the missionaries in Rewa as houseposts attracted the interest of an Englishman from Suffolk, Robert Stevens. Fellow Englishman William Diaper, who arrived in Fiji in 1840 and was much involved in local wars, related that he accompanied Stevens to Suva to saw *dakua*, and that they lived in Ravulo's house until they had one built for them, obtaining 16,000 feet of plank for an old musket.⁸²

Diaper also recounts in some detail how one afternoon he was wandering around the town on his own and happened upon a tall young man, about 20 years old, who was preparing to be buried alive. He said his god was a shark, which identifies him as a member of the *mataqali* Naqioṃila. Diaper attempted to dissuade him, to no avail, and soon his relatives arrived and they proceeded to the cemetery, where he picked the spot for his grave, was dressed in his finest, then stepped into the shallow grave and lay on the mat with a *tabua* in his hands, clasped across his belly, as his father shovelled in the earth.

We are grateful to the missionary Thomas Jaggar for providing more details and a date for this incident: Monday, 19 September 1842. He also mentions a 'foreigner' who tried to intervene to prevent the burial.⁸³

How long Stevens remained in Suva is not known, but he eventually ended up in Vava'u, Tonga, where he was flogged mercilessly by an over-zealous missionary for violating the Sabbath.⁸⁴

Prelude to Disaster: A Pig Too Far and a Long-Tailed Star

Jaggar also recorded succinctly the beginning of Fiji's greatest war in his entry for 12 January 1841: 'Sailed to Suva. Q driven away & other chiefs'. Q referred to Qaraniqio, also known as Rātū Qara, Rō Qaraniqio and

82 [William Diaper] 'Jackson's narrative', 475–76; William Diaper [Diaper], *Cannibal Jack: The true autobiography of a white man in the South Seas* (Oxford: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), 240.

83 Jaggar, *Unto the perfect day*, entry for 24 September 1842.

84 Diaper, *Cannibal Jack*, 240.

Rō Dakuwaqa, the elder of two younger brothers of the Rokotui Dreketi (chief of Rewa), Rō Kania, also known as Bānuve. According to Wiliame Lolowalu of Nakauwaru in Noco, writing in Fijian in 1866, the incident unfolded as follows:

I will tell of something that happened in the time of Dakuwaqa. He sailed to the west in a canoe named the Uluilakeba. They visited Beqa and many places on Vitilevu, then returned to Rewa. They were close to Suva when night fell so they beached there to spend the night, and killed a pig, which angered the people of Suva, and they had a heated exchange. When they arrived in Rewa, Dakuwaqa immediately prepared for war, sending envoys to all the villages to tell them to prepare to attack Suva.⁸⁵

Wall's account states that they did not kill the pig (which was named 'Tamavua') but attempted to take it, and adds that they then camped at Dakuniwai, on the east side of the peninsula, where one of them was killed the next morning by Suva scouts, before returning to Rewa.⁸⁶

Rewa and Suva both prepared for war. The next month, Jaggard reported:

they [Suva] are very busy fencing in their town: - also carrying their riches away & burying them as well as leaving the town by night (ie the women & children) and sleeping in the bush.⁸⁷

By April 1842 the situation had become so tense that the wife and daughter of the Tongan catechist were removed. The next month, Jaggard visited Suva and was told that war was expected daily, and that Ravulo and most of his people had withdrawn for defence to 'a town near them' – presumably Nauluvatu. Finally, over a year after the plundered pig affair, on 23 June 1842, the Rewa army attacked Suva. As Jaggard reported:

Warriors gone today to attack Suva perhaps 2000. The Suva people set fire last night to the house of the Teacher and that of an Englishman [presumably Stevens] which were built outside the fence of the Town in order to prevent the concealment or approach of the enemy.⁸⁸

85 Jesse Carey (compiler), n.d. MSS in Fijian. Methodist Church of Australasia, Department of Overseas Missions, Item 164, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

86 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 20.

87 Jaggard, *Unto the perfect day*, 90.

88 Jaggard, *Unto the perfect day*, entry for 23 June 1842.

Two days later, Jaggar wrote:

The warriors ret'd last night without being able to carry out their designs, they found the town too strongly fortified and too well supplied with ammunition for them. 2 Suva men were slain & others wounded. 5 of the enemy also fell and some wounded. Some of the latter were obtained by the Suva people. One Noco man was killed at the attack on S. he was carried to his town & buried: his wife first being strangled and her young infant thus left without a mother. The Teacher reports that they are very busy at S. preparing their town by night & day by planting an innumerable quantity of sokis [sharp bamboo stakes set in foot-traps] that the enemy may not approach. They are dressed & ornamented for the war: the women & children remaining concealed in the bush. It seems that the Rewa people deceived them saying they were going to verikarati [meaning unclear] only: that had the S. people been aware of this they wd have killed more than they did. The R people warriors however destroyed all their plantations and took away such food as they thot useful wh is never done but in a regular war. This conduct incensed the Suva people much. The Suva people seem more inclined to die in their town than Soro [surrender] to Q. The Rewa Chief is very much chagrined at not being able to destroy Suva. He is for going again to try, but he does not seem to be seconded or encouraged by any. Suva can it seems defend itself – it is well fenced. The root of the present attack was a disturbance about some pigs between some of Q's men and the Suva people ... (The Suva people said to the chief, we shall not run away or be driven for where shall we turn to – to the reef, – we are not fish but men – this is our land, & if we die we will die in our town – we have but one burial ground and it is this our own town.)

Before Qaraniqio launched the next attack, a portent appeared in the skies over Fiji. The first to report it was Methodist missionary Thomas Williams, who wrote from Lakeba on 4 March, 1843:

Observed something bright in the west about two hours after sunset, and was delighted to find upon closer inspection that I was looking upon a comet ... its tail ... was of great length and very bright, inclined a little towards the south.⁸⁹

89 GC Henderson, *The journal of Thomas Williams, missionary in Fiji, 1840–1853* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1, 1931), 151–52.

Williams's colleague Richard Lyth reported seeing the same phenomenon from Somosomo in Taveuni.⁹⁰ The Fijian for 'comet' is *kalokalo vakabuina*, literally 'star with a tail'.

Some 20 years later, around 1865, students (all mature) at the Methodist Training Institution in Rijimodi, Kadavu, were asked by their teacher, Jesse Carey, to write accounts of various traditional beliefs, such as ancestor gods and portents (*ilālā*), which he collected and which were eventually deposited in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.⁹¹ No less than nine students, all from Rewa or one of its allies such as Noco or Tokatoka, described the comet and stated that it was a portent of the destruction of Suva (*ilālā kei Suva*), some adding the information that the comet had a name: *lavileca* (for which I can currently offer no etymology).

The Massacre, 6 April 1843

Seeing that direct attack had failed, Rewa turned to more devious means. It gained the support of most of Suva's allies by bribery and the promise of spoils. In particular, a *tabua* was presented to Rō Camaisala, head of the Vuna⁹² people then resident in Koroī on the Waimanu, requesting them to visit Suva in a seemingly friendly manner, which they did towards the end of March 1843.⁹³

On the morning of 5 April, the Rewa fleet sailed and landed its troops on the eastern shore of the peninsula, whence they marched along the coast to take up positions at the southern end of the town. They had with them a brass cannon from the *L'Aimable Joséphine*, the French brig that had been seized by Bau rebels near Viwa in 1834, in the charge of Charlie Pickering, Qaraniqio's devoted right-hand man. At the same time troops from Kalabu, Tamavua and various *vanua* to the north and west as far as Maū, most former allies of Suva, assembled around what is now Albert Park.⁹⁴

Cannon fire started around 3 pm, but did little damage. However, the Vuna men who were being hosted in the town rose, following their instructions from Rewa, and set fire to the houses and temples. A group of Suva men defended the northern gate of the town, enabling Ravulo

90 Ibid., 152n23.

91 Jesse Carey (compiler), n.d. MSS in Fijian. Methodist Church of Australasia, Department of Overseas Missions, Item 164, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

92 Wall states it was the Lomaivuna people, but other evidence suggests it was Vuna.

93 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 22.

94 Ibid., 23.

and others to make their escape towards the south, reaching what is now the playing field at Nasova police barracks, and along with the *katikati* (women and children), numbering over 500, they sought refuge in the densely wooded hills to the east. Towards dawn they followed the familiar path to their mountain stronghold of Nauluvatu, where the men set about repairing the defences and the women went out looking for food.⁹⁵

That night they slept in caves near Nauluvatu. They were surrounded by the enemy: Rewa canoes in Walu Bay, canoes of Rewa allies in the mouth of the Tamavua River, while detachments of the armies of Vuna and Tamavua and other Rewa allies such as Noco camped in and around Nairairaiwaqa.⁹⁶

The next morning, the missionary John Hunt sailed past on his way to the west and later wrote:

Friday April 7th 1843 We had full view of poor Suva this morning, where we once had a few Christians. Yesterday the town was reduced to ashes, and many of its inhabitants killed and eaten by the Rewa people. We saw several canoes which had gone in search of the miserable remnant. The Christian chief is still alive.⁹⁷

Meanwhile the invaders had sent word to Bau that the burning of Suva was sufficient punishment. Nevertheless, most of them left the town the next morning to join their allies besieging Nauluvatu. Realising their impossible situation, the people of Suva decided to *soro* (surrender), and on the morning of the 9th Korotatibi, the envoy to Vuna, set out with a large *tabua* and a fine young lady of chiefly rank and their *isoro* was accepted by Rō Camaisala.⁹⁸

However, while the remnants of the Suva people were making their way from Nauluvatu, a Rewa warrior manhandled a Beqa lady married to a Suva man and clubbed her dead.⁹⁹ This led to a general massacre of the Suva people, mostly women, with estimates of casualties ranging from 100 to 400, and ultimately to the most terrible war in Fiji history, indeed probably in the history of the Pacific Islands:¹⁰⁰ that between Bau and Rewa from 1844 to 1855.

95 Ibid., 23–25.

96 Ibid., 25–26.

97 Jaggar MMS Letters, Hunt 12/6/1843, cited in Sahlins, *The return of the event, again*, 56.

98 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1997), 26–28.

99 Ibid., 28–29.

100 Sahlins, *The return of the event, again*, 51.

For more details on the sacking of Suva and its consequences, see Wall and Sahlins.¹⁰¹

Wanderings and Return

After the massacre, most of the remnants fled to Lami, and sent a messenger to Leweivunibua,¹⁰² the chief of Soloirā, the main chiefdom on the middle Waidina, requesting to stay in his village of Vunibua (now Nabukāluka).¹⁰³ This was approved and they moved there. When Cakobau, the Vunivalu of Bau, heard that they had fled to Vunibua, he sent a message to a certain Nalikuyameyame of Navuso, the chiefly village of Naitāsiri, instructing him to bring the Suva people to Navuso. After a period of residence at nearby Nacokaikwā, the home of the Nayavumata people of Suva, they moved to Navuso, and Ravulo the Rokotui Suva went to stay with his uncle Cakobau on Bau.¹⁰⁴ An anonymous source states that they arrived in Navuso while Cakobau was in Lakeba, which would mean in mid or late 1843.¹⁰⁵

When in January 1844 war erupted between Bau and Rewa – largely as reprisal for Rewa’s attack on Suva – the Suva army joined that of Naitāsiri to attack the Rewa villages from Nakasi to Lokia, along the west bank of the Wailevu (Rewa River), while the Bau armies attacked along the other side of the river, beginning with Verata (Wailevu), until eventually Lomanikoro, the chiefly village of Rewa, was sacked and burned to ashes, and the Rokotui Dreketi clubbed to death, in December 1845.¹⁰⁶ His brother, Qaraniqō, fled to Colo-i-Suva and returned to continue the war.

The people of Suva remained for a while in Navuso while their hosts, under instructions from Bau, built houses and planted crops for them in Suva in preparation for their return.¹⁰⁷ Another account has it that people of Viwa and Vugalei were ordered to take the *kai* Suva to Nukui in Rewa, which was held by Qaraniqō’s younger brother Rō Cokānautō, a Bau

101 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1997), 22–31; Sahlins, *The return of the event, again*.

102 This is probably a title, meaning ‘Lord of Vunibua’, rather than a proper name.

103 Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*, 2; Wāqadau, *TR Vatuwaqa*, 2.

104 Wall, ‘Sketches in Fijian history’ ([1919] 1999), 50; Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*, 2.

105 Anonymous, ‘Ai tukutuku kei Ratu Radomodomo Ramatenikutu na Vunivalu mai Bau’, *Na Mata*, May 1891, 8.

106 Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*, 2.

107 Ibid.

ally, and they all went and rebuilt Suva.¹⁰⁸ Wallis gives 3 March 1845 – so while the war was still in progress – as the date when the Viwa people were ordered to assist in the rebuilding of Suva.¹⁰⁹ An anonymous source states that the Suva men went first and the women remained in Navuso, joining their menfolk only after the war in 1846.¹¹⁰

Upon returning to Suva, a delegation was sent to Bau to ask for the hand of Adi Elenoa Mila, the daughter of Wainiu the Komai Naua, whose grandfather was half-brother to the Vunivalu Naulivou. She came to Suva and they had a boy, Rusieta (probably Rusiate), who was lost at sea as a baby,¹¹¹ then Avorosa Tuivuya (also known as Aporosa and Ambrose, born about 1851), then two girls, Adi Loaloakubou (also known as Vilawasa) and Adi Sālote Lewatū (born about 1853).

Around 1850, a party of Vuna men ventured into Suva territory one morning, searching for shellfish at the mouth of the Vatuwaqa River, and were surprised by a patrol of Suva scouts. In the ensuing melee, one Vuna man was killed and the rest fled. Camaisala again raised an army and set out to attack Suva, the two forces meeting at the present junction of Denison and Duncan Roads. Rō Camaisala was fatally speared, the army fled and a cannibal feast ensued. For more details of this battle, see Wall.¹¹²

Suva probably became Christian around 1854, following the conversion of their overlord Cakobau the Vunivalu of Bau. By 1856 it was reported that there were:

two Teachers, one chapel, two other preaching-places, and congregations averaging from one to two hundred. ... The King and Queen here have been very decided; and having great influence with their people, the work has spread and deepened all the year. About thirty have begun to read the Scriptures; a few are under concern for their souls; and instruction classes have been formed. We entertain great hope of good in this branch.¹¹³

Around 1857 Ravulo passed away in Bau – when he would have been only about 35 years of age – and was buried in Vatanitawake, the temple of the god Cagawalu, the worship of whom his mother was said to have

108 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1999), 50.

109 Wallis, *Life in Feejee*, 76.

110 Anonymous, 'Ai tukutuku kei Ratu Radomodomō Ramatenikutu na Vunivalu mai Bau', 11.

111 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1999), 55.

112 Ibid., 52–54.

113 Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians*, 204.

brought from Bau to Suva. Cakobau brought his widow and children to Bau, where they were brought up, and Adi Mila was subsequently married to Golea, the Tui Cakau (high chief of Cakaudrove).¹¹⁴

With peace upon the land, something of a golden age set in. There was plenty of food to be had on land and in the sea, with the annual migration of land crabs (*lairo*, Suva *tubā*, *Cardisoma* sp.) an additional bounty.¹¹⁵ But already by 1860, there were distant rumblings of an uncertain future. Unbeknownst to the people of Suva, Colonel WT Smythe, who had been commissioned by the British Government to consider the suitability of annexing Fiji as a colony, recommended in his report that the capital be moved from Levuka to Suva. As pointed out by Schütz, only slightly tongue-in-cheek, Smythe had been in the vicinity of Suva in the month of August, so knew nothing of the hot or rainy weather for which it has since become famous, which might have caused him to change his recommendation.¹¹⁶

Arrival of the Polynesia Company

Cakobau, the Vunivalu of Bau, had incurred debts to the United States and persuaded the Rokotui Suva, Rātū Avorosa, his *vasu* (sister's son), to allow him to sell most of the Suva peninsula to the Polynesia Company of Melbourne for £10,000, which would settle his debts.¹¹⁷ Negotiations began in 1868, followed by surveying of lots. A sole colonist, Armstrong, arrived in 1869 and occupied land at Suva Point. The ship bearing the bulk of the new settlers, including Brewster himself, then aged 16 and bearing the surname Joske, arrived on Sunday 4 September 1870.¹¹⁸ Admiring the neatness of the village of Suva and its little white church (approximately where the botanical gardens are now), they were met by Rātū Avorosa and his sister Adi Sālote, both 'young and good-looking'. Rātū Avorosa spoke English fluently, having spent some time on a visiting American ship, the USS *Kearsarge*, the previous year.

114 Wall, 'Sketches in Fijian history' ([1919] 1999), 55.

115 Brewster, *King of the Cannibal Isles*, 138–39.

116 Albert J Schütz, *Suva: A history and guide* (Sydney: Pacific Publications, 1978), 8.

117 Brewster, *King of the Cannibal Isles*, 56, 62.

118 *Ibid.*, 80–82.



Figure 1.1: 'Native church at Suva 1870'.

The caption reads: 'the little pond in the right foregrounds was part of the moat which surrounded the old native village ... The moat was filled up in 1882, and the Government House gates and sentry-box now stand on the site of the old Church'.

Source: Sketch by Mrs J. Francis Jones (Brewster's sister) in Brewster, 1937: n. p.

Brewster reports that the settlers got on well with the Suva people, who were happy to have a new source of money and European goods. But as he got older he began to wonder about the propriety of the arrangement:

We did not then recognize the honour and rectitude of the people of Suva, whose lands we seized upon like a lot of cuckoos. Ratu Thakombau, their feudal lord, had begged their fair heritage to get him out of trouble with the overbearing and unjust *kai Merike*, or people of the United States. His dutiful vassals granted his request and loyally they kept their word, although it was the severest of trials having to part with their patrimonies. I was young and thoughtless in those days and took everything as a matter of course, but when in after years I lived alone in the interior, in charge of a large native province, I came to understand the Fijians' attachment to their ancestral soil, and what a wrench it was for the Suva people to part with theirs, but they had accepted the sacred *tambua* of their overlord, the *Vunivalu* of Mbau, which kept them steady and loyal to their promise to him.¹¹⁹

119 Ibid., 114–15.

For more details of the Polynesia Company and the founding of the town of Suva, see Brewster's *King of the Cannibal Isles* (1937) and the article in this volume by Max Quanchi.

Move to Narikoso (Suvavou)

Rātū Avorosa appears to have led a carefree life as a young bachelor, flitting between Suva, Bau and Levuka. Melbourne journalist Britton met him on Bau in 1870, when he was about 18, and commented on his 'very engaging manners ... boiling over with irrepressible mirth and devilry'.¹²⁰ He married Adi Kelerayani, a lady of rank from Rewa – niece to Rō Cokānautu the Rokotui Dreketi – and their first-born was named Adi Rejeli, after Lady Gordon, wife of the first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, with whom Adi Kelerayani had become very friendly.¹²¹ The minister who baptised her at around six months, in September 1876, wrote that she was 'the prettiest little Fijian child I have ever seen'.¹²² A second child was born about a year later.¹²³ As he grew older, Rātū Avorosa lost little of his endearing charm and zest for life; the Chilean mining entrepreneur Charles Lambert, on whose ultra-modern steam yacht he sailed from Levuka to Suva, described him in 1881 as 'a great swell, in clean white shirt with silver studs, black neck-tie, flannel girdle secured with a black scarf, and white turban, with glossy legs and feet'.¹²⁴

Rātū Avorosa was called to Levuka by Cakobau and told that the Colonial Government wished to move its capital from Levuka to Suva. Cakobau had arranged for the Suva people to move to Kiuva, but the elders of Suva preferred Samabula. This was not agreed to by the government, and John Bates Thurston, the then colonial secretary, came to survey Narikoso, a small peninsula belonging to Lami,¹²⁵ to which they moved, allowing the capital to move from Levuka in 1882. Narikoso means 'the peninsula', and there is at least one other village with the same name and

120 H Britton, *Fiji in 1870: Being the letters of 'The Argus' special correspondent ...* (Melbourne: Samuel Mullen, 1870), 52–53.

121 Stanmore, 'Fiji: Records of private and of public life', 149–52.

122 Ibid., 171.

123 CF Gordon Cumming, *At home in Fiji* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 2, 1881), 234.

124 CJ Lambert and S Lambert, *Voyage of the 'Wanderer' from the journals and letters of C. & S. Lambert*, ed. Gerald Young (London: Macmillan, 1883), 201–8.

125 Rogo, *TR Nauluvatu*, 3.

etymology, in the south of the island of Ono in Kadavu. The last person born in old Suva was Sarāvina Drōtini, who was still ‘hale and hearty’ in her late seventies.¹²⁶

End of an Era

By middle age, Rātū Avorosa Tuivuya (known to most Europeans as Rātū Ambrose, or simply Old Ambrose) had acquired a reputation as an embezzler, bad debtor, drunkard, womaniser and wife-beater, and had lost his job as a civil servant and spent time in prison, according to a history of the Seventh Day Adventist church in Fiji.¹²⁷ Feeling perhaps it was time to reform, he was receptive to advances by missionaries of this newly arrived church, although nominally a Methodist. In 1898 he invited the Seventh Day Adventist church to set up their headquarters in Suvavou (where they are to this day), and was baptised with his wife the following year in the Lami River.¹²⁸

A more nuanced picture emerges from other, more secular, sources. According to Nicole, he was what would now be called an activist, instigating a Suva dockers’ strike in 1890, and being one of two leaders of a movement opposed to excessive taxes and supporting federation with New Zealand, which led to his arrest and imprisonment in 1901.¹²⁹ Seen in this light, his conversion to Seventh Day Adventism could have been also a rejection of the Methodist Church he had been raised in and its association with what he considered an oppressive colonial regime, in the same way that other parts of Fiji, such as Namosi, had switched to Catholicism.¹³⁰

Rātū Avorosa and Rō Kelerayani (also known as Adi Kelera) had three children, including Yaca Ravulo (named after his grandfather), who succeeded Rātū Avorosa after his passing away in Rewa in 1912. He was married to a lady from Nukuwatu (see below) but they had no children.

126 *Fiji Times*, 21 March 1959.

127 Eric B Hare, *Fulton's footsteps in Fiji* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969), 81–82, 99–100.

128 *Ibid.*, 100.

129 Robert Nicole, *Disturbing history: Resistance in early colonial Fiji* (Suva: University of the South Pacific Press, 2018), 75–76, 120. Also see chapters by Nicole in this volume.

130 *Ibid.*, 78, 152.

Efforts were made to persuade either Rātū Avorosa's sister Sālote, who was married to the Kwālevu of Nadrogā, or her son Rātū Orisi to succeed to the title of Rokotui Suva, but were not successful.¹³¹

According to Suvavou oral tradition, Rātū Yaca Ravulo, the last Rokotui Suva, died of *matenisolo* (tinea, a skin infection) and was buried in the *sautabu* (chiefly burial ground) of Suvavou, the only Rokotui Suva buried there. Three men of Walu, the *mataisau* (traditional carpenters) of Suva, caught the same disease in mourning (*kena iloloku*). They then threw all their carpentry tools into the sea.

Postscript: Historical Migrants: Nukuwatu and Vunaniu

As recounted in detail by Clunie, Manila men were men of Spanish and Philippine descent who were frequently employed on trading vessels that visited Fiji around the 1820s. Many jumped ship in Fiji and they became probably the most populous immigrant ethnic group in Fiji at the time. A large number of them served in the Bau army. The Bau historian Etuate Sokiveta related:

following the trouble brought on by their greed at Bau, the Manila-men were banished to Navitiviti on the Cautata coast, and later to Nukuatu, where some of their descendants live to this day.¹³²

Nukuatu – usually spelt Nukuwatu – is the long beach to the west of Suvavou and the Lami River, including where Lami town is today. Its name means ‘long beach’ in the Navakavu communalect, and some nineteenth-century records refer to it as Nukubalavu, the standardised, and perhaps earlier, form of its name.

This settlement is inhabited mostly by descendants of Manila men (many bearing the surnames Rogers, Roden and Shaw) who settled there from Mokani due to a *vasu* connection. An alternative or complementary story told to me in Suvavou is that the Nukuwatu Manila men were from a whaler that was wrecked at Namuka, just west of Lami, while the founder of the Rogers family, Paul Rogers, was a Manila man shipwrecked

¹³¹ Dumarū, ‘Suva makawa’.

¹³² Fergus Clunie, ‘The Manila Brig’, *Domodomo* 2, no. 2 (1984): 84.

in Naceva, Beqa, who married a Makerina Vakalutusau and their daughter, Yana Waqabilibili Rogers, married Ravulo, the last Rokotui Suva of the original line.¹³³

There were connections far to the west as well. No doubt there are many descendants of Suva men who, contrary to the usual custom, moved to their wife's village and raised a family there, but one in particular is still remembered, though he must have made the move in the 1880s, probably with a young family, shortly after the move to Suvavou. His name was Atunaisa Mocelutu, of the *mataqali* Nayavumata, and his wife was Vani Suranamasi of the *yavusa* Nauabale of Vunaniu, Serua. His descendants constitute a *mataqali* named Nayavumata within the *yavusa* of Nauabale, and the story of their distinct origin is well known in Vunaniu. They now comprise 10 households and have all taken to speaking the Vunaniu communalect but, like all 10 *mataqali* in Vunaniu, retain their distinctiveness by using unique vocatives for 'mother' and 'father', in this case the Suva terms *lei* and *nau*. Incidentally, a great-great-grandson of Atunaisa Mocelutu bears the same name, Seruveveli Dakai, as the man who gave the *Tukutuku Rāraba* of the *yavusa* Nayavumata to the Native Lands Commission in Suvavou in 1921.

The reason for the move to Vunaniu is not known, but it may not be insignificant that the chief of Vunaniu is descended from two men of the Vusarātū clan of Bau who moved there in the early nineteenth century.

133 Dumarū, 'Suva makawa'.

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