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The Ideological Sense of *Vanua*

This chapter addresses the ideological sense of *vanua* (that is, *vanua* 1) as the basis of pre-Colonial traditional Fijian society. Such a sense can best be considered in the light of the three elements of spirits, places, and humans. This view is based on my investigations of current Fijian understandings, in various parts of Fiji but particularly in Rakiraki, Vuda/Nadi/Nawaka and the Yasawas, and in this respect, I find compelling the views of Professor Asesela Ravuvu (1983:70) who defined the *vanua* in this sense as a complex term which has physical, social and cultural dimensions inextricably interrelated.

These three elements of the *vanua* were the source of security, both physical and spiritual, for members of the group or *yavusa*. The ideological sense of *vanua* was the basis of their sense of belonging and identity, symbolised by the founding ancestor and his *yavutū* or site first settled by the founding ancestor. A person felt confident when they understood that they belonged to a particular *yavusa*; that they were associated with the territory in which the *yavusa*'s roots were established; and that they were protected by the spirits associated with that *yavusa*.

***Vanua* and spirits**

An investigation of the present understanding of the pre-Colonial Fijian spirit world was a major objective of this project, in so far as it was relevant to the overall aim of determining how Fijians at present understand the origins, development and structure of politics. After several years of discussions about this somewhat arcane subject, I found that there was considerable unanimity on current Fijian understanding of beliefs and postulates relevant to my investigations of pre-Colonial Fijian cosmology. Seymour-Smith (1986:55) defined cosmology as 'The theory of, or sets of belief concerning, the nature of the universe or cosmos. These beliefs may include postulates of the structure, organisation and functioning of the supernatural, natural and social worlds.'

The spiritual dimension was an essential part of the systems of beliefs and values of the people forming the group, and of the various relationships between spirits and spirits, humans and humans, humans and spirits, and between humans and spirits and the environment. These factors largely determined what people thought and what they did.

The concept of *vanua* with its three dimensions of spirits, places and people will now be considered in the context of pre-Colonial Fijian cosmology, particularly:

- the characteristics, roles and powers of spirits in the spirit world relevant to the origins, unity and development of an individual polity, relationships between particular polities; and the validation of *kaukauwa* or secular power;
- the importance of the part the spirits played and the influence they had in the socio-politics of pre-Colonial Fijian society generally;
- the relationship between the realm of the supernatural and the realm of people; and

- the relationship between *mana* or spiritual power derived from a *kalou* or spirit (discussed understandingly by Katz 1993:20–22) and *kaukauwa* or secular power based on political and military strength; or, as it was conceived in the west of Fiji, between spiritual power or *sau* derived from a (*y*)*anitu* or spirit, and secular power or *qwāqwā* based on the *malumu*, or warclub.¹

The Fijian spirit world was concerned with a great variety of supernatural spirits. Essentially benevolent spirits included the *kalou ni valu* (war spirits); protecting spirits; spirits of prosperity, sometimes referred to as *digiwai*; and spirits concerned with social conduct, sometimes referred to as *turaga ni ovisa* (policemen). There were also essentially malevolent spirits, covered by the present term of *tevororo*; and a number of supernatural phenomena, including the little folk known as *leka*, gnome-like figures known as *veli*, and such cult spirits as the *luve ni wai* and *kalou rērē*.

From the point of view of this research, some of the most significant myths especially in the west are those connected with spirits, especially the (*y*)*anitu* /*kalou vu* (founding ancestral spirits), associated with the arrival, dispersal and settlement of the first Fijians. In the Yasawa Group, however, where many groups were refugees or adventurers from Viti Levu, a particular category of spirit referred to as the *itaukei du* (true owner) was recognised by the newcomers but was not regarded as their ancestral spirit.

The following account is based largely on information from my three main study areas in *ibe yasayasa vakara* or the west. In particular, the Vuda and Rakiraki areas were closely connected with some of the best-known myths of the first arrivals and settlements of the Fijians and with many of the myths relating to the dispersal of founding ancestral spirits of *yavusa* or descent groups.

This account is well known at present especially in the three areas where it is currently respected as an integral part of Fijian cosmology. I copied it from a written account in Fijian by Ratu Vuki, the late iTaukei Nakelo, who was the recognised guardian of the lore at Vuda. I was also able to discuss it with him, and the myth was essentially the same as the one I recorded in Rakiraki.

A vessel, now known as the *Kaunitoni*, brought the first of the ancestors from the west. It arrived in the western reefs of Viti Levu and, having been holed, ended up on the beach just to the north of the present village of Viseisei between Nadi and Lautoka. The crew, including women, divided up and some remained near the first landing under the leadership of the culture hero Lutunasobasoba. The *Kaunitoni* then sailed eastwards along the north coast of Viti Levu under the leadership of the culture hero Degei. Degei and his companions landed in Rakiraki and went up to the Nakauvadra Mountains, which form the backdrop of Rakiraki and which are still regarded by Fijians generally as *tabu sara* (very sacred).

A second party led by Lutunasobasoba followed an inland route to the mountains. Others remained behind and settled in the Vuda area. In course of time, quarrels occurred among those on the Nakauvadra Mountains, including one arising from the killing of the dove Turukawa,

1 The term (*y*)*anitu* or *nitju* occurs generally in north-western, western and south western Viti Levu, from Ba to Vuda/Nadi to Nadroga and even to Serua (as in the toponym Waiyanitu). It also occurs in the Yasawa group. It refers to ancestral spirits and a variety of other spirits discussed in the monograph. East of these areas the term *kalou* is found with the same general meaning. I am, however, unable to determine the provenance of this word which appears to be a neologism restricted to these eastern areas of Fiji.

(*Y*)*anitu* was probably part of a language brought to Fiji by Austronesian speakers who came from the west and who spoke the language from which the present-day Fijian communalects are descended. With the 'n' retained, the term appears with similar meanings in many Austronesian languages throughout the islands of Southeast Asia and Oceania, as reflexes of proto-Austronesian 'qanitu'. In contrast, the occurrence in Rotuman of the n-less reflex *aitu* (with a glottal stop at the beginning of the word, and with a dot under the first a—see Churchward (1940:13) is a borrowing, not a direct retention by Rotuman, from Samoan where a similar term occurs or from Tongan where the form *oitu* is found. There are two linguistic grounds why it can be affirmed that Rotuman *aitu* is a Polynesian borrowing. First, the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian *n is lost. Secondly, because in Rotuman, the consonant t in otherwise similar Austronesian words normally occurs as f (e.g. *vatu* in Fijian, *hofu* in Rotuman; stone). This interpretation is supported by tradition (see Parke 2001), and the discovery in Rotuma by the author of adzes which have been tentatively identified as of Samoan or Uvean origin.

which had been brought from Tonga and which used to wake Degei in the morning with its cooing. So a number of those on the mountains dispersed around the islands, and the belief is still widespread that the founding ancestors of many of the present descent groups throughout Fiji came from the Nakauvadra Mountains.

Peter France (1969) may well disparage this myth as having been largely missionary-and anthropologist-influenced. However, there could well be an original kernel, even if overlaid by accretions since the 1890s which have come about thanks partly to the enthusiasms of European amateur ethnographers and linguists. These claim to trace the origins of the *Kaunitoni* (or whatever the first vessel might have been called) to Tanganyika on the basis of pseudo-cognates in East African and Fijian. Further, as Fijians became aware of their place in a wider world, accounts have also been given by Fijians of their supposed mythical connections with Germany, Egypt and other exotic places.

The original founding spiritual ancestors of *yavusa* are generally referred to as *kalou vu*. Each such original founding ancestor of a descent group has a recognised site, often a mound, as his or her *yavutū*. The spirit of that ancestor continues to be associated with that site, which is regarded as *tabu sara*, and especially difficult of access except by certain people such as the official *bete* (priest) who might communicate there with the spirit.

Each original ancestral spirit has a name and is associated with a particular species of object such as a bird, fish or insect, or with a pseudo-animate object such as a whirlwind. Such an object is known as the *waqawaqa* or *ivakatakilakila* (spirit's manifestation). The term *tolatola* is also used in the west. If such an object is seen, heard or smelt, especially by a member of the *yavusa* descended from that spirit, it is believed that the spirit is at hand and has a message to pass to the living, typically of the forthcoming death of a person.

The ancestral spirit is concerned primarily with the prosperity and continuity of the *yavusa* or group of descendants. Relationships between the living and the ancestral spirits are reciprocal; and the living are expected to present *isevu* (first-fruits) to the ancestral spirits and to maintain respect for them and their associated sites by keeping at a distance from the sites.

For instance, Erovu was the founding ancestor of the *yavusa* known as the Kai Vuda who live in the village of Lauwaki near to the first landing place of the *Kaunitoni*. He settled on top of the rocky crag inland from Viseisei, known as Korovatu. To this day, several earth/stone mounds lie on the top, to which access is physically very difficult. One of these is pointed out as the housemound of Erovu. Erovu's manifestation is a *vevewa* or owl, and, if people see an owl, they know that Erovu has a message for them. Erovu looks after the welfare of the Vuda people.

It was generally agreed in the areas where my enquiries were being made that when a person dies the *yalo* (spirit) leaves the body and goes to a cliff, waterfall or other high natural feature regarded as the *icibaciba* or *ivilavila ni yalo* (jumping-off place of the spirit) associated with its *yavusa*. From there it jumps into the sea or a pool. Such places often face the west, and by jumping towards the west the spirits may be said to be returning to the direction from whence their ancestors had come. Some told me that the *yalo* then goes first to the *yavutū* or to the Nakauvadra Mountains and then heads west. Others said that the *yalo* goes eventually to Bulu, the spirit world which is located under the Earth's surface. Burotu Kula was also described to me as a spiritual place where the living may go and stay for a while in circumstances similar to those assumed for paradise. No one ever claimed to have seen Bulu, but as recently as 1995 people of Rakiraki had seen Burotu Kula, shimmering on the horizon of the sea. They told me that they heard the spirits talking to each other, in what was referred to as the *dali/vosa vakaNiulala* (Niulala speech). In the 1950s, I met people in Rakiraki who claimed to be able to understand this speech, but in the 1990s, this facility was not ascribed to any living person. Paul Geraghty (1983a:343–384) investigated in

considerable detail the possible historical origin of the mythical Polynesian homeland, Puluotu, as being in eastern Fiji. The occurrence of a site in Moala, Nadi, in the very west of Fiji is worth further investigation in connection with the overall distribution of the name. Could this reflect the origin myths of the first arrival of Austronesians from the west, their landing in Vuda (not far from Moala) and their later spread across Fiji to Polynesia? I suggest that this is a reasonable alternative to it being but a mythical echo of Polynesians returning to Fiji, especially Lau, and then to the west of Fiji.

As well as *kalou vu* there are also *kalou ni valu* responsible for the protection of the founding ancestral spirits and their descendants against some threat or impending disaster such as an imminent attack. For instance, in the general Nadi area, the war spirit Limasa is associated with the original inhabitants, the Kovacaki. He appears as an owl by day and as a *kitou* or honeyeater by night. His abode is at Naviqwa west of Nadi, and comprises an earthen mound in a grove of trees. The site where the *bete* communicates with him is at Nasavusavu on the edge of the town of Nadi. It comprises a dolmen-like structure, being a capstone with petroglyphs and collapsed uprights, and some nearby earthen mounds. A large brown spirit dog is said to guard the site.

Communication between the living and the *kalou vu* or *kalou ni valu* would normally be through the *bete* of the group associated with that spirit. This would involve the presentation of *yagona* (*kava*) to the *bete*, and the pouring of a libation onto the ground for the spirit. The priest would either go into a trance or receive a message from the spirit in a dream. Other people find in a dream or in a trance that they have a certain power to communicate with spirits, which they would do again through the medium of the *yagona* ceremony. Such unofficial seers are known by such terms as *daurairai*, *dautadra* or *daunivucu*. This communication is two-way, and the living might approach the spirit, or the spirit might approach the living in a dream or in a trance. As well as ancestral spirits responsible for the prosperity and continuity of a descent group, and spirits of war responsible for defence against and assistance in combating threats and disasters, other protective spirits aim to ensure that such disasters do not occur at all. In the Nadi/Vuda area, they were referred to as *tuwawa*, a word which is sometimes translated as 'giant'. In Rakiraki they were referred to as (*sasa*)*bai* or *ba*, literally a physical defence work such as a bank, fence or wall, but in the case of the spirits, the word is used figuratively as a spiritual defence or deterrent.

A *tuwawa* named Bituwewe is said to dwell on top of the Tualeita, the mountain range overlooking the Sabeto Valley just north of Nadi. He appears as an *ecola balavu* (tall man). Although he has no apparent ancestral connections with the Betoraurau people living in the valley, he is regarded by them as the defender of the valley and was in times of war the spiritual deterrent against attack by the Vuda people on the other side of the range. A rock formation on top of the range is pointed out as his head (towards the sea), his stomach, his legs and his feet.

The spirit of the *kalou vu* is responsible for the general prosperity of the *yavusa* of which it is progenitor, and in some areas there are also spirits regarded as being responsible for prosperity in spheres of activity such as agriculture, fishing or hunting. Nawaka, a federation of *yavusa* just inland from Nadi, recognised not only ancestral spirits and war spirits but also a number of so-called *digiwai* spirits—one responsible for successful food crops, another for success in hunting, and a third for fishing. These spirits could in turn expect to be respected and looked after by the living, by suitable presentations of food and *yagona*. Failure on the part of the living to fulfill their reciprocal obligations could result in drought or in a person being bitten by a wild pig or by a shark.

Spirits are not only concerned with the way that mortals treat them. Some spirits are primarily concerned with the way mortals behave towards each other in their *yavusa*. Social offences include, at any rate nowadays (perhaps under missionary influence), the wearing of inadequate

clothing in public (especially by women), yelling, laughing unduly in the middle of the village, or wearing a head cover in the village. These spirits watch out for such breaches of customary codes of conduct, propriety and behaviour in relation to their fellow mortals, and are liable to appear before the offenders and cause them to be very frightened or to suffer some spiritual punishment such as sickness or worse. An offender was formerly also liable to be beaten or fined on the instructions of the local chief.

Near Vunitogoloa to the west of Rakiraki, a low mound under some trees is said to be the abode of Losausauega, a female spirit who, if there is too much noise in the village, appears as a spider. In the local communalect, *sausauega* means 'spider' and *lo* is an honorific female prefix. Similarly, in Vitawa in the *vanua* of Navatu to the west of Rakiraki, the male spirit 'Abumasi appears without his clothes to shame persons who make an unseemly noise in or near the Sue Levu, the house of 'U Nava'u, head of the Navatu group.

Spirits referred to so far have been fundamentally benevolent, but they might become malevolent if not properly respected or treated, or if accepted codes of conduct of mortals are abused or disregarded. Other spirits appear to be innately malevolent, though they could be induced to be benevolent. Lewatumomo, a female spirit, has as her abode a large rock at Koronubu south of Ba between Rakiraki and Lautoka. She was recently seen riding a bicycle, appearing as a half-woman, half-*veli* or gnome. If she wishes to cause a woman's death, she would appear as a handsome young man and seduce the woman who would duly die. She appears as a girl if her intended victim is a man. However, those who wish to seek her protection, especially those connected with her, may do so after presenting her with *yagona*.

The capacity to change sex to achieve death by seduction was fairly common among malevolent individual and basically female spirits. It occurred in cases involving pairs of female spirits—one regarded as benevolent and one regarded as malevolent—who were recorded in both Vuda/Nadi and in Rakiraki, usually associated with rocks and mounds. The malevolent one of the pair had the capacity to change sex. For instance, two such female spirits known as the Lewasasa dwell at Nalala near the present village of Saunaka near Nadi. A similar pair of female spirits referred to as Na Drua, the twins, are associated with a stone mound on AiSokula land at Namolausiga, east of Rakiraki.

Among other well-known spirits are the *leka* (dwarfs) reported in coastal areas and the interior. They appeared to humans, and seemed to be generally benevolent. *Veli* (gnomes) occurred mainly in the interior, and seemed to be disinterested in humans and human behaviour. *Luve ni vai* (water elfs), and *kalou rērē* (with long vowels, so Capell 1941 who called them 'timid spirits' is probably wrong) appear to be spirits associated with specific cults. *Luve ni vai* were evidently the object of attention of youth groups, and *kalou rērē* were apparently invoked in cults concerned with immortality. *Kalou vatu* (stone spirits) were apparently carried into battle. Unfortunately there is little information about these other supernatural spirits, and nowadays their significance and powers are generally not understood.

Vanua and places

Place, the second of the three elements of *vanua* 1, includes agricultural land, forest land and fishing areas owned communally by people descended, ideally, unilineally from a recognised common ancestor. Especially, for the purpose of this research, it includes sites associated with the original and other spirits as well as sites associated with people.

Sites associated with the spirits may be broadly divided into archaeological sites, being mortal-made or developed, and natural sites. Not all sites can however be fitted exactly into one or other of these categories. One of the best-known sites associated with the spirits is the Nakauvadra

Mountains from which so many of the founding ancestors of descent groups were believed to have originated. The mountains are steeply sloped and, rising to nearly 870 m, literally and spiritually dominate the Rakiraki area, for which they provide a dramatic and fascinating backdrop. On the mountain tops and slopes, many sites, both archaeological and natural, are associated with such creatures as the culture hero Degei; original spirits known in Rakiraki as O Kora na 'U Matu'a (the old folk); Na Drua (the twins); a spirit drum known as Rogorogo i Vuda (Sounding to Vuda); Degei's cave (really a crevice in a rock); Turukawa, a dove from Tonga as well as Bilovesi, a girl from Tonga; and the *vugayali*, a tree the roots of which are associated with spirit paths. These various myths may be regarded as separate myths of different origins diachronically or synchronically; or they may represent a series of separate myths integrated into what is now regarded as one overall myth.

In the course of the research, visits were made to over 200 archaeological and natural sites, and it soon appeared that almost any Fijian archaeological site was regarded as having some general connection with the spirit world. Such sites would include those of habitation, defence, ceremony or burial. In addition, a large number of sites are regarded as having a particular association with the spirit world and with individual spirits. A brief description of such archaeological and natural sites follows, together with accounts of protocol to be followed in connection with visits to sites and of consequences to breaches of protocol.

Koro makawa (old habitation sites) are generally manifested by *yavu*, usually being rectangular mounds of earth, sometimes surrounded by *lauvatu* (stone walling). Defended sites fall broadly into two categories. The ring-ditch or oval site, typically including a number of mounds surrounded by a bank and ditch with four causeways, is usually found on flat land. The hill fort with walls of stone or earth banks and terracing is usually found on hilltops or sides. Some natural caves had been developed for defensive purposes by the addition of stone walling.

Burial sites include *sautabu* (chiefly burial grounds sometimes represented by long rectangular earth mounds with the graves marked with stones); burials in old habitation or ceremonial sites such as the main ceremonial mound on the chiefly island of Bau known as Navatanitawake; or burials in caves with either single or multiple burials present.

A common feature of the archaeological landscape is the monolith, either standing on the level or on a mound. They include monoliths associated with particular spirits, *vatu ni veibuli* or installation stones for chiefs, *vatu ni bokola* or braining stones for cannibal rites, and boulders with petroglyphs.

Many archaeological sites have a particular association with the ancestors and spirits, and are regarded as *tabu* or very difficult of access. Such sites include mounds regarded as *yavutū* (sites first settled by the founding ancestor; mounds for the presentation of goods including *isevu* (first fruits) to the ancestral spirits; mounds for the *veibuli* (installation) of chiefs; mounds usually circular and high for the house where the ancestral spirits were consulted, known as *bure kalou* or, in the Vuda/Nadi area, *beto* or *bito*; linear banks of stone or earth with associated mounds and monoliths, connected either with the performance of *solevu* (ceremonial exchange of goods between groups) or, in certain areas where they are known as *naga*, with the enactment of initiation ceremonies.

The *yavutū* especially is regarded as imbued with *mana* (supernatural power) through its association with the founding ancestor and his or her *mana*. Thus emotional feeling and psychological attachment to the *yavutū* are strong among members of the *yavusa* or group descended from that founding ancestor. It is generally believed that disturbance of the *yavutū* by any persons irrespective of group would cause the ancestors through their *mana* to bring about death, sickness or misfortune to the transgressors or to their relations or to members of the group or their

descendants. The *mana* associated with the *yavutū* and the ancestors was believed to enhance the productivity of the natural resources of the associated land and the sea, to ensure the continuity of the *yavusa*. Thus the *mana* of the *yavutū* and the associated spirits could result in good or evil, depending on how people practise, or fail to practise, customarily acceptable behaviour in regard to the site and the associated spirits.

Some of these sites particularly associated with the spirit world include multiple stone settings, sometimes being dolmen-like structures with capstone and stone uprights but more commonly a number of stones set on a mound. Most common are monoliths set up on a mound or apparently standing by themselves, sometimes marked with petroglyphs. Basalt hexagonal columns seem to have been of special significance—those beside Navatanitawake (the main spirit mound on Bau); and those beside the church at Lomanikoro, Rewa, were brought traditionally from Kadavu.

Natural sites associated with spirits are usually isolated rocks or rock faces, with or without petroglyphs; or pools, being either springs or pools in a stream or pools in the sea. Other such sites include hilltops or isolated islands. A special category of natural sites is the jumping-off place of the spirits of the dead, one of which is usually associated with a particular *yavusa* or several closely associated *yavusa*. Such sites are often cliff faces, waterfalls or hillsides, beside a stream or the sea. When a person dies, the spirit is believed to go to such a site and jump into the water, often onto a rock or *yamotu* (isolated reef) sometimes identified as a vessel in which the spirit sails off to the spirit world. In many cases the spirit is said to jump in a westerly direction, the direction from which the progenitors of the Fijians are said, according to the *Kaunitoni* myth, to have come. It is also the direction of the setting sun, which is associated with the death of a chiefly person, as in the expression ‘*Sa dromu na mata ni siga*’ (the sun has set).

One could generally see how a particular mound associated with, for instance, a deceased paramount chief came to be regarded with fear and respect. On the other hand, an innocuous-looking rock or an insignificant pool was often regarded as *tabu* because it was believed to be associated with some spirit. For instance, on the island of Malake, there is a rock with a mark recognised as resembling a vagina, and this is pointed out as the abode of a female spirit. It is, however, often problematic as to how a featureless natural site initially came to be associated with a spirit and hence became regarded as *tabu*, whereas another apparently similar pool or rock was said to have no such association and was not regarded as *tabu*. Such connection may have originated from an experience in a dream or trance, as I have been told.

Such is the great variety of sites that can be found in Fiji, both man-made and natural, including rocks inscribed with petroglyphs, which are associated with the spirits and the spirit world. These archaeological and natural sites associated with the supernatural represent an important element of the physical dimensions of the *vanua* and are collectively referred to as *vanua tabu* (tabu sites). *Vanua tabu* have a supernatural importance for a polity, being the physical focus points of beliefs in supernatural spirits, including ancestral spirits or other categories of spirits associated with a *vanua* which are also feared and respected.

The spirits are usually benevolent provided that due respect and attention is paid to them by the living. The relationship between humans, spirits and places was and is such that Fijians are anxious not to offend spirits or to place themselves in a position where the spirits might be able to exercise their malevolence. *Rere* (with short vowels) or fear of and respect for the spirits is expressed by taking appropriate measures not to disturb the sites and the spirits and by maintaining distance from the sites. This meant that traditionally people did not visit these sites, except for some particular ceremonial purpose such as interceding with the spirits. If a Fijian *tabu*

site is to be visited for any particular purpose, a ceremonial request through the presentation of *yaqona* should first be made to the landowners. The request is then transmitted by the landowners usually through the *bete* to the spirits associated with the site.

If customary procedures such as those referred to above are not followed, the spirits can be malevolent. Cases of disrespect may be followed by sickness or death; and the anger of the spirits may continue to affect relations of the transgressor or other people involved in the disturbance and their descendants until ceremonies of apology have been performed and a peaceful relationship between the spirits and the living has been resumed. Offended spirits may show offence by entering the body of the transgressor and causing sickness or death. Such offence may be alleviated by the presentation of *yaqona* in a ceremony of *soro* (apology) known as *ibulubulu* or burial.

Fijians are especially anxious that other people do not offend the spirits, particularly by not disturbing the sites with which they are associated. Disturbances to a site could be taken to include simple visits to the site or some more physical form of disturbance such as by excavation, or even by photography or surveying. These sites are feared and respected because the associated spirits are feared and respected. They are *tabu*, because of the *mana* or *sau* of the spirits who watch over, guide and control people's activities and who have the power to do good or to harm, depending on how they and their sites are treated.

As far as my investigations are concerned, many archaeological or natural sites associated with particular spirits were identified in the Vuda/Nadi and Rakiraki areas. To avoid disturbing or offending the spirits in the course of a visit to the *yavutū* or indeed to any *tabu* site, certain recognised customary procedures were followed in order to establish a working relationship with the site owners and the spirits of the place. Such procedures involved the presentation of *yaqona* on two occasions. Before visiting a site, the first ceremony that would be performed is the *isevusevu* (a request to be allowed to visit the site and an assurance to the owners and the spirits that no undue disturbance to the site or to the spirits would result). After a visit, the ceremony to be performed was the *madrali*. This represents an expression of thanks to the owners and the spirits and a procedure to *vakasavasavataka* (to clean up) everything with a request that, if there has been some error of omission or commission on the part of the visitor, this should be excused. The spirit is asked that no misfortune or sickness should result as a consequence of the error.

Over the past few decades or so the spread of urbanisation and cash-crop agriculture had resulted in the disturbance of a number of traditional *tabu* sites. Cane farmers, especially Indians, have disturbed or levelled several sites, particularly those of *yavu* associated with the spirits of the founding ancestors. Fijian landowners often referred to the death of some of those involved in such disturbances. Not long ago, in Vatukaceveva to the south of Rakiraki, the mound of the traditional *bure kalou* (spirit house) where the priest communicated with the ancestral spirits had been levelled and a large wooden house had been built on the site. The person for whom the house was built died almost immediately after occupying the house. Banyan trees (*vu ni baka*) were regarded as spirit places. A low rectangular mound at Vaileka, Rakiraki and some nearby *baka* or banyan trees were closely associated with Leka, the founding original ancestor of one local *yavusa*. During a hurricane in the early 1950s, one *baka* tree was badly damaged and in order to tidy up the tree some of the branches were lopped off. Leka expressed his annoyance at this additional damage to his tree by appearing as a short person (his name means short) in the middle of the night at a nearby house. Next day some of Leka's present descendants performed ceremonies of apology by first presenting dried *yaqona* and then by pouring a libation made from the *yaqona* onto the mound. Leka did not re-appear, at any rate not on this occasion.

From this it is apparent that Fijian spirits generally were, and still are, greatly respected and there is a close interrelationship between them and their human descendants. Spirits could be dangerous,

especially if offended by disturbance or neglect. They could, however, be approached and appeased by ceremonial presentations of *yagona* (*kava*) or food. Such spirits could communicate through dreams or trance, and could make their presence known by the appearance of an animate object of a certain category with which they were particularly associated. Fijian beliefs were and still are tied up intimately with sites associated closely with the ancestors in accordance with the concept of *vanua*.

The spirit world had and still has a vital part to play in the origins, unification and relationships between polities, and in validating and legitimising certain ceremonial activities such as the installation of a chief. It also had a vital role to play in the economic, social and ceremonial life of a polity, and in the behaviour of members to each other and to others. Even when reality suggests that secular power was more important in the development of a polity than spiritual power, the wielder of secular power would still seek spiritual support and legitimisation for his military and political activities.

This chapter emphasises that running through this work there is a theme to the effect that the notional basis of pre-Colonial Fijian polities was the ideological concept *vanua* 1 (as the encompassing term for traditional Fijian society), the three elements or dimensions of which were spirits, places and people. One of the most striking things about Fijian cosmology was that there was no disjunction between the realm of people and the realm of spirits. Spirits and people shared a common world, of which the geographical component included places with which both people and spirits were closely and directly associated.

***Vanua* and people**

I now turn to a discussion of 'people' being the third dimension of *vanua* 1—that is, people, in terms of the building blocks of traditional Fijian society identified as *yavusa*, *vanua* (being *vanua* 2) and *matanitū*—concentrating on the period from the 18th century until Cession in 1874.

The human element of the ideological concept of *vanua* 1 is exemplified by that polity or group of people now referred to as a *yavusa* who trace their ancestry usually along the male line from a common founding ancestor associated with the *yavutū*. The founding ancestor was the source of *mana* which was passed down the line from father to son. Ideologically the greatest amount of *mana* was considered to have passed to the eldest son and to his eldest son, so that the group leader was ideally the eldest of the patrilineal descendants of the eldest son of the founding ancestor. It was he who was regarded as the person endowed with the greatest *mana* and on that account was ideally the person most respected and feared. If he is offended, it is as if the founding ancestor was offended and it was the *mana* of the founding ancestor which would bring retribution to the offender.

When discussing people as an element in the concept of *vanua* 1, it is appropriate to consider them in terms of polities, especially in the context of factors relating to the unity, identification, structure, dynamics and leadership of polities, be they *yavusa*, *vanua* (that is, *vanua* 2) or *matanitū*. Some factors are common to all forms of polity whether single independent *yavusa* or federations of *yavusa* forming *vanua* or confederations of *vanua* forming *matanitū*.

The yavusa

The symbols of unity and identification of a *yavusa* include:

- a common name;
- a common origin myth and a common founding ancestor; a particular form of manifestation of the spirit of this progenitor, usually an animal; a recognised place of 'residence' of the spirit, being

usually a natural feature or a mound; and a recognised place where presentations would be made to the spirit and where the bete or priest would communicate with the spirit;

- a common, usually tripartite, series of 'totemic' features, comprising a particular kind of tree and two other features, being animal or vegetable, and regarded as *tabu*;
- a common jumping-off place of the spirits of the dead; and, usually,
- a communalect, perhaps shared with other related polities.

In addition, a *yavusa* has the following features:

- it contains a number of named *mataqali* or sub-groups, and named *itokatoka* or sub-divisions within the *mataqali*. The term for such a subdivision varied in different parts of Fiji;
- it has a pattern of social stratification and traditional roles for *mataqali* and *itokatoka* within the *yavusa*. This provides a framework within which members relate to each other;
- it has recognised bases of appointment and validation of leaders. It recognises certain manifestations of social stratification and leadership. These may be sociological, such as the seating arrangements at feasts or meetings, the order of drinking *yaqona*, and the form of address. Others may be archaeologically recognisable, such as the height of a housemound, the amount of high-status pottery found in or near a mound, or the discovery of chiefly articles such as whale tooth necklaces;
- certain factors may affect the origins of, and changes to, the pattern of social stratification and the basis of leadership.

The vanua and the matanitū

Various factors may have affected the creation and organisation of named *vanua* or socio-political federations of *yavusa*, and of named *matanitū* or confederations of *vanua*; and the nature of socio-political relationships between component polities of a *vanua* or *matanitū*. They may also have affected the recognised basis of paramount leadership of a *vanua* or *matanitū*, and procedures for the appointment and validation of appointment of such a paramount. Particular spirits in the spirit world have characteristics, roles and powers relevant to the origins and unification and interrelationships of polities and the validation of appointments to chiefly office. Indeed, spirits played an important and influential part in the socio-politics of pre-Colonial Fijian society generally. However, the crucial consideration is, in reality, the interrelationship between *sau* or *mana* (spiritual power) derived from a *nitukalou* or spirit, and *qwaqwa* or *kaukauwa* (secular power) based on political and military strength as symbolised by the *malumu* or *iwau* (warclub).

In the case of *yavusa*, *vanua* and *matanitū*, *sema* or links, and *vau* or bonds, may have been within and between individual *yavusa* or within and between *vanua* or groups of *yavusa*, so linked and bonded. These links and bonds may have been of a mythical, genealogical, or marital nature; or have resulted from alliances of mutual socio-political advantage; military alliances; and 'tributary' relationships. My investigations consider especially how and why such links and bonds were formed, how they were maintained, and how they were discontinued. Equally important are the recognised formal and informal channels of communication within and between *yavusa*, and within and between *vanua* and *matanitū*, as well as between polities not formally federated or confederated. Various factors to be discussed later indicate how and why such channels of communication came to be established, maintained and discontinued.