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## Sacred Soil in Kadavu, Fiji

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper, I consider historical and ethnographic evidence to explain how 'sacred soil' becomes an intelligible and palpable reality in Kadavu, Fiji. I begin by describing the fundamental Fijian cultural division between *lotu* (Methodism, or Christianity more broadly) and *vanua* (people and land), and argue that these entities are fruitfully considered as Bourdieuan fields whose competition is culturally generative. Examining historians' well-known work on precolonial land alienation and colonial land tenure codification in Fiji, I note that Methodist missionaries helped add to indigenous Fijians' senses that their land was diminishing or even disappearing. In addition, I examine data from recent fieldwork in Kadavu, particularly discourse about soil's and land's importance and descriptions of a Methodist ritual called the *masu sema* ('chain prayer') in which soil's investiture with *mana* (efficaciousness) is particularly apparent. Having shown how 'sacred soil' becomes both an intelligible and palpable reality, I then argue that we should consider the creative force of friction between *lotu* and *vanua* in indigenous Fijian social life generally.

'In Fiji all things go in pairs,' an informant once told A.M. Hocart, 'or the sharks will bite' (Hocart 1952:57). This division into pairs or sides is a fundamental organizing principle of many Fijian rituals, and less formal events as well. Yet despite the prominence of diagrammatic icons of duality in Fijian public life, many ethnographers have failed to note the productiveness of friction between two of the most salient institutions in Fijian society, *lotu* and *vanua*. *Lotu* is the verb meaning 'worship' and noun generally meaning 'Christianity.' *Vanua* is the richly polysemous word meaning both 'place' and 'land' in several senses (from microscopic to macroscopic levels), and also 'people,' specifically a group of people united under a chief. In the word 'lotu,' we see the conjunction of religious action and its institutionalization; in the word 'vanua' we see the conjunction of geographic and social locations.

In this paper, I examine the ways that tensions or frictions between *lotu* and *vanua* are an important factor in soil becoming considered sacred in present-day Fiji. Soil becomes a potent sign, able to mean and do different things; one of the things it does is to stand apart as 'a break in the homogeneity of space' which 'is symbolized by an opening...from one

cosmic region to another' (Eliade 1961:37). These phrases come from Eliade's description of 'sacred space,' but it will become evident to the reader that my own definition of 'sacred' also borrows from Fijian models of *mana*.<sup>1</sup> *Mana* is best glossed 'efficacy' or 'potency,' although grammatically it need not be a noun; Keesing (1984:137) argued that in Proto-Oceanic languages it was 'canonically a stative verb meaning "be efficacious, be successful, be realized, 'work.'"'<sup>2</sup> When I describe soil as 'sacred' in Fiji, this is my own conjoined gloss of Eliade's description of 'sacred space' and Fijian meanings of *mana* as 'efficacy.' This paper, then, is an attempt to understand how Fijian entities (*vanua* and soil) become imbued with Fijian metaphysical qualities (being/having *mana*).

This paper has four parts. First, I describe the ways that *lotu* and *vanua* are paired together and constructed oppositionally in Fijian discourse and practice. In the following part, I show the ways that *lotu* and *vanua* are both related to *qe* ('soil'), and then examine historical constructions of *vanua* and *qe* as precious things worth fighting for. In part three, I connect this historical data with more recent data of soil's ritual use to show how soil is made sacred. By examining Methodist rituals such as *masu sema* ('chain prayers'), I argue, we can see in concrete, particular ways how soil gains an aura of spiritual potency. Finally, in the conclusion, I return to the topic of Fijian dualities, and consider the multiple ways in which *lotu-vanua* interactions are a generative friction in Fijian social life.

This paper thus has two goals. First, I want to show in ethnographic and historical detail how 'sacred soil' becomes a palpable reality. Second, I want to persuade ethnographers of Fiji that more attention must be paid to *lotu* and *vanua* as fields whose friction of interaction is a creative force in indigenous Fijian social life.

### LOTU AND VANUA

Many indigenous Fijians describe *lotu* ('worship,' 'Christianity'), *vanua* ('land,' 'people in a particular territory under a chief,') and *matanitū* ('bureaucratic government') as the tripartite basis of Fijian culture and society. They are sometimes called the three 'pillars' of Fijian life (see e.g. Niukula n.d.; Tuwere 1992). In other words, *lotu-vanua-matanitū* is a primary metacultural formula of identity (Urban 2001; see also Tomlinson 2002a), a culturally standard trope by which Fijians can describe a reified Fijian culture itself.

These signposts of indigenous Fijian identity are not politically neutral. *Lotu* affiliation — that is, being Christian — is a politically volatile marker separating indigenous Fijians from Indo-Fijians (Fijians of Indian descent, whose ancestors came as indentured labor for sugar plantations) who, until recently, comprised over half of the nation's population but had largely refused to convert to Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The term *vanua* designates 'nonchiefly peoples' but, as a synecdoche of indigenous Fijian social order, it also points indexically to chiefliness and 'tradition' (see especially Ewins 1998; Nayacakalou 1975; Ravuvu 1983, 1987; Williksen-Bakker 1990). That is, *vanua* often pragmatically refers not only to the common people, but also to the common people's representatives — the chiefs — and what they stand for.<sup>4</sup> *Matanitū*, designating 'bureaucratic national government,' is the one banner under which Fijians and Indo-Fijians are theoretically united; however, many seats in Parliament are still assigned by 'racial' category (i.e., Fijian, Indo-Fijian, or Other) and voted for by members of the respective groups only.<sup>5</sup>

Because *lotu* and *vanua* are joined by *matanitū* in a triadic formula, it is easy to imagine that these three entities are equally weighted in Fijian discourse. We might also imagine that Church, Chiefs, and Government are considered equal partners in social life. But such an assumption would be drastically wrong for several reasons. First, as I have shown for Kadavu Island (Tomlinson 2002b), the terms 'lotu' and 'vanua' both appear with greater frequency in public discourse than 'matanitū' does. Second, 'matanitū' is not always the third term attached to *lotu* and *vanua*. During fieldwork in 1998–1999, other words I heard used in the third position behind *lotu* and *vanua* were *viqaravi* ('service'), *itavi* ('responsi-

bility'), *vuli* ('study'), and *matavūvale* ('family'). Evidently, the rhetorically appealing triadic structure demands that *lotu* and *vanua* have a third element, a triangulation. The third element is the variable one, and *lotu* and *vanua* remain a rock-solid pair — sometimes complementary, sometimes oppositional, but always interrelating.

In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, *lotu* and *vanua* are fields. That is, they are 'a kind of arena in which people play a game which has certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space' (Bourdieu 1991:215; see also Bourdieu 1977, 1984). Perhaps the fundamental distinction between the two fields is that *lotu* authority is largely achieved (i.e., people must study and train to become catechists or ministers) and *vanua* authority is largely ascribed (i.e., one is either born a chief or not). Both fields, however, have their marginal spaces in which other forms of authority may be effective, and individual behavior can help to augment or diminish one's reputation. By describing *lotu* and *vanua* as fields, I do not mean to imply that individuals do not exercise agency within them; but I do want to argue that the fields themselves must be considered agents as well.

As fields, *lotu* and *vanua* are defined by their actors, events, and forms of discourse. *Lotu* actors are those who bear the institutional authority of the national Methodist Church in some measure, whether on the local village level (such as lay preachers and pastors), or supralocally (such as catechists and ministers). They form into a body for Church-related activities — not only conducting worship services, but also weeding Church gardens, helping build a new boat for the minister, etc. *Vanua* actors are the chiefs and the commoners working for them, whether in quotidian ways, such as helping in communal gardening projects, or on grander ritual occasions such as formal kava ceremonies.

Discursively, *lotu* and *vanua* encompass particular speech events with their own norms. For example, Methodist preachers often imitate Western-style Christian sermonizing through dramatic intonation, raising their voices to a crescendo of volume and intensity, then dropping down to a restrained tone, like waves crashing on a shore. Some preachers, less subtle, shout most of the time. In 1921, the Rev. W. Deane wrote wryly, 'All have volubility in preaching' (Deane 1921:114). Quain (1948:410) commented, 'Wesleyan services, which permit men of low status...to speak presumptuously from the dais in the church, amuse most chiefs.' Such an intonational pattern is the opposite of most chiefly speech giving's intonational pattern, which is steadily quiet and sometimes halting (Arno 1990). The implicit rule seems to be that when chiefs speak, you must make yourself listen to them; they do not need to persuade or coerce you to listen. When I heard chiefs speak during Methodist Church services in Kadavu, they generally maintained their *vaxatūraga* ('chiefly, noble') style of speaking.

Institutionally, *lotu* and *vanua* lead relatively separate existences, but their actors interact with great frequency. For example, chiefs in Tavuki village, the locus of my research,<sup>6</sup> rarely gave sermons; however, chiefs often gave speeches of exhortation at Methodist services, telling people to work on behalf of the *vanua*, and, in addition, lay prayer-meeting leaders often designated the *vanua*'s welfare as a prayer topic. Conversely, Methodist officials such as catechists or ministers were often called upon to provide a prayer at kava drinking sessions, which are generically events of the *vanua*. One role created explicitly to mediate between Church and chiefs is that of the *tuirārā*, or 'steward,' who is supposed to represent *lotu* to *vanua* and vice versa (see Thornley 1979, Tomlinson 2002b). Thus, *lotu* and *vanua* are often mutually supportive, but because they are different fields they are occasionally in competition. As I have described elsewhere (Tomlinson 2002b), the flow of power between *lotu* and *vanua* is not equal, and if there is a dispute between Church and chiefs in Tavuki village, the chiefs will likely win.<sup>7</sup>

Recent political events suggest that what I argue for Kadavu is true for Fiji generally — namely, that *lotu* and *vanua* are cultural entities which bear perhaps the most authority of any Fijian social institutions, and whose friction is culturally productive. In the three coups d'état which have wracked Fiji since 1987, indigenous Fijian discourse has made prominent

reference to both *lotu* and *vanua* as entities under threat (see especially Dean and Ritova 1988; Ewins 1998; Howard 1991; Kaplan 1995; Kelly and Kaplan 2001; B. Lal 1992; V. Lal 1990; Lawson 1991; Miyazaki 2000; Rutz 1995; Williksen-Bakker 1990). Such discourse is ironic in many ways, most notably because *matanitu* — bureaucratic national government — is the principal entity threatened, by definition, in a coup. In contrast, *lotu* and *vanua* would seem to be stable, relatively unthreatened institutions. Many indigenous Fijians, however, see the situation quite differently, and in terms which superficially suggest harmony between *lotu* and *vanua*. Both *lotu* and *vanua* have a common enemy: Indo-Fijians. Often, *vanua*'s permanence as traditional Fijian homeland is said to be threatened by Indo-Fijian rapacity — that is, Indians are said to be greedily looking to take over native Fijian lands (this will be discussed further in the next section). Indo-Fijian presence in the public life of the nation also threatens Christianity's status as state religion: although Christianity is written prominently into the national constitution,<sup>8</sup> pronouncements of the nation's Christian status are challenged by the size and visibility of Fiji's Hindu and Muslim groups. Although no Indo-Fijians reside permanently on Kadavu (Government of Fiji 1995), discourse about their supposed threat, and their problematic status as national citizens, does circulate there.

If many indigenous Fijians, and especially rural people like Kadavians, feel united in dislike of Indo-Fijians, however, this does not mean that local Fijian groups are internally harmonious. As Thomas (1992) has shown persuasively, Fijian discourses of 'tradition' often invite, indeed generate, their own opposition: competing voices proclaim an anti-traditionalism, in which the past is not necessarily a good model for present-day social action. In the following sections of this paper, I will show how *lotu* and *vanua* exist in productive friction. I will do so primarily by examining the creation of ideas of 'sacred soil.' The Church depends on chiefly authority but can chafe at this dependence, and in various contexts — including, especially, rituals such as chain prayers, described below — we see the *lotu*'s attempts to define a sphere of practical authority against the power of the *vanua*.

I must emphasise that the tension between *vanua* and *lotu* is a national phenomenon, produced by (and further producing) the two fields in a ceaseless flow of discourse on what *vanua* is, what *lotu* is, and how the two should interact. In Kadavu Island, these national-level fields of discourse are localised in concrete ways, as I will show in a later section, through such genres of discourse as Methodist sermons and discussions at kava-drinking sessions, and such practices as ritual 'chain prayers'. Thus, the creation of 'sacred soil' is enacted locally in relation to fields of national discourse. In other words, when soil is prayed over in a 'chain prayer,' this becomes meaningful action because of the larger fields of discourse within which, and in relation to which, such actions take place.

## HOW SOIL BECOMES SACRED: AN HISTORICAL EXPLORATION

Because one of *vanua*'s primary meanings is 'land,' soil (*qeleva*) itself is closely related to the concept of *vanua*. In fact, sometimes 'vanua' is used to mean dry land, in opposition to water; if you want to walk from Tavuki village to Solodamu village at low tide, people may ask if you are going *mai wai se mai vanua*, 'by water [across the muddy lagoon floor] or by dry land.' Consider also the Deed of Sovereignty document (see below), whose Fijian-language explication of the term *vanua* mentioned soil as one of its components. In other words, the term 'vanua' lexically unites not only 'people' and 'land,' but also various dimensions of land, such as land-as-political-territory, land-as-soil, etc.

More abstractly, *vanua* can be linked to soil through notions of enduring land ownership — people belonging to a place and a place belonging to a people because of long and intimate connection. As Ravuvu (1983:76) puts it: 'For a *vanua* to be recognised, it must have people living on it and supporting and defending its rights and interests. A land without people is likened to a person without [a] soul' (see also Abramson 2000; Turner 1988).

Indeed, examining texts such as the collected writings of Ratu Sukuna (Fiji's revered twentieth-century soldier and statesman), we see moments at which soil and *vanua* are essentially equated (see e.g. Sukuna 1983:204, 214). To understand how soil can become sanctified in present-day Fijian practices, then, first we must understand how *vanua* has become a politically and emotionally charged term.

In his study of Fijian land tenure laws, France (1969) argues that British colonial government imposed a label of 'traditionality' on a diverse set of flexible tenure practices and, using 'traditionality' as a basis for indirect rule, codified land use and ownership in a way that was unfamiliar to many Fijians. The biggest challenge facing Fiji's first colonial governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, was not a restless native population, but, rather, rapacious white settlers who had begun founding plantations in the 1860s — a decade and a half before Gordon's arrival. A student of his era's anthropology, the governor felt that Fijians had achieved the 'Middle Period of Barbarism' according to the criteria in Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*. Benevolently patronal, Gordon insisted — in the face of much opposition — that Fijians be guarded against economic entanglement, kept in their villages, and barred from ever selling their lands. Settlers, generally unable to contract Fijian labor, preferred to hire Solomon Islanders or Vanuatians, or, 'if this proved too expensive, they were careful to employ Fijians remote from their estates so that the labour force would be free from the influence (and lack the protection) of their relatives' (France 1969:39; see also Derrick 1946:168–176).

Although struggles over land rights in Fiji were intensified by British colonial policy, and particularly by the importation of Indian labor which began in 1879, trouble did flare earlier, such as during the 1860s when settlers were growing in strength and became determined to nail down land claims while they had the chance. Here it is worth quoting France at length, not only for his description of these various struggles, but also for the hints he provides about how *vanua* developed into an emotionally evocative entity for indigenous Fijians:

At many plantations Fijians were unwelcome. Imported labour were drilled and armed to protect the property of the European owners. Trespassing notices became common. The exclusive nature of European rights to land was emphasized by the refusal to allow Fijians to tread on the soil which they had alienated.

Relations between the races worsened as segregation became more widespread. Sales of land became increasingly provocative of friction as Fijians began to assert claims against each other and then to sell the disputed areas. This left the purchaser with at least one group of disaffected neighbours. A state of open hostility gradually developed in areas where chiefs sold occupied lands to planters without the consent of the occupants; when the settler went into possession his plantations were destroyed, his cattle speared, or his house burned. As the planters grew in strength and could call on armed support, Fijian reactions became more violent. (*ibid.*:41)

Reading such a description, we sense that present-day Fijian claims about *vanua* — its supposedly traditional importance, emotional significance, and role as basis of identity (more on which below) — might have developed partly out of this confrontational settlement period, and then became more widely circulated as persuasive, compelling discourse during the colonial period.

However, reading further back in the historical record, we continue to find statements on land and identity which sound surprisingly current. For example, in June 1839, the Methodist missionary John Hunt wrote grimly, 'The Feejeeans are men of strong passions and exceeding proud, suspicious and covetous, their pride is seen in their Independent haughty spirit, their covetousness, in their desire to possess our property and their suspicion in their willing-

ness to believe that we are come to possess ourselves of their land and riches' (Thornley 2000:84). In addition, Mary Wallis, a trader's wife, reported in the early 1850s that Fiji's famous future sovereign, Cakobau, 'said that he was not willing to receive' French missionaries 'because by and by they would take possession of the lands of Feejee, as they had done at Tahiti...' (Wallis 1851:255). Besides the English and French, another group considered rapacious were the Tongans (see Cargill 1977; France 1969; Routledge 1985; Scarr 1984), who were conquering the Lau Islands of eastern Fiji. It is evident that the characterization of 'rapacious outsiders,' now tagged so insistently to Indo-Fijians, has been applied to other groups historically. A Fijian theologian writes, 'Fijian fear of the dominance...of the migrant race(s) (potential or real) in their own land is not new. They have lived with it throughout their history since their first contact with the outside world' (Tuwere 1992:187).

Considering that *vanua* could be, and was, alienated in precolonial Fiji — that is, blocks of land were sold and given away — what might symbolize its alienation? Reading the ethnographic record, we find that soil was often called upon to serve metonymically in this regard. An old Fijian ritual of surrender was the *soro ni qele*, or presentation of a basket of earth from the vanquished to the victor 'signifying submission to the chiefs of the land' (see Derrick 1946:26–27; see also Deane 1921:72, France 1969:50, Thornley 2000:145). An early missionary observer described it as 'generally connected with war...presented by the weaker party, indicating the yielding up of their land to the conquerors. Sometimes, however, the ceremony may be an expression of loyalty by parties whose fealty is suspected' (Williams and Calvert 1859:24).

In the realm of spiritual warfare, too, soil could serve as a powerful symbol. Hocart (1929:176) noted that Tongan and Fijian magicians took different approaches to their work: 'The difference between Tongan and Fijian witchcraft is that the Fijian charm is buried, while the Tongan is hung up, formerly where everyone could see it.' Such a difference depends not simply on invisibility and secrecy, I suggest, but also on the power and efficaciousness — the *mana* — with which Fijians invested the soil. Consider Rev. Epeli Rokowaqa's striking description, penned in 1926, of how Verata's high chief allegedly decided which grandson would succeed him:

After two nights of rejoicing, he gave orders that all but two of his grandsons would take part in a race. The winner would become the next Ratu of Verata to succeed him. So he called all the seventeen children before the race and gave them the following word of instruction:

"I now hold before you a *tabua* (whaletooth) as my *vosa-mana* (word of *mana*) to you. After I have uttered my word I shall bury this *tabua* into the ground before you. You must know that this [is] my word of blessing to you. Whoever wins this race will be installed as *Ratu* to lead Verata. The rest of you will listen to him. Those are my words to you. I now bury my *vosa-mana* and it will never be unburied. If you twist my word and change my *lewa* (authority) at any time and unbury the *tabua*, my *vosa-mana*, the blessing which I have buried in the soil[,] will be taken away from you. For my word which I have uttered is meant to hold the *vanua* intact (*bika*) and remain unmoved. If the *tabua* is unburied, I now tell you that your *vanua* of Verata will be destroyed and you will suffer humiliation. If you allow the *tabua* to remain in the ground, you will remain a *matanitu* (kingdom) and will never be destroyed." (This English translation comes from Tuwere 1992:14; the original Fijian version is found in Rokowaqa 1926:61.)

The burial of the whaletooth gives its 'word' illocutionary force in J.L. Austin's (1962) sense. Although whaleteeth are always powerful tokens, the one in this story becomes even more efficacious by being embedded in earth. As long as the whaletooth remains buried,

Verata will remain a strong kingdom. (And with a narrative set-up like this, you already know the denouement: the chief is disobeyed, and Verata falls.)

Thus we see, first, that *vanua* was alienable in precolonial Fiji, but became inalienable due to British colonial policy; and, second, that soil has served metonymically as a symbol of wider landscapes. What role did the *lotu* play in this evolving discourse about land? Specifically, how did Methodist missionaries influence Fijian perceptions of the *vanua*?

Examining the historical record, we see that Methodist missionaries threatened not only the authority of traditional Fijian priests (see e.g. Cargill 1977, Thornley 2000, Williams and Calvert 1859), but also engaged in a complicated dynamic of dependence and aggression with local chiefs. Missionaries and chiefs both needed and distrusted each other. Missionaries sought the chiefs' aegis not only for strategic reasons (once a chief converted, it was assumed, his subjects would follow), but also for practical considerations of safety (Thornley 2000:77). They also participated in processes of land alienation by building exclusive domestic compounds (France 1969; Jolly 1992:337). Chiefs appreciated the material resources and prestige they gained by hosting white foreigners, as they had learned decades earlier by appropriating the services of such notorious beachcombers as Charles Savage and Paddy Connor (Routledge 1985:46–47; Williams and Calvert 1859:3), but were wary of the changes that accepting the missionaries would surely bring.

Despite Methodist missionaries' fundamental dependence on chiefs, the Christian emissaries threatened chiefly authority for at least four reasons. First, Christianity was initially spread in Fiji largely through the efforts of Tongans who also aimed at military conquest (Derrick 1946; Scarr 1984). Second, missionaries inevitably challenged chiefs' temporal authority by proposing the existence of a supreme deity for whom they — the missionaries — spoke. In addition, the supreme deity seemed peculiarly dissatisfied with venerable Fijian customs such as chiefly polygamy; so to accept Jehovah as a spiritual superior meant that chiefs would be stripped of signs of their temporal power. Third, although Methodist missionaries focused their efforts on converting chiefs so that commoners would follow the lead, in fact commoners often took initiative in converting.<sup>9</sup> Fourth, despite their self-image as benevolent men working only for godly purposes, missionaries were occasionally guilty of abusing their authority in putatively non-*lotu* affairs. In fact, in some indigenous Fijians' opinions, the missionaries were just as ambitious in mortal affairs as settlers were, and accepting the *lotu* might lead to the ultimate loss of the *vanua*. For example, in September 1838, the Rewan village of Sigatoka was burnt down as a protest 'against [the chief] Rokotui Dreketi's leadership, including his patronage of the missionary [William Cross].... Shortly after the burning, there were talks between Rokotui Dreketi and his elders on the question of whether to accept Christianity' (Thornley 2000:69). The ensuing debate revealed the threat that missionaries posed, and how chiefs recognized the dangers but felt they could not fight the Christians:

Some advised the high chief against it, saying that the coming of [Rev.] Cross was the beginning of a flow of outsiders. Soon, they said, many more would come "to dwell and they will all join together, build themselves a city, take our land from us and rule over us". Rokotui Dreketi responded with a more pragmatic outlook: 'Christianity has taken hold of the land and we cannot send it away or stop its progress... (Thornley 2000:69).

This early period of missionary work in Fiji prefigures present-day frictions between *lotu* and *vanua*, as I will describe below.

In addition to the complex connections of support and competition between missionaries and chiefs, we see hints in the historical record that Methodists introduced a discourse of smallness to Fiji, thereby inflecting Fijian senses of *vanua* with impressions of its diminu-

tion and the spectre of loss. We might imagine Fijians' surprise when British missionaries in the 1830s brought globes which showed Fiji's diminutive place in the world. Up until that time, Fijians had lived in an expansive Oceanic universe, maintaining far-flung regional trade networks throughout Fiji and to Tonga and Samoa. Then came the clash:

The Fijian is very proud of his country. Geographical truths are unwelcome alike to his ears and his eyes. He looks with pleasure on a globe, as a representation of the world, until directed to contrast Fiji with Asia or America, when his joy ceases, and he acknowledges, with a forced smile, "Our land is not larger than the dung of a fly;" but, on rejoining his comrades, he pronounces the globe a "lying ball." (Williams and Calvert 1859:95)

In August 1999, on one of my last days of fieldwork in Tavuki village, I was sitting with a middle aged man — a man who had traveled more than most of his fellow islanders; he had even been to Japan — when he used the phrase *da ni lago* to describe Fiji. *Da ni lago* means 'dung of a fly,' and I was astonished to hear him using the phrase I remembered reading in Williams and Calvert. But perhaps I should not have been surprised, for however that phrase had wended its way through history, the sentiment of Fiji's small stature in the world was quite evident during my fieldwork. People occasionally said that places like America were big, and Fiji was small. A phrase I sometimes heard in Tavuki, 'vuravura levu,' literally means 'big world' and indexically points to someplace elsewhere, i.e., not Kadavu Island. This sense of smallness is a product of Fiji's engagement with Europeans and Americans, not their engagement with other Pacific Islanders.

As we consider these historical accounts of Fijian land use, soil surrender, and inspection of globes, we must bear in mind Belshaw's warning that 'land use rights should not be confused with the sentimental and religious attachment to specific blocks of land' (Belshaw 1964:186). That is, laws and emotions do not necessarily correspond. There are ways to investigate the potential connections, however, following Goodenough's (1951, 1955) work in Chuuk, which showed how rights to land ownership were the basis of local citizenship. Goodenough described how people who merely had use-rights to land were obligated to follow behavioral rules more strictly. In other words, land, behavior, and interpersonal relationships are not always neatly separable categories; their conjunction may create exactly those 'sentimental and religious' tendencies Belshaw mentions.

## HOW SOIL BECOMES SACRED: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

As fields, *lotu* and *vanua* have not only their actors and events, but also their institutional structures of authority: the Fijian Methodist Church has an explicit national and local hierarchy inherited from British Wesleyans, and the 'traditional' social order of the *vanua* places some chiefs in a higher rank than others. Intriguingly, the structured interaction of the two fields places the *lotu* in a position of permanent externality to the *vanua*. Serving five-year terms before moving on to new appointments, and often not native to the divisions they work in, Methodist ministers are permanent outsiders. The five-year rotation schedule, according to historian Andrew Thornley, is 'almost written in stone' because it keeps chiefs and ministers from developing too close an alliance (Thornley, personal communication). Another way to view the arrangement — my view — is that it keeps chiefs in a permanently privileged position *vis-à-vis* the *lotu*.

In the context of modern political turbulence, with indigenous Fijians vying among themselves for power while blaming Indo-Fijians for national troubles, the term 'vanua' appears prominently in official statements. Two examples, from rather different sources, will illustrate the prominence of *vanua* in public discourse and its investiture with emotional significance.

Less than two weeks after the May 2000 coups, a document was circulated to Fijian Affairs Board officials, with an introductory letter from the General Manager of the Native Land Trust Board. This remarkable document, titled the 'Deed of Sovereignty' in its English translation, tries to define indigenous Fijians' positions in the chaotic atmosphere of immediately post-coup Fiji. The authors borrow the language of Fiji's Deed of Cession, which, over 125 years earlier, had given the islands to Queen Victoria; in 2000, they try to reclaim the *vanua* rhetorically. Many passages are striking, but I will select three fair specimens, two from the preamble and one from the resolutions:

...**WHEREAS** we the **Taukei** through the concept of **Vanua** (the chiefs, our tribes, their land, their waters and seas and other possessions) and **Veivakaturagataki** (chiefly system) are by custom, tradition and practice united for a common purpose and destiny to protect and promote our rights for the benefit of the **Taukei**, their future generations and other peoples.

...**WHEREAS**...the survival of our Vanua as a unit being paramount and necessary...

**THAT** we do take back the possession of our full sovereignty and dominion of our people and Vanua wherever it may have been ceded and or assigned or exercised...

...**ME VAKA** ko i keimami na i **Taukei** e na neimami bula vaka-Vanua (na turaga, veiyavusa, qele, wai kei na waitui kei na veika era taukena) kei na veivakaturagataki (turaga, qase ni vale, bati kei na veitutu vakavanua e so) e na neimami tovo vakavanua kei nai vakarau e na neimami veivakadonui vakaitikotiko kei na veitauri vata ki na dua ga na i lakolako me taqomaki ka vakavinakataki kina na veika ka keimami taukena me bula kina na i **Taukei** kei ira na neimami kawa e na veigauna mai muri.<sup>10</sup>

...**ME VAKA**...me bula na neimami Vanua ena kena duavata ka ni sa ka bibi duadua oqo...

**ENA** neimami sa taura lesu na taukeni ni lewa ena Vanua kece e yaco kina na lewa ni neimami tutu vei ira na neimami lewenivanua kei na neimami Vanua mai na vanua kece ga e a soli se biu kina se vakayagataki...<sup>11</sup>

(Anonymous 2000; emphases in original)

This document invests 'vanua' with certain kinds of force: political, emotional, and meta-cultural. Defining the *vanua* expansively as 'the chiefs, our tribes, their land, their waters and seas and other possessions,' the authors cast *vanua* in the role of something both threatened and lost, something in need of reclamation and redemption. The authors characterize the *vanua*'s survival as the key to indigenous Fijian survival generally.

The second example comes from a sermon given in the Methodist church in Namuana, Kadavu, in October, 1998. Ratu Josaia Veibataki, a well educated man in his thirties from Nagonedau village, preached:

Sa sega ni noda  
na **vanua** oqō.  
Xena ibalebale bexa xacei  
xeda da i sa mai  
xeda da i sa vani tū bexa gā  
xeda da i sa wili tū talegā  
xedra na vulagi dra mai tū ena noda **vanua**.

[This **vanua** is not ours.  
[  
Its meaning is  
we are  
we are like  
we are counted as  
the foreigners who are in our **vanua**  
[i.e., Indo-Fijians].

Dra mai lisi tū bexa gā.  
 Xena ibalebale  
 na nomu bula jixo ina vuravura xa  
 xo i na mini bula tawa mudu jixo xe  
 jixo na gauna  
 xo na lesu vuā.

They lease [the land].  
 Its meaning is  
 your living in this world  
 you will not live forever  
 there is a time  
 you will return to Him.

Here, Veibataki forges a complicated chain of meaning. First, drawing on the Book of Exodus' story of the Jewish exile, he claims that 'This land' — Fiji — 'is not ours.' Drawing a comparison that his Kadavuan listeners would find threatening, Veibataki suggests that Fijians are just like Indo-Fijians — that is, are in danger of not really belonging in Fiji. This is a strong political claim drawn from Exodus, echoing themes of a rightful homeland and raising the spectre of its loss. After this pronouncement, Veibataki inflects the statement 'this land is not ours' with a different meaning, turning to ultimate metaphysical issues: 'you will not live forever,' he tells the congregation, 'there is a time you will return to Him.' In other words, you will die and go to the afterworld.<sup>12</sup>

In the previous section, we explored how *vanua* historically became a discursively prominent, emotionally evocative entity in Fiji through various influences: precolonial encounters with white missionaries, beachcombers, and settlers, and also Tongans; intensified threats generated by British colonial land policy; and senses of threat generated by Methodist missionaries brandishing globes that showed Fiji as a mere speck in the world. The two examples above show how *vanua* is used as a rhetorical keystone by speakers in different present-day contexts, including Church services; *vanua* serves as an emblem of what should belong to indigenous Fijians but is in danger of being lost or alienated, and must be reclaimed.<sup>13</sup> Now, having considered *vanua*'s current rhetorical presence, we will turn again to the topic of soil itself and ask how, in particular actions, it is imbued with sacred efficacy or, in Fijian terms, with *mana*. Here, I will focus mostly on my data from Kadavu specifically.

For young adult and adult men, working with soil is generally considered honourable and constitutive of one's character. During the period of my fieldwork, the Tui Tavuki himself occasionally worked in his own gardens, although as Kadavu Island's paramount chief he could call on other men to labour for him. When one young man who planned to go to the Methodist theological college on Viti Levu told me about all the gardening that students had to do there — hours and hours each day — I said to him, 'But this is time you're supposed to study.' He replied that indigenous Fijians' 'theology' was that one needs to know the *qe*le — the soil — and that if someone got up to preach but did not do garden work, people would think that the preacher did not know anything. A Methodist preacher's right to preach, then, ideally comes not just from reading the Bible but also from working the earth.

One night, pursuing the topic of soil's metaphysical associations while drinking kava with friends, I asked one man about soil's importance. He began to say that the Indians wanted it — they wanted to own land in Fiji — and to say that this was both reprehensible and impossible. I then asked why the island's head Methodist minister took some soil from house foundations after chain prayer rituals (see below). My friend answered that taking the soil was an act of taking away the *cala* ('sins') of the *qase* ('elders,' 'ancestors'). This explanation resonated with what another young man, a non-Kadavuan resident in Tavuki, said at one chain prayer event, as described in Tomlinson (2002b): that the earthen house foundation contained *tēvoro* ('devils'). These devils might be ancestral figures, or perhaps non-kinsfolk who were buried in the house foundation long ago; in either case, they were non-Christian spiritual forces, and they were dangerous. When I asked the Methodist minister himself about soil, he responded that it was *bibi* ('heavy,' connoting 'important') because the elders are buried in it.<sup>14</sup> The fullest explanation, however, was given to me by a Nagonedau village man who explained that soil was 'heavy' in Fiji for three reasons. First, God built Adam from soil. Second, ancestors fought over it. (This seems to be both a reflec-

tion and a cause of soil's importance.) Third, he explained, the earth was created before everything else, according to the Bible's story of creation: before water, before animals, before humankind, land was brought into being.

Because old village sites, earthen house mounds, and house foundations are the places especially imbued with *mana* of the ancestors who lie within, they may be dangerous sites. Such dangers are variably weighted, however — some may be dealt with cursorily, and others may be considered too daunting to deal with at all. Two examples illustrate this point. First, in April 1999, I helped a woman and young man gather *cevuga* (red ginger) for a festive occasion. The red ginger grew in Tavuki's old village site, an uninhabited place cloaked in silence, still marked with stone house foundations. When we arrived at the site, the woman leading us called aloud, 'Ni sa yadra. Xeimami sa xere senixacu,' meaning, 'Good morning [polite]. We [plural exclusive] request flowers.'<sup>15</sup> In passing an old foundation, she called out 'julou' ('excuse me') a few times — the sort of thing one would do if real, physically present humans were sitting there. Finally, in leaving the old village site, she called out, 'Vinaxa na senixacu' ('Thanks for the flowers'). These simple acts of recognition presumably negated any spiritual threat we faced in treading on the earth of the ancient village and plucking flowers within its borders. However, other sites may be considered more threatening. I once expressed an interest in visiting a different old village site purely for curiosity, and two men in Tavuki advised me against it even though I had the landowner's permission. (In fact, I had originally been invited to see the site by a member of the old village's descendants.) The day that I was supposed to go, torrential rain poured out of the sky, and the Methodist minister interpreted this as divine intervention.

Because soil is imbued with *mana*, disturbing the soil can have bad consequences. For example, when a Tavukian man fell ill in March 1999, he believed that his illness had been caused by the digging of earth. Specifically, land that his family owned had been dug up for the laying of electrical wires. In such situations, both the *lotu* and *vanua* may be called upon to help, and indeed the man asked the Methodist minister to help rectify his violation of tabu — but he also had a feast of pork and taro prepared to mollify the ancestors.<sup>16</sup> Linguistically, the sense that land acts *upon* people — that land is an agent which can affect humans, that land is *mana* — is expressed in certain phrases; consider the report of Michael Dickhardt from Levuka, south coast Kadavu (2000; translation by Mark Ashley):

In my respondents' statements, [the *vanua*] appeared as something alive (*e dua na ere bula*, a living (*bula*) thing (*ere*)), as something possessing *mana*..., as something with ears (*taliga*) for hearing (*rogo*) and eyes (*mata*) for vision (*rai*)..., even as something that could bite (*katjia*) in the sense of a punishment for particular forms of transgression. (Dickhardt 2000)<sup>17</sup>

Considering how land has been invested with power in Fijian imaginations — not only is it associated with the *mana* of the ancestors, but it is something the Indians want to take away — it is not surprising that knowledge of borders and proper ownership can have meta-physical implications. Once, when a Methodist Church-appointed estimator visited Tavuki to assess the worth of all the land the Church owned in the area (he was doing this throughout Fiji), it was discovered that in 1890 a certain patch of land in a village near Tavuki had been given to the Church. At some point this fact had become obscured, however, and now a man had his house on the land. The minister told me that two of the man's children had died, and, hedging his speculation by saying it was '*noqu vakasama gā*,' 'just my thoughts,' he mused that there might be a connection between this man's taking Church land and his children's deaths. The irony is that land ownership is such an emotional issue that no one mentioned the Church's ownership of the land to this man when it was learned; presumably it was too difficult a subject to broach, and the Church stood to gain little. I do not know if the man was eventually informed.

Ignorance of land ownership was a topic I heard about on several occasions. This is not surprising, because such discourse resonates with a more generally circulating theme in Fijian public life: the fall from a golden age of *mana* (see Tomlinson 2002b for a detailed discussion). That is, the past is said to have had more *mana* than the present; as a friend of mine put it, while we drank kava one night, ‘E liu, se mana.’ *E liu* means ‘before,’ as in ‘days gone by,’ and *se* is the aspect marker indicating an ongoing state. Thus my friend was saying ‘In the old days, there was still *mana*.’ This is a common sentiment in Tavuki.<sup>18</sup> The signs of lost *mana* are read in many phenomena: not only ignorance of land ownership, but also disordered kinship relations, illegitimate political authority, and overconsumption of kava, for example. Old and young speakers alike said these things. For example, I was told by Tavuki’s eldest man, Ratu Irinale Soqeta, that people did not know proper land divisions (or kinship connections, either) today; but in addition, the young Ratu Josaia Veibataki echoed this theme explicitly in his sermon at Namuana’s Methodist church, mentioned above:

Au dau tuxūna mai yasa xadua  
na vicōcō sa mino tū ni vāitaxeī.  
Sa mino tū ni xilai o yava i je nona  
baleta  
ni tamata vosa bibī  
sa mini xilai xia jixo.

I say on the other side [i.e., Tavuki Bay]  
the **land** is not owned.  
It is not known what is whose  
because  
people  
do not know [who owns what].

The word translated here as ‘land’ has a different connotation from *vanua*. *Vicōcō* encompasses gardens, soil, and forest, but has none of the sociopolitical meaning of ‘*vanua*’ by itself. Nonetheless, by claiming that people do not know what land they own, Veibataki is saying that people do not know where they belong — and in Fijian terms, that is a deeply lamentable situation. Worse yet is to be called a *kai si*, ‘landless person’ (Williksen-Bakker 1990:237), which is a gross insult.

### Chain Prayers and Soil’s *Mana*

As I have described at length elsewhere (Tomlinson 2002b), Tavukians looking for the sources of their difficulties — whether ill health, unhappy family situations, or lack of desirable employment, for example — often turn to the past. Specifically, non-Christian ancestors are blamed for ‘cursing’ the present. Chain prayers (*masu sema*) are rituals conducted by Methodist ministers ostensibly to defuse such dangers from the past. They are called ‘chain prayers’ because people pray, individually or in teams, at one or more prayer sites, while other participants rest at another site or sites; in the revolving pattern of prayer-and-rest, prayergivers repeatedly replacing each other, the form of a patchwork or a linked chain is suggested.

As noted above, *lotu* and *vanua* involve different actors and forms of discourse; they also carve out spheres of practical authority. In other words, a Church service is an affair of the *lotu*, and so the responsibility for conducting it goes to preachers, pastors, catechists, and ministers. A kava drinking session is an affair of the *vanua*, and so the explicitly hierarchical order of seating and service reflects chiefly paramountcy in society (Arno 1990, 1993; Toren 1986, 1988, 1990, 1999; Turner 1986). Chain prayers are *lotu* affairs, but ones which cast the *vanua* in the role of a dangerous entity as embodied in the power of the past.

Chain prayers are unique ritual events that make the potency imbued in soil, specifically the soil of house foundations, both intelligible and palpable for participants. They are perhaps the clearest example of how friction between *lotu* and *vanua* is culturally generative. That is, chain prayers are ritual sites in which the *lotu* (in the form of the Methodist minister) confronts the *vanua* (in the form of ancestors’ potency located in soil) and claims supremacy. Elsewhere, I have described the language of chain prayers in detail (Tomlinson

2002b). Here, I will describe the moment at the end of such rituals, when soil is dug up from the corners of house foundations and then prayed over by the Methodist minister.

After hours of praying in the chain pattern, participants congregate in the house of the family on whose behalf the event is being conducted. A handful of soil is gathered from the corners of the house foundation. On two occasions that I witnessed, the soil was then placed in a plastic bag and brought indoors for the minister to pray over. In a chain prayer conducted in January 1999, the minister instructed the chief, whose house the ritual was focused on, what he should do with the bag of soil:

Ni sa	Please
vakarau me datou vakacavara	get ready for us to conclude it
qe le gā sa tiko sa qai	the soil is here and
kerei gā mo ni qai taura ni qai	it is asked that you take it and
solia mai.	give it [to the minister].
Ni qai cavuta gā e vica na vosa lalai	Then please give a short speech
qe le ni tikotiko	soil of the dwelling
a soli yani ki na	is given into
liga ni lotu	the hand of the Church
kerei na	it is asked that the
meca me ra vakamalumalumutaki	enemy be weakened, it is also requested
kerei talegā	that life
na bula me sobuta na itikotiko	descend to the dwelling

The minister referred vaguely to the spiritual entities afflicting the chief's family as *na meca*, 'the enemy'; we know they are plural because he used the plural pronoun *ra* in reference to them. Later, when I asked the minister whom he meant by 'the enemy,' he responded *tamata*, *veiwekani*, and *tēvoro* ('people,' 'kin,' 'devils'; note the ambiguity, and possible overlap). Despite their ambiguous identification, the minister makes these shadowy agents' placement quite explicit: their efficacy, their *mana*, is located in the soil. By giving the soil 'into the hand of the Church,' these invisible malefactors will be defeated. This is a version of a *soro ni qe le*, as described above, and exemplifies soil's sacrality in Eliade's sense: it stands apart as 'a break in the homogeneity of space' which 'is symbolized by an opening...from one cosmic region to another' (Eliade 1961:37), linking present-day ritual actors in Tavuki with *mana* of dangerous ancestors. The goal in surrendering the soil is not to appropriate *mana* but to have it defused.

Taking the bag of soil and speaking briefly, and very softly (in appropriate chiefly style), the chief followed the minister's instructions, declaring:

Qe le i V. [ila ni yavu]	Soil of V. [house foundation name]
xei na veiyasa ni vale vāvā	and the four sides of the house
xei na ruxu ni vale	and underneath the house
[unintelligible]	[unintelligible]
Na luve ni Xalou	The son of God
xerei [unintelligible]	is asked [unintelligible]
me vaxasavasavataxi	[the soil] to be cleansed
da tū isō na inaxi baci na tamata	lest there are some bad intentions, the people
i vuravura	in the world
mino ni xilā tū[,] xilā duadua gā na Xalou.	do not know, only God knows [if there are any
	'bad intentions' in the soil].
Xerea xena vivuxe da rawa ni vāsavasavataxi	[We] request help so that it [the soil] can be
	cleansed
me rawa ni rawa xe na bula	so there can be life
rawa xe ni qaravi vinaxa jixo xe na itavi.	[and] responsibility can be attended to.

The chief has restated the minister's message, altering the wording slightly by describing the threat to his household's health and prosperity as 'bad intentions' but also locating them in the soil, as the minister did.

The great irony in this performance is that, as I interpret it, chain prayers are rituals which explicitly mark the tension between *lotu* authority and *vanua* authority. Although the minister is helping the chief's family here, the interaction both indexes and perpetuates rivalry between the Church and chiefs, because the agents being identified as dangerous and in need of neutralization — ancestors whose malignant power is embedded in the house foundation's soil — are entities of the *vanua*. In a chain prayer, the *lotu* defines itself as the power which can defeat the hazards of the *vanua*.<sup>19</sup>

Rituals such as chain prayers are crucial performances in which soil becomes conceptually invested with potentially dangerous *mana*. However, they are not the only such performances. An amusing example of a ritual used to 'cleanse' soil of dangerous forces comes from a sporting magazine, which alleged that a Fijian soccer player 'tells how [the team from] Ba used to form a circle around a player to shield him from the crowd while he peed in the centre of the ground. According to a Fijian belief, this will free the ground from evil spells' (Singh 1996:12–14).<sup>20</sup>

When asked directly about soil's *mana*, people may give broad answers. Once, when I asked a chief about soil's *mana*, he responded that it was '*mareqeti*,' 'precious,' '*baleta ni qele e rawa ni yaco xe na mate*,' 'because soil can result in death.' He meant that arguments over land could result in lethal fighting, as was evident by what he said next: '*xe sō i na laxo mai xa via taura vaxaveitalia na nona qele i dua na tamata, i na rawa ni na yaco xe na mate. Xacei i dua na ere au tuxuna ni ere bibi sara xe na qele*,' 'if some [people] come and want to take someone's land just as they please, it can cause death. That's one reason I say that soil is a very 'heavy' thing.' This chief also said that he saw, in the Bible, how the ancient Israelites revered their soil. His statement — '*xedra na Isireli dra dau vāmareqeta na qele [...] vālevu sara gā*,' 'the Israelites really cared for their land [...] a lot' — is reminiscent of what the chief Tui Waciwaci told A.M. Hocart in the 1920s. The Tui Waciwaci said that different villages had different types of men, and this fact "may have something to do with the soil; some places have soil productive of strong men.... Doubtless," he added, "it is the will of God" (Hocart 1929:8; for similar statements in a different context, see Daniel 1984).

In this section, I have argued that soil gains an aura of *mana* in the present day because of historical influences and current ritual practices, bound together inextricably (Sahlins 1985). Discourse about the *vanua* as a diminishing and threatened space, and as something that must be reclaimed, has been circulating for a long time in Fiji; its circulation has been spurred by various foreign encounters, including encounters with Methodist missionaries. In the present age, political discourse about rapacious outsiders has continued to circulate prominently, and has warranted revolutionary actions such as the coups d'état of 1987 and 2000. Such messages are reinforced by concrete actions, such as chain prayer rituals in which soil serves as a sign of dangerous potency from the past which must be defused. 'Filled to brimming with past and present significance,' Basso (1988:102) writes, 'the trick is to try to fathom (and here, really, is where the ethnographic challenge lies) what it is that a particular landscape may be called upon to "say," and what, through the saying, it may be called upon to "do."' In Fiji, one thing the landscape is called upon to do is to hold the unquiet spirits of the ancestors — the dangerous agents of the *vanua* that the *lotu* (the Methodist Church) sets against itself as enemies that must be fought.

Soil is a potent symbol because of its polysemous possibilities. Synecdochically, it can represent a larger territory and can therefore be 'surrendered' in a *soro ni qele*. Metonymically, it can represent the ancestors' bodies which spilled into the earth and returned to dust long ago. By extension, soil can represent those ancestors' unsavory aspects, such as their non-Christian aggression. In being associated with ancestral *mana*, soil is both the product

of, and further impetus for, general competition between *lotu* and *vanua* for practical authority. Defining danger — making people believe that something is hazardous — is an eminently political act, and in a ritual such as the Methodist chain prayer we see a strong statement by the *lotu* about its power to conquer malfeasance of the *vanua*. Such a statement is not made in a vacuum, however. It is warranted, motivated, and rendered practically intelligible by the history of discourse that has come before it — discourse that has described *vanua* and soil as precious entities, and as things that can (and sometimes should) be fought over.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have attempted to show in historical and ethnographic detail how soil becomes sacred in Kadavu. That is, I have tried to show how soil becomes invested with *mana*. It has earned *mana* because of long-term, generative friction between the fields of *lotu* and *vanua* in Fijian social life. Its *mana* is made a palpable, continuing reality for people not only by the continued circulation of discourse about rapacious outsiders and Fiji's smallness, but also by rituals such as chain prayers. A second, related argument is that *lotu* and *vanua* must be seen as fields whose interactive friction is creative in indigenous Fijian social life. The reason I state this explicitly, and do not merely leave it as a warrant for the argument about sacred soil, is that when we apprehend the generative power of interactions between *lotu* and *vanua* we can understand other phenomena in modern Fiji more clearly.

For example, Kelly and Kaplan (2001) have recently addressed the topic of nationalism in Fiji, arguing that Fiji challenges Benedict Anderson's (1991) arguments about the nation being an ideologically modular 'imagined community.' Nations like Fiji, they claim, are products of 'wills to power' (Kelly and Kaplan 2001:36). Nations are not made by reading newspapers, they argue, but by deals, negotiations, coercions, and impositions. Their argument is persuasive, but misses a key element in the Fijian situation: namely, what gives 'wills to power' their energy? Unless one subscribes to a Nietzschean view of humanity, one must look for the particular cultural reasons that spur peoples to fight for power. In Fiji, I argue, the discourse one hears so often about 'race' (namely, indigenous Fijians comprise the 'race' that rightfully belongs in the islands, and Indo-Fijians are the greedy outsiders) is fuelled by discourse about the *vanua*. Discourse about the *vanua* does not only justify things such as coups d'état after the fact: it actually helps to generate the urgency behind them in the first place.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, as I have argued in this paper, the *vanua* is often constructed interactively with discourse about the *lotu*. Seeing *lotu* and *vanua* as intimately related but not always harmonious fields, or 'arena[s] in which people play a game which has certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space' (Bourdieu 1991:215), helps us to understand their complementary, generative power in indigenous Fijian social life.

Another reason to pay close attention to *lotu* and *vanua* is that when we analyze their interaction, we can see the 'invention of tradition' issue in Fiji in the clearest possible light. Senses of what is 'traditional' in Fiji — that is, what actions and things are considered old, are said to have been replicated through time, and are marked as distinctively local, not foreign — are designated by the adjectival form of *vanua*, 'vakavanua' (see Jolly 1992 for an overview). Christianity itself is often said to be *vakavanua*, although such discourse exists in tension with narratives of how Christianity brought light to the darkness of heathenism. One material sign of this tension is kava, as I have discussed at length elsewhere (Tomlinson 2002b; see also Arno 1990, 1993; Toren 1986, 1988, 1990, 1999; Turner 1986). To drink kava is to act *vakavanua*, and Methodists are considered to be particularly enthusiastic kava drinkers, imbibing seven days a week. However, because kava is emblematically a thing of the *vanua*, its consumption serves to tie one figuratively to the ancestors whose non-Christian status makes them dangerous. Indeed, to drink kava alone is a sign of practic-

ing 'witchcraft,' because if one is not enjoying kava with one's fellow villagers, then he or she must be getting in touch with the ancestors, or perhaps other non-Christian spiritual figures, to request their help in evildoing (see e.g. Brewster 1922:20; Deane 1921:30; Hashimoto 1989; Ravuvu 1983:92–93, 1987:25). The association between kava consumption and spirit possession is described not only for old Fiji (Deihl 1932, Hocart 1952:12, Kaplan 1995:106–107), but also for elsewhere in Oceania, such as in a famous Vanuatuan 'cargo cult' (Lindstrom 1990:88; see also Brunton 1989). Thus, while Methodists drink kava, and kava is drunk during chain prayers by people who are not praying at the moment, kava is never used sacramentally in Fijian Methodist churches (cf. von Hoerschelmann 1995:195 for Samoa; Cowling 1989:46–47 for Tonga; and McGrath 1973 for Ponape; see also Lebot, Merlin, and Lindstrom 1992).

Unfortunately, some of the leading anthropologists working in Fiji recently have misapprehended *vakavanua*'s range of meanings and, thus, its practical importance. For example, Rutz (1995:90 n. 11) writes, 'Nicholas Thomas [in a review of Rutz's manuscript, has] noted that "the Fijian idea of *vakavanua*, unlike the English word *tradition*, is not primarily grounded in the past...*vakavanua* is good because it is intrinsically good, not because it has been done for generations and is validated by time. Hence the 'invention of tradition issue' simply does not arise.'" Note the slippage in Thomas' reasoning: although the 'goodness' of *vakavanua* things may be inherent, that does not mean that their presumed time depth is unimportant.<sup>22</sup> Evidence of (*vaka*)*vanua*'s temporality comes from an assertion by the Rev. Dr. Ilaitia Tuwere, who writes of 'The *vanua*, with its emphasis on the past...' (Tuwere 1992:215). Consider also this passage from the Methodist missionary Rev. A.C. Cato:

I listened to stories expressing ancient beliefs as recounted by a Methodist Circuit Steward. When I asked him whether he believed these things or the Christian New Testament, he unhesitatingly replied that he believed both. I asked him which he would believe if they were in conflict. Slowly, and with some reluctance (perhaps because of his position in the church) he replied that the ancient beliefs were very important to Fijian people, that it was from them they derived the truest consolation and they therefore would believe the old. (Cato 1947:156)

Finally, I might note in passing the phrase I heard Kadavu's superintendent Methodist minister use when he was formally installing a man in a Church position, 'E sega ni kā vou, e sega ni kā vācalakā,' 'It isn't something new, it isn't a mistake.' This is an equational construction which strongly implies that new things might be 'mistaken' — in contrast to things *vakavanua*.

Another misrepresentation of *vakavanua* is seen in Toren (1988:696), where we read, 'The Fijian term for tradition and ritual as generic terms is "acting in the manner of the land" (*cakacaka vakavanua*); it refers to a way of living and behaving that is culturally appropriate. By contrast, our normative understanding makes tradition inhere not in action but in objectified structures' (Toren 1988:696). Besides oversimplifying whatever 'our normative understanding' might be, Toren manufactures a Fijian definition by inserting the noun *cakacaka* ('work, action') into a formula — and then positing that work and action are central to what the phrase means. This is a circular definition. In my textual corpus of transcribed field recordings (approximately 22,000 words in Fijian), the phrase *cakacaka vakavanua* never occurs, although *vakavanua* does modify other nouns therein, including, for example, *itūtū* ('position/rank') and *ova* (a kind of village meeting). Thus *vakavanua* things can in fact be things of 'objectified structures' as well as actions.

In summary, when we see *lotu* and *vanua* as Bourdieuan fields with their own actors, strategies, and forms of discourse, we can understand the forms of productive power they generate interactively. Such interaction is centrally implicated in most important modern indigenous Fijian social phenomena, including struggles to define the nation, to define the

ways that older things must resist, incorporate, or yield to new things including foreign influences, and to imagine what Fijian futures will look like. *Lotu* and *vanua* are two things that go together as a pair, but also make the sharks bite. In this paper, I have focused on one product of *lotu-vanua* interaction, the sacralization of soil in Kadavu. By doing so, I hope I have illuminated deeper social processes at work throughout Fiji, processes which will be recognizable to scholars of Oceania who aim to understand the sanctification of territories, the rhetorics and rituals of nation making, and the politics of tradition.

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### NOTES

1. On *mana*’s translation, see Capell 1938; Codrington 1891; Durkheim 1915; Firth 1940; Handy 1927; Hocart 1914, 1922, 1927; Hogbin 1936; Keating 1998; Keesing 1984; Lowie 1948; Malinowski 1948; Mauss 1972; Sahlins 1985; Shore 1989; Valeri 1985.
2. For Fijian, Hocart (1914:100) argued that *mana*’s ‘fundamental meaning appears to be “to come true,” although he noted that ‘truth’ and ‘efficacy’ are often conflated in Fiji. He quoted an informant to this effect: ‘If it is true (*ndina*), it is *mana*; if it is not true, it is not *mana*’ (98).
3. *Lotu* was a Tongan word that Methodist missionaries introduced into Fijian as a term for Christian practice. In Tongan, *lotu* was ‘the term used for praying,’ according to the accidental ethnographer William Mariner, stranded in Tonga from 1806 to 1810. Mariner added that *lotu* was ‘more commonly applied to prayers offered up in the fields to all the gods, but particularly to [the deity] Alo Alo, petitioning for a good harvest’ (Martin 1979:189, vol. 2). Because the process of mission advancement in the South Pacific was a slow affair working through networks of local teachers (see Garrett 1982), Tongans in eastern Fiji had a disproportionate influence on early mission development there (Cargill 1977; Thornley 1979, 2000; Wood 1978); the word *lotu* is just one token of the early Tongan influence. Once adopted into Fijian, the word was introduced by Fijian missionaries to other parts of Oceania (see e.g. Garrett 1982:233.)
4. An anonymous reviewer of this article for *Oceania* pointed out, quite correctly, that many anthropologists have noted how Fijian chiefs are often conceptually **opposed** to the *vanua*, not united with it; in such formulations, the *vanua* is really the *lewe-ni-vanua* (‘flesh of the land’), i.e., commoners; for a particularly lucid statement of these relationships and how the Methodist Church is enmeshed, see Kaplan 1990a. In this article, however, I am emphasizing the relative subsumption of chiefs to *vanua* when *vanua* is opposed to *lotu*. When opposed to *lotu*, *vanua* is a synecdoche standing not only for the *lewe-ni-vanua* but their chiefs as well and, indeed, the ‘traditional’ system writ large. Thus, for example, when Kadavu’s superintendent minister preached a sermon asking ‘O cei e liu? Na lotu se na vanua?’ (see Tomlinson 2002b), he was asking ‘Who leads? The Church or the Vanua?’ and ‘vanua’ here evoked the chiefs and the ‘traditional’ system generally. (See also the first excerpt from the Deed of Sovereignty document, below.) Note, chiefs are also subsumed in the *vanua* when the *vanua* as a national-level entity is something uniting all indigenous Fijians in opposition to Indo-Fijians.
5. *Matanitu* were originally large and powerful ‘confederations’ of political groups which emerged in late-1700s Fiji (Routledge 1985:28, 36–37). In precolonial Fiji, ‘*vanua tūraga*’ (‘chiefly vanua’) and ‘*matanitu*’ could have the same meaning (Thornley 2000:74).
6. Tavuki is a village of approximately 125 people, and is the seat of the Tui Tavuki, the paramount chief of Kadavu Island. It is also the location of the Kadavu Provincial Office and the village of residence for *Talata-*

- la Qases*, or superintendent ministers of the Methodist Church. Kadavu, the fourth largest Fijian island geographically, has a population of approximately 9,800, over 93% of whom are members of the Methodist Church; groups with lower numbers and less visibility than the Methodists include Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Assemblies of God, and 'Every Home' sect members (Government of Fiji 1995).
7. I believe that Martha Kaplan's term 'land-centered Christianity' (Kaplan 1990b:16) is an apt description of Methodism in Tavuki, as it suggests the *lotu*'s ultimate dependence on the *vanua*. However, scholars working elsewhere may find different relative emphases on the authority of *lotu*, *vanua*, and *matanitū*. For example, Michael Dickhardt (personal communication) writes that competition between *lotu* and *vanua* in an area of south coast Kadavu is 'articulated...in a struggle to make the *vanua* and the *lotu* compatible and cooperating within a unifying Christian worldview,' suggesting that *lotu* takes precedence in this context. See also Quain 1948:59–60; Sahlins 1962:264.
  8. The preamble begins with an appeal to God and describes 'the conversion of the indigenous inhabitants of these islands from heathenism to Christianity through the power of the name of Jesus Christ; the enduring influence of Christianity in these islands and its contribution, along with that of other faiths, to the spiritual life of Fiji.' Fiji's constitution can be viewed online at [http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/fj00000\\_.html](http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/fj00000_.html).
  9. For a particularly striking example from Tonga of chiefs deciding to follow commoners' lead in converting to Methodism, see Cargill's (1977:48–49) account of the 'Tongan pentecost.'
  10. The English translation used here is part of the official document; in fact, the Deed of Sovereignty presents English paragraphs first, and Fijian paragraphs second. The translation is, however, inadequate. For example, the Fijian version's parenthetical gloss of *veivakaturagataki* should be 'chiefs, heads of households, warriors and other traditional roles' and not simply 'chiefly system.' Also, the 'other peoples' concluding the English paragraph is not in the Fijian version. The reader should be aware that *Taukei*, a rhetorical keystone here, literally translates as 'owners,' and is often used as a synonym for 'indigenous Fijians.'
  11. The authors emphasize *vanua*'s importance as a political unit by capitalizing it here ('Vanua'); note that they do not capitalize it when it is used simply to mean 'wherever' (*mai na vanua kece ga*).
  12. Another way to deny most present-day people's ownership of the *vanua* is to attribute all ownership to the ancestors and elders, as a Kadavuan man told the German ethnographer Michael Dickhardt: '*sa mino ga na nomu vanua, sa mino nomu qele...Baleta na itaukei dra sa mate makawa sara vata dra sa bera sara jiko mai na vica na yabaki mai i bera...O jiko ga vayagatakina jiko ga*,' meaning 'You don't have a *vanua*, you don't have soil...Because the owners are those who are long dead, along with those who will be there in a few years...You are just using it (Dickhardt 2000; translation mine).
  13. An English-language example comes from the *Fiji Times*. On September 7, 1998, the newspaper published an editorial titled 'Access to land' which asked what was to become of non-Fijian Pacific Islanders living in Fiji who faced expiring land leases. The beginning of the editorial declared:

LAND is at the heart of all Pacific beliefs. Without land, our culture would lose much of the reason for its very existence.

Pacific islanders have a powerful connection with their land, one which Westerners often find difficult to comprehend.

Land for the islander is part of the past and a reason for the future.

The people are part of the land and the land is part of the people in a relationship whose bonds are virtually unbreakable. (Fiji Times 1998)

Although the editorial is written in English, it is recirculating indigenous Fijian discourse about the *vanua* — consider its solemn characterizations of land's cultural centrality, and the implication of its imperiled status ('Without land...'), for example.

14. Soil may be associated with birth and growth as well as death. After birth, one's umbilical cord may be placed in the ground along with a seed (Williksen-Bakker 1990 lists lemon, mango, guava, and coconut as the preferred varieties), so that 'relatives can then point at the tree and say to the child: ...'There you are'' (Williksen-Bakker 1990:235).
15. For reasons unclear to me, this utterance mixes Standard Fijian (*ni*, [*k*]*jeimami*) with Tavukian (*senixacu* for Standard Fijian *senikau*).
16. The feast is known as a *madrali*. In this case, I never learned how the minister responded to the man's request for help. However, one way to respond to such a problem would be to conduct a chain prayer, as described below.
17. For an example from Tavuki of the *lotu* (Church) being depicted similarly as an anthropomorphic agent, see Tomlinson 2002b.
18. Three important, related points must be made at this juncture. First, it is possible that the theme of a fall from a golden age of *mana* is more prominent in Tavuki than elsewhere in Kadavu, because Tavuki is the island's paramount chiefly village; as chiefs stand to lose status — and the *mana* they are supposed to embody — from the effects of new religious movements, capitalist economic relations, and other effects of the modern era, they may be more vigorous in circulating messages about the good old days (or at least the powerful old days).

Second, although Tavukians may emphasize this message, I do think it is present in much of indigenous Fiji, as shown, for example, by national-level discourses about the threatened *vanua*, the dangers of kava overconsumption, and other related themes (Tomlinson 2002b). In other words, I believe that many indige-

nous Fijians would recognize the message that 'the old days had more *mana*' and grant it validity, because the message is phrased in many ways, with many common examples. Compare Raymond Williams' (1973:40–45) description of how English aristocracy, middle class, and landless peasants all accepted 'golden age' ideas, but from different perspectives and with different emphases.

Third, I believe that discourse about the fall from a golden age of *mana* is a crucial counterweight to standard themes about Christianity bringing 'light' to the 'darkness' of heathenism found in Oceania. I will explain further in the main text about how the golden age functions in relation to themes of light and darkness, power and loss.

19. Although the chain prayer I am describing was dramatic because it was being conducted in an important chief's household, and therefore it ironically underscored the generative friction between *lotu* and *vanua* in ritual actions, chain prayers are also conducted for commoners.
20. For an example of verbal remedy of metaphysically tainted soil in a rather different cultural context, see Taussig 1987:347.
21. Many observers have noted that George Speight's stated reasons for leading the coup of May 2000 — his predictable platitudes about the preservation of indigenous Fijian interests — probably masked his personal reasons for involvement, namely to dodge his economic and legal troubles. However, observers who focus on the ringleader, Speight, ignore the crucial fact that hundreds of indigenous Fijians supported the coup by occupying the grounds of Parliament as events unfolded. This suggests that no matter how naked Speight's self-interest was, the *vanua*-centric message of 'Fiji for the Fijians' continues to generate an emotional (and politically practical) public response.
22. Compare Thomas' criticism with Rutz's own assertion: 'the present is authorized by the past. Current political dialogue appeals to continuity between past and present in order to establish its truths' (Rutz 1995:78). See also Jolly 1992 for a statement on *vakavanua*'s connotation of continuity with the past.

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