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Na Sala Vakavanua, Na Sala Vakailavo:
The Fijian Way of Life, the Money Way of Life

by

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ABSTRACT

The title of this study --**Na sala vakavanua, na sala vakailavo**-- means the Fijian way of life, the money way of life. The objective of the thesis is to obtain an understanding of Island Fijian socioeconomic conditions. It takes the approach that the Island Fijian socioeconomic system consists of two sides --reciprocity and commodity-- and focuses on the interplay between these sides. With reference to direct observations and field based materials from various parts of Fiji, the thesis examines recent changes in the processes of socioeconomic life in Fiji. It is observed that Island Fijians are using commodities and money to fulfil reciprocity requirements, converting commodities and money into gifts, using the reciprocity side for commodity production.

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GLOSSARY

bulubulu	atonement.
dalo	root crop.
galala	Island Fijian exempted from obligatory participation in the yavusa group organization.
ibe	mat.
i tokatoka	the extended family; a sub-division of the mataqali .
i yau	wealth.
kerekere	a kinship based request for goods and/or labour.
komiti ni koro	village committee.
koro	village.
lala	chiefly leadership request for labour.
magiti	feast.
masi	bark cloth made from mulberry plants.
mata	an ambassador or envoy.
matanitu	the largest political configuration in Island Fijian society, often considered a state.
mataqali	social grouping; the mataqali are the principal landholding unit in Island Fijian society; the mataqali are comprised of several i tokatoka .
mataqali bati	descent group of warriors.
mataqali bete	descent group of priests.
mataqali matanivanua	spokesmen of the chiefs.

mataqali sauturaga	executives of the chiefs.
mataqali turaga	chiefs.
oga	ceremonial preparation.
ratu	prefix attached to a male name.
solevu	ceremonial exchange.
tabua	whale's tooth; the most prestigious object of ceremonial exchange.
taukei	the owners of the land.
tevutevu	a ceremonial laying of mats at a wedding.
tikina	an administrative sub-unit of a province.
tukutuku	formal notification of an coming event.
vakacabori	ceremonial offering.
vakamu	marriage.
vakamama	drying ceremony.
vakavanua	in accordance to the way of the land or custom.
vanua	(1) land; (2) a confederation of yavusa united under a common chief.
veidrotaki	elopement.
veiqaravi vakavanua	ceremonial presentation.
yaqona	drink made from the root of Piper methysticum .
yavusa	a federation whose members claim to be descended from a common ancestor; usually a yavusa is comprised of several mataqali .

ORTHOGRAPHY

b is pronounced as **mb** in number
c is pronounced as **th** in that
d is pronounced as **nd** in end
g is pronounced as **ng** in singer
q is pronounced as **ng** in finger

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Na sala vakavanua, na sala vakailavo, that is, 'the Fijian way of life, the money way of life' is a phrase used to distinguish between two sides of Fijian life. This study takes a new approach and offers alternative propositions to explain the interconnection and interplay between the Fijian way of life and the money way of life. The opening chapter establishes the problem; provides the analytical framework, concepts and definitions needed to tackle the problem; and outlines the specific proposition and the arguments explored in the study.

A. The Fijian Problem

Social analysts have been studying socioeconomic conditions in Fiji for several decades. An early and authoritative work that focused on Fijian socioeconomic conditions was O. H. K. Spate's study *The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects*, commonly called The Spate Report (1959).¹ The object of the Spate Report was:

¹O. H. K. Spate, *The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects* (Suva: Government Press, 1959).

Other early and noted studies dealing with socioeconomic conditions in Fiji were: W. E. H. Stanner, (1953), *The South*

To assemble and assess such data as can be obtained on the economic activity of Fijian producers, with special attention to the effects of their social organisation on the activity; . . . To consider how far the Fijians' social organisation may be a limiting factor in their economic activity, and to suggest in what ways changes in that organisation might be desirable.²

Spate identified the Fijian problem as an apparent conflict between the "traditional 'communal' system" and the "modern economy."³ Spate and other observers have considered the solution to this perceived problem to be a shift from communal-based subsistence agricultural production toward individual-based commercial agricultural production.⁴ Spate's argument was that the persistence of "traditional" obligations which are understood in the Fijian terms of **kerekere**, **lala**, and **solevu**, limited Island Fijian involvement in the "modern

Seas in Transition, A Study of Post-War Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Three British Pacific Dependencies (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1982); Sir Alan Burns, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Natural Resources and Population Trend of the Colony of Fiji, 1959* (Suva: Government Printers, Council Paper No. 1 of 1960); C. S. Belshaw, *Under the Ivi Tree* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964); and R. F. Watters, *Koro, Economic Development and Social Change in Fiji* (London: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969).

²Spate, 1959, p. 1.

³Spate, 1959, p. 5.

Such terms as "tradition" and "modern" are utilized just here to remain consistent with the terminology employed by Spate and many other early observers. In point of fact, Island Fijian "traditions" can more appropriately be considered "neo-traditions" as they combine elements of indigenous and colonial systems.

⁴Spate, 1959, p. 5.

economy" and resulted in low economic productivity.⁵ The increased involvement of Island Fijians in the "modern economy" would bring about higher economic productivity.⁶

Twenty-five years after the publication of the Spate Report, Island Fijian geographer Isireli Lasaga noted:

the Fijian is far from holding a commanding position in the commercial economy of Fiji. . . . the fact that he is beginning to enter in a significant way in some sectors of the commercial economy of Fiji indicates that something can be done and is being done to bring him into the mainstream of the country's commercial life. To succeed will require not only his individual and collective will: . . . in some situations it will demand, some internal adjustment of his social relationships so that the needs of economic and commercial progress are not lost sight of; . . .⁷

Lasaga wrote that, as Island Fijians are involved in the commercial economy, they must "conform to the rules of commerce", which requires "some internal adjustment of his social relationships."⁸ The view that "traditions" prevent wider participation of Island Fijians in the "modern economy" persists.

The most serious drawback of the perspectives of these studies is that they view the understanding of the Fijian socioeconomic condition within a simple dualistic framework.

⁵Spate, 1959, p. 22.

⁶In order to reflect their Oceanic heritage Fijians are referred to as Island Fijians.

⁷Isireli Lasaga, *The Fijian People: Before and After Independence* (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1984), p. 139.

⁸Lasaga, p. 139.

Island Fijian society is studied in non-capitalist/capitalist, rural/urban, traditional/modern, and Islander/non-Islander terms.⁹ The texts are abundant in terminology and distinctions which reveal these approaches. For example, New Zealand geographer and noted observer of Fiji, R. F. Watters writes:

The enterprise of the Europeans, who with the Indians form the capitalistic or commercialized side of the modern dual economy, has been constantly checked by Government action. . . . A classic form of 'Dual Society' thus came into being. The formidable problems of dualism today underlie almost every other major problem. In this chapter we shall consider the historical development of Fijian society, which is closely bound up with the processes underlying the evolution of the traditional sector --processes

⁹Other social analysts write of "three Fijis" or "four Fijis." The "three Fijis" and "four Fijis" contain elements of the dichotomous tradition-modern framework. An example of note comes from Douglas Oliver (1951), *The Pacific Islands, Second Edition* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1961), p. 294 writes:

"By 1939 there were, then, four Fijis. There was the Fiji of sugar: large, highly rationalized plantations and mills, producing wealth for its white owners and managers and subsistence for its Indian workers, and leaving in its train the basic conflict between Fijian and Indian which dominated political and economic activity in the two main islands. Then there was the Fiji of copra: dependent for its continuation upon price factors completely outside local control. Third, there was the Fiji of gold: highly profitable to its owners and rich in revenue for the government, but limited in area, in longevity, and in influence upon the course of local events. Last, there was the Fiji of the Lau Islanders: "Tonganized," and tamed somewhat by Christianity, but far enough away from the big islands to escape all but the faintest repercussions of the caste warfare which went on there."

which prevent its conquest by and incorporation in the modern capitalist sector.¹⁰

While works using dichotomies such as traditional/modern and underdeveloped/developed¹¹ seem to enable the observer to account for social conditions such as poverty, this type of scheme presents an inadequate view of the complexity of Fijian society. A dominant feature of these dualistic approaches is the predisposition for examining how Islanders participate in the "traditional 'communal' system" and the "modern economy" respectively, while scant attention is paid to the complex relationship between the two. This creates at least three problems for the study of Fiji.

First, social analysts guided by the traditional/modern dichotomy argue that Island Fijian society is traditional and should move to become modern. It is thought that the transition from a traditional society to a modern society involves the introduction of such elements as individual land tenure and organized markets. Those guided by underdevelopment\development approaches hold that the onset of capitalistic relations served to integrate Fiji with the global economy. This is viewed as a dialectical process that

¹⁰Watters, pp. 25, 26.

¹¹A detailed discussion of dependency theory with a characteristic dichotomy of development/underdevelopment and its application to Fiji is beyond the scope of this study; however, since the dependency approaches are viewed here as one type of critique and alternative to the traditional/modern dichotomy it will, in the context of representing another example of a dualistic theory, be discussed.

results in the underdevelopment of Fiji.¹² Second, dualistic approaches tend to force the data into the framework. This results in the reification of the original theory, rather than the formulation and empirical testing of propositions on the nature of the relations between the sub-systems. Furthermore and more importantly, two-part frameworks are predicated on the assumption that the "modern economy" and the "traditional 'communal' system" are separate and distinct from one another. This assumption severely limits recognition of the important interconnection between the two sub-systems.

These and other problems with dualistic approaches have been recognized by some writers, and methods to overcome these problems have been developed. Geographer John Overton notes:

dualist frameworks, not just of spatial differentiation but of the social and economic structures (such as communal/individual or traditional/modern), are no longer appropriate as a basis for study. New research must proceed on a more sound understanding of the complexity of Fijian society, economics and political organization and reject such inappropriate and facile assumptions.¹³

New studies must proceed on a theoretical foundation that

¹²Jay Narayan, *The Political Economy of Fiji* (Suva: South Pacific Review Press, 1984).

This study applies a variation of dependency theory to Fiji. Dependency approaches hold that through the expansion of capitalism undeveloped states became underdeveloped.

¹³John Overton, *Land and differentiation in rural Fiji* (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, The Research School of Pacific Studies, Australia National University Press, 1989), p. 131.

generates propositions which focus on elucidating and understanding the complexities of Island Fijian society. These propositions must be substantiated by evidence gathered at a local level.

I spent May of 1990 in Fiji. One morning I was in the sitting room of a home over-looking Laucala Bay in Suva speaking with an Island Fijian. "What can you tell me about the Fijian economy?" I asked. Without hesitation and emphatically, she replied, "Fijians do not want money, Indians want money." Her reply seemed contradictory.¹⁴ She was living in Suva, working for wage-labour, and regularly travelling to her home village for ceremonies, and remitting cash and goods to village kinsmen. Daily I observed Island Fijians driving the buses that serviced Viti Levu, teaching in schools, selling garden produce in the town markets, clerking

¹⁴R. R. Nayacakalou, *Tradition and Change in the Fijian Village* (Suva: South Pacific Social Sciences Association in Association with their Institute of Pacific Studies, 1978), p. 40.

Nayacakalou noting a common view of many Island Fijians toward money quoted a common Island Fijian response: "We are not Indians or Europeans to demand a price for everything we give; we are all relatives, and we look after each other...Even if we are poor, we share what we have, for we all are in need sometimes."

This view was a concern for many observers of Fiji. Watters (page 10) noted "[the] problem of low Fijian productivity lies at the root of almost all of the Colony's basic problems" and E. K. Fisk, *The Political Economy of Independent Fiji* (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1970), page 3 wrote "The affluence and leisurely quality of the Fijian village life has been eroded, but it still exists and influences the attitudes and motivation of almost every Fijian"

in the stores, toiling in restaurants, hotels and night clubs, and working in government offices. It became apparent that "traditional" and "modern" forms coexisted, that Island Fijians were involved in both types of relationships, and that certain elements of the "modern economy" and "traditional 'communal' system" sub-systems were changing. As the "modern economy" expands, the "traditional 'communal' system" as a whole does not diminish --it persists in reinvented forms. Overton's call for a new focus, combined with my field observations, suggests that the more pressing problem is to understand the ways in which Island Fijians combine the Fijian way of life and the money way of life and determine the nature of socioeconomic conditions at the local level.

B. Theory, Concepts and Definitions

I. Theory

To tackle this problem it is valuable to look at studies conducted elsewhere in the Pacific, especially C. A. Gregory's work *Gifts and Commodities* on neighbouring Papua New Guinea. The objective of Gregory's study was "to provide a critique of neoclassical economic development theory by presenting a constructive alternative that builds on the theoretical work of Marx, Sraffa, Lévi-Strauss and others, and on the empirical work of anthropologists who have worked in PNG and

elsewhere."¹⁵ As a point of departure Gregory began:

The impact of colonisation on the indigenous economy of PNG presents the analyst with something of a paradox. This is because the indigenous economy has not died out with the advent of political and economic development, but has "effloresced". . . . This runs counter to both the descriptive and prescriptive propositions of neoclassical development theory and it calls into question the descriptive and explanatory adequacy of the theory, to say nothing of the relevance and implications of its policy recommendation.¹⁶

Gregory calls for the development of a framework to overcome the shortcomings of existing theory. Gregory argues a new theory must focus on the following issues:

First, there is a need to develop a general conceptual framework within which a distinction between capitalist and non-capitalist economies can be made. Secondly, a set of concepts for describing the basic features of the indigenous economy of PNG, as well as a system for classifying the different types of indigenous economic systems, is required. Thirdly, these concepts must be able to generate propositions to account for the historical and anthropological data on the impact of colonisation on PNG and in particular, the efflorescence of the indigenous economy.¹⁷

Gregory's work provides a synthesis of the political economy and anthropological approaches, and draws on the political economy works of Quesnay,¹⁸ Marx,¹⁹ Ricardo,²⁰ and Sraffa,²¹

¹⁵C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982), p. 1.

¹⁶Gregory, 1982, p. 4.

¹⁷Gregory, 1982, p. 6.

¹⁸François Quesnay, (1759) "Tableau Economique," in *The Economics of Physiocracy, Essays and Translations* by Ronald L. Meek, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962).

and the anthropological studies of Morgan,²² Mauss,²³ Lévi-Strauss,²⁴ and Sahlins²⁵. Gregory calls for the formulation of a theoretical framework which will identify (1) the distinctions between what Gregory terms the capitalist and non-capitalist sides of an economy and (2) the concepts necessary to describe "non-capitalist" economies.

Although Gregory's work is on Papua New Guinea, it has theoretical implications that extend to many socioeconomic systems in which indigenous and introduced sub-systems interconnect. As such Gregory's analysis is important for several reasons. First, it demonstrates that the introduction

¹⁹Karl Marx, (1867) *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* Translated by Jack Cohen with an introduction by Eric J. Hobsbawm, (New York: International Publishers, 1975); and Karl Marx, (1867) *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: The Modern Library, 1906).

²⁰David. Ricardo, (1817) *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, Volume I of The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo* edited by P. Sraffa, with the collaboration of M. H. Dobb. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951).

²¹Piero Sraffa, *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities, Prelude to a Critique of Economic Theory* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960).

²²L. H. Morgan, (1877) *Ancient Society* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1963).

²³Marcel Mauss, (1925) *The Gift, Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967).

²⁴Claude Lévi-Strauss, (1949) *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Revised edition translated by James Harle bell and John Von Strumer, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969).

²⁵Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1972).

of the commodity sub-system has not dissolved the reciprocity sub-system. Spate's proposition that a conflict exists between the "traditional 'communal' system" and the "modern economy" can be questioned and must be tested. Second, it shows that social relations play a central role in economic transactions. The evidence demonstrates that Papua New Guineans are motivated by the accumulation and distribution of social wealth, not economic wealth.²⁶ Third, it shows that Papua New Guinea does have a history that is formed by local conditions. Although it is true that non-Islanders have played a significant role in the shaping of PNG's history the people of PNG have contributed to a much greater extent than recognized.

The proposition that emerges from Gregory's analysis is that the reciprocity and commodity sides interconnect so that people can use the wealth obtained from the commodity sub-system in the reciprocity sub-system.²⁷ This capacity for the transfer of wealth has in Gregory's view resulted in an

²⁶A fundamental difference between social and economic wealth can be captured by noting that social wealth is measured in terms of socially defined social and political prestige of people, while economic wealth is measured in terms of money and prices of commodities.

²⁷It is necessary to be aware that Gregory's study focuses on ceremonial forms of exchange and does not include an analysis of other forms of exchange such as those occurring on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, Gregory does not fully investigate the influence reciprocity relations have on the commodity side of Papua New Guinean life.

'efflorescence' of the reciprocity sub-system.²⁸

II. Concepts and Definitions

"Economics," wrote Gregory and Altman, "is a mode of analysis concerned with ideas about the economy," while an economy, "is a mode of living; it describes how people organize production, consumption and circulation of wealth in order to reproduce themselves."²⁹ The objective here is to develop abstract theoretical concepts and definitions from the study of economics and anthropology, and use them to understand empirical data from Fiji.

The Island Fijian socioeconomic system may be conceptualized as having two sides. One side is derived from the indigenous system, which will be called the reciprocity sub-system, in which things produced, exchanged and consumed will be referred to as gifts. The other side is introduced, and is termed the commodity sub-system, in which the things produced, exchanged and consumed will be called commodities.

From a conceptual perspective, a socioeconomic system has three interrelated components: production, which consists of

²⁸Gregory borrows the term "effloresce" from A. J. Strathern and argues (page 166), "*The gift economy of PNG has not been destroyed by colonisation, but has effloresced. This is reflected in a tendency for European commodities to be transformed into gifts.*"

²⁹C. A. Gregory and J. C. Altman, *Observing the Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 3.

inputs and outputs; circulation, which is made up of economic activities, categories of exchange, forms of exchange and forms of personal relationships; and consumption, which is the final use of things produced by people and since it generates the demand for reproduction it is the beginning of the socioeconomic process.³⁰ From this starting definition, let us consider further what we mean by an 'economy' in terms of late 20th century Fiji.

The outputs of socioeconomic systems are shaped and influenced by factors of production --environment (physical environment, production systems, and tenure), labour, and technology. The type and presence of these factors of production will vary from society to society. Collectively these factors form a system of production.³¹

The physical environmental factors of production also vary from society to society. Societies are endowed with different types, quantities and qualities of soil, vegetation, fauna, and water, and different climatic conditions.³² The ability of a society to exploit the physical environment, then, is set in part by the physical environment itself.

The system of tenure for holding land and things and the right to land, labour and things differs from one society to

³⁰Gregory and Altman, 1989.

³¹Gregory and Altman, 1989, p. 69.

³²Gregory and Altman, 1989, p. 61.

another.³³ In a reciprocity sub-system such as that found in Island Fijian society, land is usually held in common by the **mataqali** descent group.³⁴ Land-use rights are determined and allocated by the leadership of the **mataqali**. Land always remains within the jurisdiction of a **mataqali** and is inalienable.³⁵ Conversely, in the commodity sub-system the land is owned by individuals or corporations. Land use rights

³³Gregory and Altman, 1989, p. 80.

³⁴Peter France, *The Charter of the Land* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 173.

³⁵Through a series of legislative acts Fijian governments have ensured that land deemed "native land" cannot be alienated without the consent of Island Fijian political leadership. In brief these legislative acts are (1) Native Land Ordinance Act, 1880; (2) Native Lands Act, 1905; (3) Native Land Trust Act, 1940; (4) Crown Lands Act, 1946; (5) Land Transfer Act, 1971; (6) Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act, 1966 and 1971.

Additionally, under the 1970 Constitution this policy was reaffirmed. As D. T. Lloyd, *Land Policy in Fiji* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1982), p. 317 has correctly noted: "Provision has been made for all matters affecting Fijian owned land to be classified as "reserve subjects" and no policy decisions or legislative measures affecting this land is valid without the approval of a majority of Fijian representatives in the Senate."

Although the 1970 Constitution was abolished following the coups of 1987, the Constitution of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Fiji (adopted July 1990) has not, in any substantive way altered land tenure. The introduction to the Constitution (no page number) states the government will reaffirm: "that the indigenous people of Fiji are endowed with their lands and other resources and the right to govern themselves for their advancement and welfare." The composition of Parliament ensures Island Fijian will have more representation than any other group. Thus, Island Fijians have majority control over the introduction and passage of legislation.

are determined and allocated by individuals. Land is generally alienable and may be bought and sold.

Labour, wrote Marx, is "a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and nature."³⁶ Labour is the means through which people interrelate with the environment (physical environment, technology and tenure) to make gifts and commodities.³⁷ It is the process that transforms inputs to outputs. People expend labour (whether with a tractor and cultivator or a digging stick) clearing and tilling land and planting crops. Labour time and division depend on the level of technology available and the adaptability of technology to existing social conditions.

In a reciprocity sub-system, labour is inalienable, meaning that labour, like land and things, is subject to the general principles of reciprocity. Labour use rights are held by the group or an individual. Labour is not separated from the output, and the output assumes the personified form of a gift. In contrast, labour in a commodity sub-system is alienable.³⁸ Labour use rights are bought and sold. The labour is separated from the output and the output takes the

³⁶Marx, Capital, p. 197.

³⁷Gregory and Altman, 1989, p. 94.

³⁸Marx, Capital, p. 558.

objectified form of a commodity.³⁹

Circulation is the process through which production and consumption are arbitrated.⁴⁰ It is the process through which productive inputs and outputs are exchanged within society and distributed to society. The scope, degree and method of circulation is determined by the types of economic activities, categories of exchange, forms of exchange and forms of personal relationships present in a socioeconomic system.

A social analyst concerned with exchange and distribution in a reciprocity sub-system was Marcel Mauss. An objective of Mauss's study, *The Gift, Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, was to overcome the prevailing assumption that reciprocity-type economies were predicated on subsistence production and ignored the principle of exchange and distribution. Mauss explains:

We have repeatedly pointed out how this economy of gift-exchange fails to conform to the principles of so-called natural economy or utilitarianism.⁴¹

Mauss argued that exchange and distribution within and between groups were fundamental to early economies and were governed by social imperatives. Lévi-Strauss advanced this position by arguing that:

In primitive thought there is clearly something

³⁹Gregory, 1982, p. 41.

⁴⁰Gregory and Altman, 1989, p. 198.

⁴¹Mauss, p. 69.

else in what we call a 'commodity' that makes it profitable to its owner or its trader. Goods are not only economic commodities but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion; and the skilful game of exchange . . . consists in a complex totality of conscious or unconscious manoeuvres in order to gain security and to guard oneself against risks brought about by alliances and by rivalries.⁴²

In a reciprocity sub-system forms of prestation exist. People proffer gifts under socially prescribed conditions, while people accept gifts according to socially prescribed etiquette. In a commodity sub-system markets are the mechanism through which commodities circulate.⁴³ In simple terms, people sell commodities for a set or negotiated price, and people buy commodities and labour with money or credit. The central difference between circulation through markets and circulation through prestation is brought into perspective by Gregory:

Commodity exchange relations are objective relations of equality established by the exchange of alienated objects between independent transactors. Gift exchange relations are personal relations of rank, established by the exchange of inalienable objects between transactors who are related. This distinction comes about because in a class-based commodity economy the methods of production predominate, while in a clan-based gift economy the methods of consumption predominate. In other words, commodity exchange relations are to be explained with reference to the methods of

⁴²Lévi-Strauss, p. 54.

⁴³For a discussion of markets see: F. M. Scherer, "Market Structure," in *The New Palgrave, A Dictionary of Economics, Volume 3 (K to P)* edited by John Eatwell, Murray Milgate, and Peter Newman, (London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1987), pp. 342 - 345.

production, while gift exchange relations are to be explained with reference to the methods of consumption.⁴⁴

The circulation of gifts in a reciprocity sub-system is qualitative in the sense of being defined by the social relationships between people. "If gifts make friends, friends make gifts," wrote Sahlins.⁴⁵ Things have the personified form of gifts and are inalienable from the holder. Conversely, the exchange of commodities in a commodity sub-system is quantitative. The transaction centres on the relationship between the measured value of the commodities themselves. Commodities hold the objectified form of a commodity and are alienable from the holder. The social relations between transactors in a reciprocity sub-system are inalienable, while the social relations between transactors in a commodity sub-system are alienable. Exchange, then, has a social function more than a narrow economic one.

C. Proposition and Arguments

Although Spate's prediction that "traditions" limit the involvement of Island Fijians in the "modern" economy is supported by the statements of Island Fijians, it is

⁴⁴Gregory, 1982, p. 71.

It is my opinion that this is not the case in Fiji. As will be shown in Chapter 3 the data indicates that the process of circulation is more important than the process of consumption.

⁴⁵Sahlins, 1972, 188.

challenged by my own observations, and by the theoretical approach called for by Overton and developed by Gregory. Gregory's theoretical work provides an alternative to Spate's approach. The Fijian problem revisited is to determine and explain the relationships that exist between the reciprocity and the commodity components of the broader socioeconomic system. By examining the Island Fijian socioeconomic components as part of a much larger socioeconomic system, it is possible to examine Island Fijian society as an interconnected whole. Empirical verification in an unstructured framework is required.

The following proposition sets out the approach developed in consideration of these observations.

The Island Fijian socioeconomic system features a combination of the commodity and reciprocity sides. Contrary to some writers, the continuation of the reciprocity sub-system does not prevent commodity development as such, and sometimes, may stimulate commodity activity as people seek to use commodity wealth in their contributions to the reciprocity sub-system.

Some specific points of argument that will be tested in support of the main theme are:

- A. Commodities and money are used to fund group projects.
- B. Commodities and money are use to satisfy kinship obligations.
- C. Commodities and money are converted into gifts.

The chapters that follow examine these points of argument in terms of observations made on the local level.

CHAPTER 2
SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

"History," wrote E. H. Carr, "is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past."¹

How can we understand Fiji's present through Fiji's past? The socioeconomic history of Fiji can well be understood by considering it in several phases in terms of (1) the organization of Fijian society and the reciprocity sub-system, and (2) the forms of commodity production and system of land tenure and labour relations that were introduced. An examination of these phases will provide the necessary historical background for the discussion in Chapter 3 which focuses on the relations between the indigenous reciprocity sub-system and the introduced commodity sub-system. The objective here is not to engage in an exhaustive discussion of society and economy, but rather, through selective examples which will demonstrate how Fiji's present can be understood through the past, to provide the reader with an orientation to the socioeconomic history of Fiji.

¹E. H. Carr. *What is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 35.

A. Society

Fiji is an archipelago located between latitudes 15° and 22° South of the equator and longitudes 177° West to 175° East. East to West it spans more than 1,000 kilometres and encompasses some 400 islands with a land mass totalling 18,434 square kilometres. The two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, account for 90 per cent of the total land area.² The islands are geographically diverse and consist of a mix of high continental volcanic islands and low coral limestone formations. The volcanic islands are the largest, most fertile in the group and are highly populated; while the coral atolls are the smallest and least fertile, and are less populated.

Although the Fiji group was first sighted by Abel Tasman in 1643, contact with Island Fijians did not take place until 1774. In that year Captain James Cook spent an extended period of time in the Tongan Islands. While in Tonga, Cook met a Fijian who informed him of the Fiji Islands.³ William Bligh, midshipman to Captain Cook, subsequently sighted and charted the Fiji group in voyages of 1789 and 1792.⁴ For the next several decades contact with the Fiji group was made by

²Christopher Browne and Douglas A. Scott, *Economic Development in Seven Pacific Island Communities* (Washington, D. C.: International Monetary Fund, 1989), p. 33.

³Ida Lee, *Captain Bligh's Second Voyage to the South Sea* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1920), pp. 141, 142.

⁴Deryck Scarr, *Fiji: A Short History* (Honolulu: The Institute of Polynesian Studies, 1984), p. 9.

castaways and beachcombers, *bêche-de-mer* and sandalwood traders, and labour recruiters. By the 1820s traders, beachcombers and missionaries began establishing residences on Fijian soil.⁵

The society they encountered had and has today three main hierarchical levels: the **yavusa** (a regional federation), the **mataqali** (loosely glossed as a clan), and the **i tokatoka** (or local extended family).⁶ The leaders of the **yavusa** and the **mataqali** hold chiefly rank, and make up the Island Fijian chiefly leadership. The **yavusa** group organization is sustained by the reciprocity sub-system and reciprocity relations are part of the flow of the **yavusa** group life. The relationship between the **yavusa** group organization and the reciprocity sub-system is a mutually reinforcing one. For

⁵France, pp. 20, 24, 28, 29, 36, 37.

⁶There are two other political, social and economic levels in Island Fijian society --the **matanitu** and the **vanua**. Briefly, a **matanitu** is the largest political configuration in Island Fijian society and is often thought to be a state, while a **vanua** is a confederation of several **yavusa**.

There are regional variations in the principles of kinship and descent on which these groups are organized; most notably, agnatic descent prevails. However, in Macuata descent is reckoned matrilineal. See Buell Quain, *Fijian Village* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948; G. K. Roth, *Fijian Way of Life* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1953).

Roth (page 72) noted "Even in the old family groups a person was regarded as the rightful member of his father's social unit. In other words descent was patrilineal, except in the confederation of Mathuata [Macuata] on Vanua Levu island: in Mathuata [Macuata] and nowhere else in Fiji it was matrilineal."

example, the **yavusa** group is responsible for the organization of exchange transactions such as **lala** and **solevu**. Additionally, the **mataqali** group is charged with the distribution of land --a key factor of production. Island Fijians obtain the use of land by proffering a gift to the chiefly leadership and maintain the use of land through the presentation of first fruits. Thus, tenurial arrangements are tied to the reciprocity sub-system.

The **yavusa** is a federation whose members claim to be descended from a common ancestor. Before European contact the primary function of the **yavusa** was to provide security for its membership during periods of warfare. The gradual onset of peace limited the responsibilities of the **yavusa** to the organization of labour for tasks such as the construction of village buildings.

The next widest social grouping is the **mataqali**. Five types of **mataqali** that collectively form the polity of a **yavusa** are: chiefs (**mataqali turaga**), executives of the chiefs (**mataqali sauturaga**), spokesmen of the chiefs (**mataqali matanivanua**), priests (**mataqali bete**), and warriors (**mataqali bati**).⁷ The **mataqali** is the principal land-holding unit and as such is tied to the reciprocity sub-system through **solevu** such as "first fruits." **Mataqali** leaders are responsible for

⁷W. R. Geddes, "Fijian Social Structure in a Period of Transition," pp. 201 - 220, in *Anthropology in the South Seas, Essays presented to H. D. Skinner*, edited by J. D. Freeman and W. R. Geddes. (New Plymouth, New Zealand: Thomas Avery & Sons Limited, 1959), p. 206.

the distribution of land-use, and these lands are not alienable from the **mataqali** group.

Mataqali in turn consist of **i tokatoka** units which may be glossed as an extended family and is the primary production unit for village agriculture. Settlement of these groups is dispersed in villages of **i tokatoka** from several **mataqali**. The **i tokatoka** are responsible for house building and repairs, gardening and fishing, and land clearing.⁸

B. The Reciprocity Sub-system

The pre-European Fijian socioeconomic system entailed subsistence and gift production, circulation and consumption. Fijians obtained food by practicing sedentary and shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing, and gathering. Homes and village buildings were constructed by organized groups of people, while canoes, agricultural implements, house-hold wares, and weapons were crafted by groups or individuals.

The forms of circulation included requests for labour and gifts (**kerekere**) among kin and neighbours, chiefly rights to labour and gifts (**lala**), and **solevu** exchanges of various types. Exchanges that occur through these mechanisms are governed by social imperatives in terms of the relations of reciprocity. The reciprocity sub-system provides a means for

⁸R. Gerard. Ward, *Land Use and Population in Fiji: A Geographical Study* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1965), p. 486.

the "pooling and redistribution"⁹ of gifts and labour, the establishing of social and political relationships, and the sanctioning of social and political status. The exchanges that occur within the reciprocity sub-system are remembered, and people are obligated to give and receive. Conceptually, reciprocity relations are socially structured and bind the group together, and people who do not follow the spirit of reciprocity are subject to criticism and shame.¹⁰

The form of transaction known as **kerekere** is kinship-based and involves generally balanced exchange of gifts and the formation of pools of labour by kin members to help other kin members. **Kerekere** is the type of exchange that occurs on a daily or regular basis, and is initiated when a kin member needs a gift for presentation at ceremonies, for daily subsistence, or labour for the completion of a task. Kinsmen are obligated to honour the **kerekere** requests of their kin.¹¹

Another important principle termed **lala** provides the chiefly leadership with the right to obtain things and labour

⁹Sahlins, 1972, p. 188.

¹⁰C. S. Belshaw, *Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 38.

¹¹Marshall Sahlins, *Moala: Culture and Nature on a Fijian Island* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 203.

Sahlins, in writing of the transitive verb form *kerea*, notes: "...in economic contexts the general meaning of **kerea** is to solicit a good, resource, or service, or the use of a good or a resource."

from their followers to fulfil chiefly obligations.¹² The chiefly leadership can call on the membership of their **mataqali** or **yavusa** to provide labour for house building, mat making, and gardening, and to provide food and entertainment for ceremonies.¹³ The social status and prestige of the group is, in the main part, created and defined by the collective efforts of the group. Members of the group have an interest in ensuring that the gifts and the products of labour are of substantive quality and quantity. Labour circulated within the group is a form of gift and as such is subject to these rules of reciprocity.

In general, **solevu** are held to celebrate life-cycle events such as birth, naming, marriage, and death;¹⁴ to

¹²Basil Thomson, *The Fijians: A Study of the Decay of Custom* (London: William Heinemann, 1908), p. 66.

Thomson's work provided among the earliest notations of how Europeans had misunderstood Island Fijian customs. On **lala**, Thomson wrote "It was here that the first mistake was made. The chiefs' privileges were well understood; their limitations had never been studied. It was known that the chief could command the gratuitous service of his subjects, provided that he fed them while they were working for him. It was not understood that each confederation had its own system of privileges. Mr. David Wilkinson, the Native Commissioner, had a most complete knowledge of the Confederation of Mbua, and he seems somewhat hastily to have assumed that the Mbua system prevailed *mutatis mutandis* throughout the group. Nor does he appear to have clearly understood the differences between the chiefs' personal privileges and his right to impose taxation for the good of the commune." Thomson's comments are illustrative of the imposition of a colonial vision of Island Fijian custom.

¹³Roth, pp. 67, 68.

¹⁴Spate, 1959, p. 23.

forge, display and secure social, political and economic relations; and to secure land and show gratitude for the use of land. The type, quality, and quantity of the gifts circulated and the social status and prestige of those involved in the exchange provide people with a way of obtaining, maintaining, and displaying social status and prestige. Compared to **lala** and **kerekere** transactions, **solevu** exchanges have a greater social significance. Island Fijian anthropologist Asesela Ravuvu, noting the social implications of **solevu** exchanges, wrote:

Ceremonial presentation or *veiqaravi vakavanua* involves the *vakacabori* (ceremonial offering) of valued objects. It is a public and symbolic expression not only of the social ties, thoughts, feelings and attitudes between the two parties involved but it is also the means whereby new aspirations and social order are sought to be achieved. Objects which are *vakacabori* (being offered ceremonially) thus have specific intrinsic value and are considered as *i yau* (ceremonial objects of wealth).¹⁵

The **solevu** is a public exchange that expresses position, role and meaning in group life.

Kerekere in the modern era has taken on new forms. The alienation of labour and land, and different social needs such as health care and education, and the growth of urban centres have changed **kerekere**. Urban-based Island Fijians often remit goods and money to their rural-based kin, while in times of social upheaval such as the coups of 1987, rural-based Island

¹⁵Asesela Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987b), p. 233.

Fijians remitted foodstuffs to their urban-based kin.¹⁶ Despite the continuing importance of kinship obligations, the scope of **kerekere** has narrowed: commoditization and urbanization have reduced the scope of the reciprocity circle. Although the **lala** pooling of labour is supposed to be at the direction of the chiefly leadership, today a great control over labour is exercised by independent Island Fijian farmers and wage-employers.¹⁷ **Solevu** exchanges continue to occupy a prominent role in Island Fijian society. They provide Island Fijians with a means of forging, securing, and displaying social relationships. However, with the introduction of money and commodities, a new range of things are now being used as gifts.

C. The Commodity Sub-system

In order to understand the empirical data from Fiji on the introduction of the commodity sub-system to Island Fijian society, I now turn to the production and circulation of commodities using the concepts and definitions presented in the previous chapter's discussion of Gregory's theory of gifts and commodities.

In 1874, the paramount chief of the Bau confederation, Cakobau, and most of the autonomous regional chiefs signed a

¹⁶John Garrett. "Uncertain Sequel: The Social and Religious Scene in Fiji since the Coups," *The Contemporary Pacific* Volume 2 (1), 1990, p. 91.

¹⁷This is addressed more fully in Chapter 3.

Deed of Cession that ushered in 96 years of British colonial rule.¹⁸ The cession of Fiji to Britain concluded decades of regional warfare, and nominally unified the Fiji group under British colonial rule. Three features of the colonial period that are of particular significance are the policies aimed at preserving what was perceived to be the Island Fijian way of life, the expansion of the commodity sub-system, and the formation of a central government.¹⁹ Colonial policies resulted in the introduction and codification of an Island Fijian social organization and land tenure system that continues to exist late in the 20th century. The commodity sub-system caused some early alienation of land, the use of indentured labour, the introduction of money and commodities, and the further integration of Fiji into the global economy. Centralized government resulted in the imposition of a taxation system based on taxation in kind, not in money.

Nineteenth century European expansion into Fiji led to the gradual establishment of a commodity sub-system and the integration of Island Fijians into the commodity sub-system. This transition occurred in several phases. The first phase was marked by the introduction and exchange of commodities, and by the idea that labour could be used to produce commodities. The second phase was marked by the consolidation of Cakobau's power, cession of the Fiji group to Britain, and

¹⁸Lasaqa, p. 24.

¹⁹Scarr, 1984, pp. 81, 82, 83.

the establishment of central government. The third phase was distinguished by the establishment of commodity production, some alienation of Island Fijian land and labour, and the introduction of labour from India and neighbouring Pacific Island countries.²⁰ The fourth phase was characterized by the emergence of wage labour, the increasing significance of agricultural commodity production, and the growth of an urban-centred service sector.

I. **Bêche-de-mer, Sandalwood, Firearms and Implements**

The first Europeans to make prolonged contact with Island Fijians were castaways and beachcombers in the early 19th century. These men were usually shipwrecked or marooned in Fiji. The first recorded castaways were led by Oliver Slater and consisted of the crew from the ship **Argo** that was shipwrecked in the Lau group in 1800. Slater spent twenty-one months in Fiji and is credited with the discovery of sandalwood.²¹

The next group of Europeans to make contact with Island

²⁰France (page 47) notes that Europeans and Island Fijians held different views regarding land. Europeans viewed land as property that could be legally bought and sold. Thus, early Europeans exchanged commodities, money and services for land. Island Fijians, as France (page 53) wrote, ". . . thought they were parting with the 'ownership' and retaining the usufruct. The nearest concept to ownership in Fijian is the 'lewa' of the land, which means the right to control its use. . . . This was the right possessed by the chiefs and it was the lewa of the land which they transferred to Europeans."

²¹H. E. Maude. "Beachcombers and Castaways," *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* Volume 73 (3), 1964, p. 261.

Fijians were the traders: first, bêche-de-mer traders and later, overlapping with the bêche-de-mer traders, sandalwood traders.²² Early in the 19th century large quantities of bêche-de-mer were found in the water surrounding Fiji.²³ The bêche-de-mer was brought ashore, cleaned, dried, smoke-cured, and loaded for shipment to China where it was in high demand as a culinary delicacy.²⁴ The bêche-de-mer trade was important to the Island Fijian community for several reasons. First, Island Fijians obtained European commodities such as fish hooks, iron implements, and firearms in exchange for providing labour for the harvesting, processing, and loading of bêche-de-mer.²⁵ Second, iron implements reduced the amount of time required for gardening,²⁶ while firearms enabled groups to establish hegemony over others.²⁷ Third, the processing of bêche-de-mer required the construction of large

²²An important feature of this period was the uneven distribution of such goods and hence the asymmetrical advantages enjoyed by some and not by others. Also some groups became acquainted with the commodity sub-system significantly earlier and/or more intensely than others

²³R. Gerard Ward, "The Pacific Bêche-de-mer Trade with Special Reference to Fiji," in *Man in the Pacific Islands* edited by R. Gerard Ward. (London: Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 97.

²⁴Ward, 1972, p. 92, 108.

²⁵Ward, 1972, pp. 95, 107, 109.

²⁶Thomson, p. 339.

²⁷Ward, 1972, p. 109.

drying houses on Fiji's soil.²⁸

In the first decade of the 19th century large stands of sandalwood were discovered on the western side of Viti Levu, and European traders eager to supply the Chinese market began to arrive. The trade that resulted from this discovery had several effects on Island Fijian society. Visiting vessels and European residents called on Island Fijians to supply garden produce.²⁹ Europeans developed inland commercial trade networks that made commodities widely available to Island Fijians. In 1901 the purchase value of imported commodities was £91,993, or some 76 per cent of Island Fijian cash expenditures.³⁰ At the village level Island Fijians obtained commodities from merchants through trade. Frequently, merchants would provide Island Fijians with a line of credit which could be retired by the exchange of produce. In effect a portion of Island Fijian produce was drawn out of

²⁸Ward, 1972, pp. 106, 107.

²⁹Ward, 1972, p. 115.

³⁰Bruce Knapman, *Fiji's economic history, 1874 - 1939, Studies of capitalist colonial development* (Canberra: The Australian National University National Centre for Development Studies, Pacific Research Monograph Number 15, 1987), p. 36.

Knapman provides the following qualifying statement (page 36): "Drapery imports accounted for an estimated 60 per cent, meats for 15 per cent, biscuits for 8 per cent, and hardware, crockery, tea, sugar, salt, soap, kerosene etc. for 17 per cent. The indirect tax paid by Fijians on these goods was estimated at £ 12,127."

direct gift circulation to retire new forms of debt.³¹

II. Ratu Cakobau's Matanitu and Queen Victoria's Empire

Following decades of intra-Island Fijian warfare, Cakobau, chief of the Bau confederation, emerged as a powerful paramount chief. In 1871, Cakobau established a centralized government with the support of the European community. At the first session of the legislature the new government introduced a complicated land tax to be paid by Europeans.³² The scheme collapsed and no money was collected. At the next legislative session the government introduced a land tax of 10 per cent to be levied on the assessed value on uncultivated land. By 1873 some \$9,988 had been collected.³³

Two months after cession of the Fiji Islands, Lord Carnarvon, the Colonial Secretary, appointed Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon as governor of the newly created colony. On June 25, 1875 Gordon landed at Nasova and two months later assumed his responsibilities.³⁴

In a letter dated June 7, 1876 to former British Prime Minister Gladstone, Gordon complained:

³¹Deryck Scarr, *Viceroy of the Pacific, The Majesty of Colour A Life of Sir John Bates Thurston* (Canberra: The Australian National University Press, 1980), p. 29.

³²France, p. 95.

³³France, p. 95.

³⁴Paul Knaplund, "Sir Arthur Gordon and Fiji: Some Gordon-Gladstone Letters," *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* Volume Eight, 1957 - 1959, p. 286.

I have of course many serious difficulties to contend with. Of these the greater part are directly or indirectly connected with want of money. It is this want which renders us unable in many departments to pay for the services of officers of as efficient a description as I should wish them to be,--which renders it impossible to provide adequately for the administration of government in the two great islands, which reduces us to the most inconvenient straits through the difficulty of getting things printed, a difficulty which retards all our operations to frightful extent,--which obliges us to put up with very inadequate means of local communication,--to dispense altogether with local post offices,--and to refrain from commencing those public works of roads, piers, lights, &c without which no real development can be given to the Colony.--But I am determined to abide by my promise that I would ask no aid from the Imperial Treasury beyond the £100,000 originally agreed upon, and I am confident in my ability to make both ends meet and to struggle on till better times, if I am allowed tolerably free scope as my *modus operandi*.³⁵

Subsequently, Gordon outlined his proposal for dealing with the problem:

The two chief points on my policy, on which all else turns are the maintenance of a separate native code of laws, and the taxation of the natives by communities instead of individually, and in produce instead of money. The first of these measures has already received Lord Carnarvon's approval,--the second is now under his consideration.³⁶

Following the cession of Fiji, the colonial government under the tutelage of Gordon and his Auditor-General, John Bates Thurston, developed a system of taxation aimed at collecting taxes from Island Fijians. According to the Gordon - Thurston scheme the Islanders were obligated, at the direction of the

³⁵Knaplund, p. 289.

³⁶Knaplund, p. 290.

Island Fijian chiefly leadership, to cultivate a cash crop on the communal tax land. Produce was collected and sold by colonial authorities. Despite its initial successes the scheme collapsed a decade later.³⁷ Nevertheless, these attempts at imposing a system of taxation would, according to Scarr:

make Fijians producers for the market, where now they were gatherers. Currently they grew only yams, *dalo* and so forth. . . . Taxation in kind would put the colony's natural resources under control. It would stimulate the growth of new products and the utilization of plants that now grew wild.³⁸

Although the taxation system has changed over time, the principle of taxation remained and the effects have become more acute. Rather unknowingly, Island Fijians were being drawn into the commodity sub-system. Taxation in kind or money meant Island Fijians had to produce commodities to fulfil tax obligations. Thus, new economic relations were emerging as Island Fijians were separated from their produce, and produce took the objectified form of a commodity.

III. Cotton, Cane, and Copra

An objective of most colonies within the British empire

³⁷Timothy J. Macnaught, *The Fijian Colonial Experience, A study of the neotraditional order under British colonial rule prior to World War II* (Canberra: The Australian National University Pacific Research Monograph Number Seven, 1982), pp. 7, 8.

³⁸Scarr, 1980, p. 30.

was to contribute to the Imperial treasury.³⁹ As a stimulus to the development of tax revenue in the colony the British administration actively promoted new commodity production. Commodity production would provide the colony with a tax base. Consequently, British expatriates living in the colony sought to exploit Fijian resources for the financial betterment of the individual if not the empire. This led to the introduction of an of an agriculturally-based commodity sector. Several lasting features of the agricultural economy were the introduction of capital and wage-labour, the alienation of land and labour, and the organization of transportation networks and markets.

British colonial policy defined a land tenure system under which the **mataqali** social group became the principal land holder. This policy created an orthodoxy described by France as follows:

The land tenure system which exists in Fiji today evolved from the varied administrative decisions of a colonial government; it has been adopted as a protective device into the Fijian ethos. It has come to be regarded as immemorial tradition. For the strength of the tradition depends less on its historical accuracy than on its social significance. And the tradition which is held to enshrine the ancient land rights of Fijians is a

³⁹A feature of imperial policy was the expectation that colonial administrators should attempt to make their territories self-financing. Thus Gordon was under pressure to stimulate investment and development. This has implications in terms of the commoditization of Island Fijian society.

powerfully cohesive force in Fijian society.⁴⁰

Island Fijians obtained the use of land from **mataqali** leaders and were obligated to participate in group affairs. Thus, this policy served to render land inalienable from kinship and chiefly rights and provide the chiefly leadership with a strong political and economic base. Before the establishment of large scale commercial agricultural production such as sugar cane, copra and cotton, most Island Fijians were engaged in **i tokatoka**-based subsistence agricultural production. Groups or individual Island Fijians cleared, tilled, planted and harvested the land allocated to them. Agricultural produce was grown for sustenance, presentation to the chiefly leadership for the use of land, to secure political, social, economic, and military security offered by the **mataqali** and **yavusa**, and as trade goods required to obtain household wares, agricultural implements, weapons, foodstuffs, and sailing canoes.⁴¹ Late in the 20th century, few if any Island Fijians are engaged solely in **i tokatoka**-based subsistence agricultural production.⁴²

In the mid-19th century, European planters began arriving

⁴⁰France, pp. 174, 175.

This is illustrative of the elasticity of tradition.

⁴¹Thomson, pp. 280, 281, 288.

⁴²H. C. Brookfield, "Fijian Farmers Each on his Own Land," *The Journal of Pacific History* Volume 23, (1), 1988, p. 35.

Unfortunately exact statistics are unavailable.

in Fiji and large tracts of fertile land were alienated from Island Fijians and brought under plantation production. In the immediate post-session period a Land Claims Commission was formed to mediate and settle European land claims. The Commission held hearings beginning in 1875 and concluding in 1882, when freehold title was granted to Europeans over some 400,000 acres.⁴³ Although the conclusion of the Commission's work was to mark the end of the alienation of Island Fijian land, an additional 104,142 acres became freehold between the years 1905 and 1908.⁴⁴

In general, the plantation sector was constructed on Island Fijian land⁴⁵ with European capital⁴⁶ and by Indian labour.⁴⁷ This sector has changed to reflect advances in agricultural techniques and prevailing market conditions. It has produced cotton, sugar cane, copra, and bananas for the global market.

The plantation sector resulted in the creation of markets which many *i tokatoka*-based small-holder farmers and

⁴³R. Gerard Ward, "Land Use and Land Alienation in Fiji to 1885," *The Journal of Pacific History* Volume 4, 1969, p. 4.

⁴⁴Ward, 1969, p. 3.

⁴⁵Cedric Harvey, "The Changing Agricultural Economy of Fiji," *New Zealand Geographer* Volume V, 1949, p. 109.

⁴⁶Michael Moynagh, *Brown or White? A history of the Fiji sugar industry, 1873 - 1973* (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1981), p. 12.

⁴⁷Brij Lal, *Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians* (Canberra: The Journal of Pacific History, 1983), p. 6.

independent small-holder farmers or so-called **galala**, are willing to supply.⁴⁸ Although there is no exact data available on the numbers of **i tokatoka**-based small-holder farmers, current estimates place the number of independent small-holder farmers at between 20 and 25 per cent of the total number of Island Fijians engaged in agriculture.⁴⁹ The distinguishing feature of independent small-holder farmers is that they are engaged in subsistence and cash cropping on land held independently from the **yavusa** group organization. They are not legally obligated to participate in the **yavusa** group organization. In contrast, the **i tokatoka**-based farmers practice subsistence and cash cropping on land allocated to them by the **mataqali**. They are socially obligated to participate in the **yavusa** affairs.⁵⁰

I tokatoka-based small-holder and independent small-holder subsistence and cash cropping have gained prominence in

⁴⁸Island Fijians could become independent of the **yavusa** group organization by paying a commutation fee and requesting permission from the chiefly leadership. Following these steps enabled Island Fijians to become exempt from reciprocity obligations.

⁴⁹John Overton, "A Fijian Peasantry: *Galala* and Villagers," *Oceania* Volume 58, 1988, 193 - 211; Brookfield, 1988, p. 15.

⁵⁰**I tokatoka** small-holder farmers are required, as a condition of their land tenurial arrangement, to participate in **yavusa** group affairs, while independent small-holder farmers are not legally required to participate in group affairs. It seems, however, that many independent small-holder farmers feel socially obligated to take part in group affairs.

the past several decades.⁵¹ Although independent small-holder farmers have been viewed by social analysts as significant departure from the *i tokatoka*-based agricultural production, Overton noted:

In most respects, they are socially and culturally integrated into village life. Economically, they are all but indistinct from their 'ordinary' non **galala** neighbors, who have proved to be just as commercially-oriented and in an economic sense individualistic.⁵²

In the 1950s the colonial government was concerned about the perceived poor economic performance of Island Fijians.

⁵¹Belshaw, 1964, p. 84.

⁵²Overton, 1988, p. 205.

Galala means "free", "independent", or "out of the village and many observers such as Spate, Belshaw, Frazer, Watters and Ward considered the **galala** a break from traditional communalism and to quote Spate (page 91) "the **galala** are the growing points of Fijian rural life." Overton notes that Island Fijians became **galala** by paying a commutation fee that exempted them from village obligations, and concludes (page 206):

Whither studies of Fijian *galala* and peasantry? It has been argued here that both the terms *galala* and peasant have some relevance to Fiji. They can illuminate certain themes, by focusing on changes in Fijian society in the colonial period or by eliciting comparisons with other groups of rural smallholders. However, it is clear that *galala* and peasant to do not mean the same, *galala* are not a Pacific manifestation of some universal and uniform world peasantry. For rural change in Fiji involves a peculiar mix of local adaptation, local custom and global economic processes. The record of recent Fijian rural change suggests that attention be focused on patterns of modification and differentiation, especially within villages, rather than on imposed resettlement schemes or on attempts to fit Fiji into what are now largely inappropriate theoretical and semantic frameworks.

Following the recommendations advanced by The Spate Report of 1959, the colonial government implemented policies aimed at providing Island Fijians with opportunities to farm land independently from the **yavusa** group organization. It was thought by many observers that the communal land tenure system and reciprocity sub-system were impediments to commodity production.

Although these policies were opposed by the politically powerful Council of Chiefs (**Bose Vakaturaga**)⁵³, in 1961 the colonial administration established the Land Development Authority (LDA). The LDA policy allowed the colonial government to provide Island Fijians with 30 year leases on land, and enabled Island Fijians to become established as independent small-holder farmers.⁵⁴ The success of the LDA was mixed. In 1965 the number of Island Fijians engaged in independent smaller-holder farm operations reached 1,000; yet, by 1966 the number of independent small-holder farmers dropped to 570.⁵⁵ Despite this fluctuation, many Island Fijians seized the opportunity presented by the LDA and adapted farming practices to fulfil the demand of national and international markets. Currently, **i tokatoka**-based small-

⁵³According to Scarr (1984, page 86) the colonial created neo-traditional Council of Chiefs was an annual meeting of Island Fijian Chiefs. At these meetings the Council dealt with Island Fijian issues.

⁵⁴Watters, p. 274.

⁵⁵Brookfield, 1988, p. 22.

holder farmers and independent small-holder farmers are engaged in the production of crops for both subsistence use and the commodity market.

At present, three general modes of agricultural production exist: (1) **i tokatoka**-based small-holder subsistence and cash crop production, (2) independent small-holder subsistence and cash crop production, and (3) plantation agricultural production.⁵⁶ Despite the changes in land use, late in the 20th century Island Fijians continue to hold the rights to most Fijian land (table 1).

Table 1 Distribution of land in Fiji, 1986

Category	Acres	Per centage of Total
Native land	3,714,000	82.16
Freehold land	368,000	8.15
Crown land	377,000	9.45
Rotuman land	11,000	0.24
Total	4,470,000	100.00

Source: Brij Lal. "Politics since independence: Continuity and change, 1970 - 1982," in *Politics in Fiji*, edited by Brij V. Lal, (Honolulu: The Institute of Polynesian Studies, University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 81.

IV. Labour, Money, and Commodities

Prior to European contact Island Fijian labour was geared toward subsistence and gift production, governed by the rules of reciprocity, and organized according to kinship and rank.

⁵⁶Douglas Yen, "Pacific Production Systems," in *South Pacific Agriculture, Choices and Constraints*, edited by R. Gerard Ward and Andrew Proctor, (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1980), p. 73.

The labour required for household subsistence was organized at the **i tokatoka** level, while the labour for communal projects was organized at the **mataqali** and **yavusa** level through **lala** and **kerekere**. As such, labour was embedded in the wider set of social relationships. European contact led to the establishment and development of wage labour which was utilized for non-group activities and new production relations where wage labour takes the objectified form of a commodity. This section focuses on the historical establishment and development of wage labour.

The American Civil War disrupted the flow of cotton from plantations based in the southern United States, forcing European manufacturers to seek other sources of cotton, and inflating the price of cotton.⁵⁷ In the late 1860s, European planters based in Fiji began to produce cotton on plantations to capitalize on the market created by the Civil War and the escalating price paid for cotton. Between 1868 and 1872 cotton was the primary export of Fiji.⁵⁸ However, the prosperity of the cotton plantation sector was short-lived. Two factors caused the collapse of the Fiji cotton sector.⁵⁹ Following the Civil War, American planters recaptured the markets they had lost, and the onset of the Franco-Prussian

⁵⁷Evelyn Stokes, "The Fiji Cotton Boom in the eighteen - sixties," *The New Zealand Journal of History* Volume 2, (2), 1968, p. 165.

⁵⁸Stokes, pp. 165, 167.

⁵⁹Stokes, p. 175.

War (1870-71) led to the disruption of the French textile industry.

In the mid 1870s, planters changed from cotton production to sugar production. In 1880 the Australian-based Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) opened operations in Fiji. A prerequisite for successful plantation operation is availability of inexpensive and plentiful labour. In the early years of the plantation sector development, labour was imported from neighbouring Pacific Islands and, more significantly, from India. Between 1879 and 1916 some 60,965 people were brought to Fiji from India through a system of indenture.⁶⁰ Over time the resulting labour pool and economic growth brought about the commoditization of labour, and created a landless economically important social group without secure land rights.

Gold was first discovered in the Navua River in 1868, and the Navisi River in 1872. However, it was not until the discovery of the **Vatukoula** field in the 1930s that gold production made a significant contribution to the economy and became a principle avenue through which Island Fijian labour became a commodity.⁶¹ The gold mining sector was owned by foreign companies and worked by Island Fijians. More importantly, however, for our purposes the transformation of

⁶⁰Lal, 1983, p. 13.

⁶¹J. S. Whitelaw, "Gold Production and the Mining Community in Fiji," *New Zealand Geographer* Volume 23, 1967, p. 7.

Island Fijian labour was limited because the colonial government was dedicated to preserving what was considered the traditional Island Fijian way of life by insulating them from wage-labour markets.

The **Vatukoula** field, located in rough terrain near Tavua, was discovered in 1935 and became the focal point of several Australian companies --the Emperor, the Loloma, and the Dolphin operations.⁶² In 1939, 1171 of 1493 people employed in the mines were Island Fijian, while in 1963, it was 962 of 1684 people.⁶³ During the ten year period beginning in 1951 and ending in 1961, gold production averaged between 71,000 ounces to 124,000 ounces per annum. Gold mining was the second leading sector in the Fijian economy.⁶⁴ Thus the Fijian economy, like that of most former colonies, was based in main part on the extraction of resources and the export of primary products. This socioeconomic system is dominated by foreign capital and imported wage-labour, and features the production, consumption and circulation of commodities. As the socioeconomic system as a whole matures, the population increases, and as technology advances, a service sector based on wage-labour develops.

In the late 20th century many Fijians (Island Fijians and Indo-Fijians) are employed as wage-labourers. Figures for the

⁶²Whitelaw, p. 3.

⁶³Whitelaw, p. 7.

⁶⁴Knapman, 1987, p. 97.

quarter ending in December of 1986 show that, of 80,842 wage labourers, only 4,063 were engaged in resource extracting sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying (table 2).⁶⁵ This constitutes 4.9 per cent of the total wage labourers, and indicates the restructuring of the Fijian economy.

Table 2 Labour per Sector

Sector	1986	Paid Labourers	Per Centage
(1) Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing		2,691	3.3
(2) Mining and quarrying		1,372	1.6
(3) Manufacturing		13,566	16.7
(4) Electricity, Gas and Water		2,358	2.9
(5) Construction		7,024	8.6
(6a) Whole & retail Trade & Restaurant		10,961	13.5
(6b) Hotels		4,546	5.6
(7) Transportation, Storage & Communication		7,766	9.6
(8) Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Business		5,457	6.7
(9) Community social and personal services		25,101	31.0
	Total	80,842	

Source: Current Economic Statistics, October 1989 (Suva: Fiji, 1989.)

Nevertheless, Fiji's commodity sector is almost wholly dependent on the global economy for markets. This makes it vulnerable to global fluctuations in commodity prices and dependent on subsidy agreements. Taylor, examining Fiji's position in the global economy and dependence on global markets and subsidized markets (especially in sugar), commented:

In effect what Fiji receives from guaranteed markets and subsidised [sugar] prices is aid with

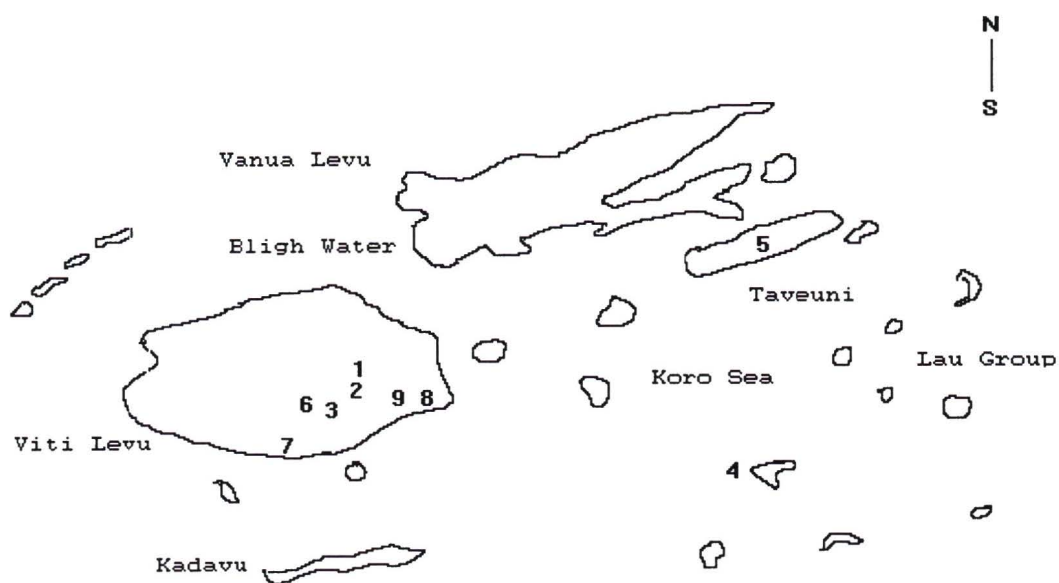
⁶⁵Current Economic Statistics, p. 74.

dignity.⁶⁶

At present, Island Fijians are involved in the commodity sub-system to varying degrees. They are involved in the production of agricultural commodities and work as wage-labourers. The following chapter will examine aspects of the connection between such commodity participation and historically-given reciprocity relations.

⁶⁶Michael Taylor, ed. *Fiji, Future Imperfect?* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 10.

Map 1: Fiji showing location of examples and observer



Free hand map, not drawn to scale

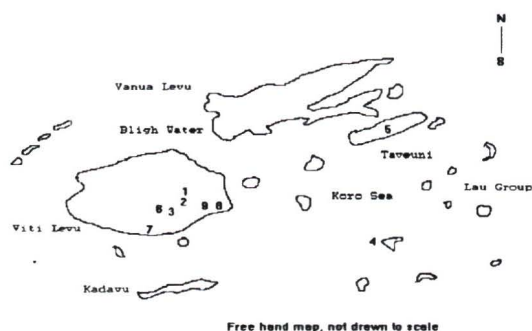
1. Nakorosule: Nayacakalou (1954); Ravuvu (1980)
2. Nairukuruku: Turner (1983)
3. Waidina Valley: Rutz (1968-70)
4. Moala Island: Sahlins (1954-55)
5. Bouma: Nair (1980)
6. Draubata: Nayacakalou (1954); Overton (1985-87)
7. Deuba: Geddes (1942-43); Barnard (1974)
8. Cautata: Ravuvu (1982)
9. Suvavou: Williksen-Bakker (1981)

CHAPTER 3
MONEY AND CUSTOM

It is possible to test the proposition outlined in Chapter 1 by providing specific examples and general statements, drawn from the literature, upon which points of comparison can be observed and analyzed. The best examples available from various locations have been selected by judgement to illustrate the range of transactions observable. These transactions demonstrate the connections between:

- (A) Commodities, Money and **Lala**.
- (B) Commodities, Money and **Kerekere**.
- (C) Commodities, Money and **Solevu**.

Map 1: Fiji showing location of examples and observer



1. Nakorosule: Nayacakalou (1954); Ravuvu (1980)
2. Nairukuruku: Turner (1983)
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4. Moala Island: Sahlins (1954-55)
5. Bouma: Nair (1980)
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7. Deuba: Geddes (1942-43); Barnard (1974)
8. Cautata: Ravuvu (1982)
9. Suvavou: Williksen Bakker (1981)

A. Commodities, Money, and Lala

Currently, independent Island Fijian farmers engaged in small-holder agricultural production on **mataqali** lands and individual lands work together with people from the **yavusa** group organization to perform many of the functions that were the sole responsibility of the **yavusa** group organization in the past. Many independent farmers organize and provide the labour required for constructing village buildings (such as churches) and for clearing land.

Observations by Brookfield on Taveuni Island, located south east of Vanua Levu, demonstrate that independent Island Fijian farmers are actively organizing labour for communal projects without direction from the **yavusa** and **mataqali** leadership.¹ An analysis by Overton of independent farmers from Waibau and Lomaivuna, located in the north-east part of Viti Levu, further supports this observation. Although people are engaged in commodity production and reside outside the village, their assistance is solicited for help to kin, and participation in **yavusa** projects.²

The examples here show how the Island Fijian chiefly leaders use **lala** rights for the solicitation of group labour and the pooling of resources. The first example from Nakorosule shows how the resources acquired from the commodity sub-system can be diverted from rural development.

¹Brookfield, 1988, p. 34.

²Overton, 1989, p. 95.

Conversely, the later examples from Nairukuruku and the Waidina Valley demonstrate how an educated chiefly leadership can utilize the commodity sub-system to enhance reciprocity activities, and how strong leadership with vision can coordinate the resources of their followers for the greater good of the village. These transactions illustrate how distribution within the reciprocity sub-system can benefit from opportunities presented by the commodity sub-system.

(1) Lala in Nakorosule Village

The village of Nakorosule, on the Wainimala River, is located in the province of Naitavasi. Between the years 1954 and 1979 it maintained a population base of approximately 250 persons.³ The main economic activities are subsistence and commodity production and wage-labour. Over the past 30 years the opportunity to earn money through commodity production and wage-labour has provided villagers with the money to satisfy the requirements created by local institutions. Frequently, these ambitions manifest themselves in the reciprocity sub-system.

In 1954, those who left the village to seek wage employment seldom remitted cash to the village; those who remained in the village grew bananas to secure a source of money; and the Island Fijian chiefly leadership was very much

³Asesela Ravuvu. *Development or Dependence* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987a), p. 88.

in control of the village.⁴ The local chief had the right and ability to draw upon his followers for labour:

I am **mata** to Nawaisomo. I am chief here, and chief there also. If there is a **tukutuku** to Naiwasomo, I am the very one to send one of our boys to take it. In that village what I say goes. I have noticed how very busy this village is, and because of this I took one **tabua** to that village and asked them to come over here and build this house.⁵

In return for the labour, the chief held **magiti** (feasts) at various stages of the construction and presented a wide variety of European and traditional gifts --pigs, cattle, **dalo**, biscuits, sugar, tea, **yaqona**, and **tabua**-- to the workers.⁶ Considered in purely economic terms, the house cost the chief more in gifts than it would have if he had hired labour.

It is the social dimension of the house building that is of primary importance to the chief and his followers. The ability of the chief to call upon his followers to engage in such a project is a way for the chief and his followers to establish and confirm their positions within the social organization.⁷ The chief is able to affirm his position as leader of the community by mobilizing labour, while the

⁴Nayacakalou, p. 89.

⁵Nayacakalou, pp. 94, 95.

⁶Nayacakalou, pp. 98, 99.

⁷Nayacakalou, pp. 98, 99, 100.

There is also a political dimension to the social organization.

members of the community are able to display their positions within the community in a public forum.

By 1987 the banana export market had collapsed and the lack of land suitable for other cash crops forced villagers to seek wage labour. Increasingly, the church was demanding a portion of monies obtained through wage-labour and commodity production. In the early 1950s, the house of the chief served as the focal point of village social, political, and economic activity, but by the late 1970s the church, as demonstrated by the following example, had emerged as a center of village activity.

On the claim that damage to crops caused by marauding animals could be stopped by constructing a new church, the village elders and church leadership dispatched a group of 40 men to work on timber projects in order to earn money for the construction of a new church.⁸ After fulfilling a portion of their contractual obligations, the labourers returned to the village with F\$1,914.00 which was given to the church.⁹ The returning men were treated to a **magiti** and presented with 20 **ibe** (mats), 3 **tabua** (whale teeth), and 3 lengths of cloth.¹⁰ This episode prompted Asesela Ravuvu to note:

It would have been very helpful to the people if the church minister had advised the chief and the people to give top priority to food production and

⁸Ravuvu, 1987a, p. 117.

⁹Ravuvu, 1987a, p. 117.

¹⁰Ravuvu, 1987a, p. 117.

the protection of gardens from stray animals. This was essential for the survival of the people and it would cost less to fence the animals or the gardens, than to build a church worth \$40,000. Instead, church supporters and officials utilised the situation to the advantage of the church itself and encouraged the people to implement a project which would provide for their advancement within the church bureaucracy.¹¹

Compared to the house construction project of 1954, the incident serves to support the proposition that commodities and money are used to fund communal projects, and also reveals societal changes within the village of Nakorosule. The chiefly leadership and church authorities now have the ability to mobilize the villagers. This evidence suggests that different social and political configurations, with differing economic consequences, have emerged.

Of special note is the point that *lala* has taken on a new form. In 1954, at the direction of the chief, a new house was constructed with local materials by his followers. While in 1979, at the direction of church leaders and village elders, members of the village raised money, as opposed to organizing labour, for the construction of a new church. This represents a variation of *lala* and illustrates an ever broadening set of social configurations at the village level.¹²

Community buildings, as a measure of prestige, are a symbol of the community. A church constructed with European materials is considered to be more prestigious than one

¹¹Ravuvu, 1987a, p. 118.

¹²Ravuvu, 1987a, p. 119.

constructed with local materials. This is illustrative of a much larger and societally significant verity. The village provides Island Fijians with a world order --a place of birth, marriage, and burial, a place in society, and a sense of belonging. In short, psychological comfort. In this example the psychological well-being of Island Fijians has been satisfied by the reciprocity activities through the **yavusa** group organization in conjunction with new commodity opportunities.

(2) Lala and Money in Nairukuruku Village

Nairukuruku is located north west of Suva, in Naitasiri province, the district of Matailobau.¹³ The community consists of approximately 250 people,¹⁴ distributed among five **mataqali**: Siko, Nabubuco, Nakorwaqa, Nakoramatusa, and Nakoruwaiwai.¹⁵ Collectively, these **mataqali** hold tenure over some 919 acres and have the use-rights to an additional 412 acres currently held by **mataqali** Nalovia (Taulevu village).¹⁶

Over the past several decades the villagers have become

¹³James West Turner. "Staying Together': Kinship and Community in Fiji," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983, abstract.

¹⁴James West Turner. "Owners of the Path': Cognatic Kinship Categories in Matailobau, Fiji," *Oceania* Volume 56, 1986, p. 294.

¹⁵Turner, 1983, pp. 34, 35, 36, 37.

¹⁶Turner, 1983, p. 35.

increasingly involved in the commodity sub-system. In the early 1950s many villagers produced bananas¹⁷; however, flooding caused many villagers to abandon the production of bananas in favour of producing taro for the growing urban markets.¹⁸ Despite nearly four decades of involvement in the commodity sub-system, Nairukuruku has retained many conventions. Land remains more important to the villagers than money. In response to the question of which is more powerful, land or money, anthropologist James W. Turner noted that most villagers considered land more powerful than money. Island Fijians argued that those wholly dependent on money do not have the security of land and therefore they are vulnerable to declining economic conditions. Also, money can be spent, but the land remains.¹⁹ In 1983, noting the nature of Nairukuruku society, Turner wrote:

In the deepest sense, the chief is the keystone of village life, for the welfare of the community depends upon the fulfillment of obligation of mutual ministrations by him and his followers. When they offer and he accepts in the context of ritual prestation, each has fulfilled their role in maintaining the well being of the community.²⁰

The availability of growing urban markets has encouraged many villagers to participate in commodity production. In

¹⁷Turner, 1983, p. 91.

¹⁸James West Turner. "A Sense of Place, Locus and Identity in Matailobau, Fiji," *Anthropos* Volume 83, 1988, p. 29.

¹⁹Turner, 1983, pp. 54, 55.

²⁰Turner, 1983, p. 32.

recognition of this growing involvement, and in keeping with the long standing government promotion of agricultural growth, the Ministry of Agriculture provided the village with a grant of F\$3,900.²¹ These funds were used to purchase eight oxen, four ploughs and harrows, 10,000 taro suckers, fertilizer and chemicals and the necessary materials to fence the gardens.²² Under the auspices of the village committee (*komiti ni koro*) each *mataqali* was to prepare a specially designated communal field for planting, weeding and harvesting taro. The produce from the communal field was to be marketed and the proceeds divided among the *mataqali* membership.

The Nairukuruku experience demonstrates how cooperative labour, at the command of a village leader, is channelled toward commodity production. Although the group labour is at the direction of a village leader, it is not for the collective well-being of the *yavusa* social group, but rather, for the well-being of the *mataqali* social group. This is significant because it supports the argument that the reciprocity circle is closing.

Whether this change in group labour is the direct result of the introduction of the commodity sub-system is difficult to ascertain. It is apparent, however, that as more Island Fijians become involved in the commodity sub-system, group labour is changing, and that in some instances it is being

²¹Turner, 1983, p. 45.

²²Turner, 1983, pp. 45, 46.

used by Island Fijians to participate in markets provided by the commodity side.

(3) Lala and Commodities in the Waidina Valley

The Waidina Valley is located in Waimaro District, south central Viti Levu. Prior to contact, Waidina Valley villagers were engaged in subsistence agricultural production growing root crops such as taro and yams. Items such as kava bowls, **tabua**, mats, and **tapa** were acquired through extensive trade networks that linked the land-locked villages in the valley with the coastal villages.²³ Waidina villagers have been engaged in the production of bananas for the commodity markets since early in the twentieth century. In the early years bananas were loaded on rafts and floated down the Waidina River.²⁴ Although villagers have been growing bananas for the commodity market since 1910, it was not until they began supplying root crops to the nearby Vatukoula gold mines and to allied forces during World War II that markets of substantive size and certainty were available to them.²⁵

Since the 1950s the barriers separating valley farmers

²³H. J. Rutz. "The Efficiency of Traditional Agriculture, Phases of Development, and Induced Economic Change in the Waidina Valley, Fiji," in *Development from Below, Anthropologists and Development Situations*, edited by David C. Pitt, The Hague and Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1976, p. 174.

²⁴Rutz, 1976, p. 181.

²⁵Henry J. Rutz. "Ceremonial Exchange and Economic Development in Village Fiji," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* Volume 26, 1978, p. 790.

from the growing and more lucrative urban markets have diminished. The construction of a major road linking the valley and Suva and the growth of tourism have created markets which many villagers in the Waidina Valley were eager to supply. But a global downturn in the banana market and a damaging hurricane in 1964 disrupted banana production. Recognizing these conditions, the colonial government introduced the Waidina Valley Scheme, a project aimed at streamlining and enhancing the production of bananas.²⁶ As Rutz observed:

The Waidina Scheme Project was an attempt by developers to apply the plantation model of agricultural production to a particular industry. Producers were not involved in the initial plan, which established village plantations on hill soils, the use of fertilizers, and the indebtedness of whole villages by being incorporated as legal cooperative organizations. . . . When the high cost of hill-site plantations and their impermanency became evident, indebtedness proved a disincentive to regular weeding and maintenance . . . Producers began to react almost immediately by moving bananas back to the river terraces, and by 1969 nearly every village had abandoned its scheme plantation at great sacrifice in initial labor costs. In early 1970 the developers abandoned the scheme by writing off the indebtedness at great capital cost and additional costs in recurrent expenditures, including the salaries of a rather large bureaucracy.²⁷

Despite the failure of the Waidina Scheme Project, the scheme did serve to further integrate villagers into the national and international economy, and in the process a new type of

²⁶Rutz, 1976, p. 183.

²⁷Rutz, 1976, p. 184.

social, political, and economic leader, aptly termed a "village broker", came to the fore.²⁸ The following example focuses on the activities of one such broker. It will show how the components of the reciprocity sub-system have survived and flourished and how elements of the commodity sub-system have taken hold and prospered.

Sete's successful career as a local politician and business leader started in the early 1950s. Following the premature conclusion of his education, Sete returned to the village and operated a successful banana export plantation with his father. The lineage earned enough money from this venture to send Sete's younger brother Seci to teachers college. Together, Sete and Seci saved enough money to educate their younger brother Sila, and as a result Sila was able to secure employment with the Fiji Prison Department. Through their efforts the lineage was able to ensure a steady cash income.²⁹

By combining Seci and Sila's financial resources with his agricultural resources Sete was able to expand the banana plantation. When the banana sector declined, Sete obtained money from Seci and Sila and secured the services of local

²⁸H. J. Rutz. "Bureaucracy and Brokerage: Fijian Villages and Public Goods," in *Middlemen and Brokers in Oceania* edited by William L. Rodman and Dorothy Ayers Counts, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1982, p. 169.

²⁹Rutz, 1982, pp. 168, 169.

villagers to seed the lands to grass.³⁰ Sete then purchased a small herd of cattle. With his two brothers living away from the village, Sete found himself in need of additional inexpensive labour. Accordingly, Sete "secured" the unpaid labour of a classificatory brother. Together they managed the herd and expanded the lineage operation to include a successful village store. In return for their labour Sete and his classificatory brother obtained goods for household consumption from the store and cattle for ceremonial purposes from the herd, while Sete provided his brothers with the necessary cattle to meet their ceremonial obligations.

By the late 1960s Sete held a number of powerful positions within the community. Sete is the eldest in his lineage and is the administrative chief of the village, and holds the positions of 'director' on the Central Cooperative Banana Marketing Association (CCBMTA), 'leader' of the rival group 'The Agency' and 'member' of the school committee.³¹ Sete occupies these positions through inheritance and accomplishments.

From his vantage point Sete controls many of the resources of his lineage and village, influences the way the resources of the CCBMTA are utilized (Sete has since quit the

³⁰Interestingly, Sete could have secured the assistance of the villagers by invoking his *lala* rights; however, he opted to provide villagers with the opportunity to obtain a source of money during a period when most required an external source of money.

³¹Rutz, 1982, pp. 166, 176.

CCBMTA and formed 'The Agency'), assists in developing the policies affecting the banana industry (through 'The Agency'), and plays a role in setting educational policy and financing for his village and two others.³² Through Sete's leadership and the allocation of lineage and village resources (money and labour), the village has a new school, an electrical generator that supplies hydro to all homes in the village, a village meeting house, cement sewage facilities, and a cement housing project.³³

Through the use of reciprocity and commodity mechanisms, Sete was able to draw together the necessary resources to realize these projects. For example, as the village administrative chief he was able to solicit, through **lala**, the labour resources of the villagers; as the leader of 'The Agency' he obtained the necessary financing from the membership to introduce these communal projects; and when the projects required skilled labour Sete was able to **kerekere** the assistance of his former "school mates".³⁴ Through astute political manoeuvring, Sete obtained assistance from a wide array of people. As Rutz observed:

In village and association meetings, Sete continually put forth new goals. Most of his persuasive ability lay in his capacity to place these goals in the context of village pride and to suggest the possibility that the village could have

³²Rutz, 1982, pp. 166, 167.

³³Rutz, 1982, p. 170.

³⁴Rutz, 1982, p. 171.

something which other villages in the valley lacked. Competitive spirit exists as a social fact in the valley . . . Sete and the other brokers, play on this and other cultural standards to get more resources out of households than would otherwise be forthcoming.³⁵

Although Sete used his position to draw on the resources of others, it is of significance to this study that he did so by communicating his desires to the chief, who in turn used **lala** to obtain those things Sete required.³⁶

This example provides a clear demonstration of how money and commodities obtained through the commodity sub-system are channelled, through the use of methods of exchange found in the reciprocity sub-system, to affect rural development.

(B) Commodities, Money, and Kerekere

In contrast to **lala** and ceremonies, **kerekere** is not accompanied by public displays. Therefore, obtaining data regarding **kerekere** is problematic because the attention of observers is not readily drawn to it. Nevertheless, this section contains valuable examples regarding the solicitation of labour and goods through **kerekere**. The examples have been selected from Moala Island, Bouma village, and Draubata village. The fourth example, Moala Island, reveals the types of commodities that are requested through **kerekere**. The fifth example, Bouma village, demonstrates that **kerekere** continues

³⁵Rutz, 1982, p. 174.

³⁶Rutz, 1982, p. 171.

to exist despite the geographical separation of its principals. The sixth example, Draubata village, shows how Island Fijians use **kerekere** to secure the labour necessary for commodity production.

In the past, **kerekere** occurred at the village level and involved the solicitation of labour for house building, land clearing, and gardening; or requests for food and gifts. Increased monetization, wage-labour, commodity markets and the availability of manufactured goods has changed the nature and scope of **kerekere**.

(4) **Kerekere and Commodities on Moala Island**

Moala Island is located 95 miles southeast of Suva, Viti Levu and covers an area of 23.98 square miles. Three Moala villages --Naroi, Keteira and Nuka-- were studied by Marshall Sahlins in 1954, this study culminating in a published work.³⁷ For our purposes, Sahlins' work is significant for his examination of **kerekere**. "Kerekere," writes Sahlins, "is not only suitable to Moalan modes of production; it tends to sustain the productive system. Kerekere provides motivation for some sectors of the population to plant intensively and 'cash in' on the status claims of generosity. Others who are inclined to be lazy are encouraged to remain so: they can never go without so long as they have relatives, and they are

³⁷Sahlins, 1962.

never without relatives."³⁸ Under the influence of the commodity sub-system **kerekere** is changing. Some of these changes will be examined in this example.

Moala is regarded as one of the most productive islands in the eastern group. As early as World War I, Moalans were actively producing copra for the commodity markets. The copra trade flourished throughout the 1920s, but declined at the onset of the world-wide depression.³⁹ Following the depression, strong prices renewed the copra sector. In the early 1950s, Moalans organized copra marketing cooperatives to improve the marketing of copra.⁴⁰ In addition to growing copra, many Moalans produce taro and yams for the commodity market. Despite involvement in the commodity sub-system, most Moalan production is still for local consumption.⁴¹

The commodity sub-system has affected Moalan society in at least three ways that are of significance to this work. First, it created a desire for the things --money and commodities-- that can only be obtained from the commodity sub-system.⁴² Second, the need for money led to the production of cash crops and wage-labour.⁴³ Third, new types

³⁸Sahlins, 1962, p. 213.

³⁹Sahlins, 1962, p. 29.

⁴⁰Sahlins, 1962, p. 353.

⁴¹Sahlins, 1962, p. 34.

⁴²Sahlins, 1962, p. 410.

⁴³Sahlins, 1962, p. 49.

of things were being acquired through **kerekere**. It is the last mentioned that is of particular interest here.

Unfortunately, there is no information available to indicate whether the frequency of **kerekere** has changed as a result of Moalan participation in the commodity sub-system. There are numerous references, however, that suggest that money, and commodities purchased with money, are being transferred through **kerekere**. It has been reported that money is used in some instances to initiate much larger requests, and there are frequent references to Island Fijians requesting such items as money, cloth and kerosene through **kerekere**.⁴⁴ For example, Sahlins reported that one Moalan used **kerekere** to obtain 4 drums of kerosene, 2 tabua, £3.00 cash, coconut oil, 2 tapa cloths, 2 shirts, and 1 jacket, while providing yams and taro through **kerekere**.⁴⁵

It is unclear from this limited evidence on Moala whether or not the reciprocity sub-system is efflorescing as a result of the commodity sub-system. It is evident, however, that commodities and money are entering the reciprocity sub-system through **kerekere**. This can be attributed to their availability and physical character.⁴⁶ The transformation of

⁴⁴Sahlins, 1962, p. 206.

⁴⁵Sahlins, 1962, p. 209.

⁴⁶Money is infinitely divisible and thus ideally suited to the graduated nature of obligations. Furthermore, money (like Fiji Bitter Beer) lasts forever and does not perish like roast pig or taro. Things such as beer are also ideal because of their divisibility and suitability to **magiti**.

this relation shows limits, however, on such points as (1) the commodity sub-system of assigning set objective values to commodities transacted through **kerekere** has not been introduced, and (2) there is no suggestion that labour required for commodity production is obtained through **kerekere**.⁴⁷ Finally, there has been a reduction in the production of subsistence crops such as taro and yams and an intensification in the production of commodities such as copra.

(5) **Kerekere and Money in Bouma Village**

The village of Bouma, located on Taveuni Island, is the birth place of Sitiveni. Sitiveni left Bouma to attend secondary school in Nausori. Following the completion of his education, Sitiveni obtained employment within the airline industry.⁴⁸

Although Sitiveni has only returned to Bouma once during a ten year period, he regularly remits money and food to his parents, contributes money to village church and school projects, and pays provincial taxes through the village.⁴⁹ At the time of his marriage, his kinsmen and fellow villagers

⁴⁷Sahlins, 1962, p. 208.

⁴⁸Shaskikant Nair. *Rural-Born Fijians and Indo-Fijians in Suva, A Study of Movements and Linkages* (Canberra: Australia National University, 1980), p. 68.

⁴⁹Nair, p. 68.

reciprocated by providing food and mats.⁵⁰

This example demonstrates that urban to rural remittances in the form of money and goods are being used to satisfy **kerekere** requests. Sitiveni has never severed his ties to the village and makes a considerable effort to maintain these ties. Remittances to kinsmen and villagers is an indication that kinship and village ties remain important despite distance and time. Remittances are one of the ways in which Island Fijians try to provide for the social welfare of other Island Fijians; therefore, the reciprocity sub-system and the **yavusa** group organization continue to provide a safety net for Island Fijians.

The migration of people from the rural areas has reduced the kin labour-pool available for rural-based activities, and has forced some Island Fijians to hire wage-labourers or **kerekere** labour from their kinsmen. Usually money required in the village is obtained through the sale of agricultural commodities; however, increasingly, money is obtained from one's urban-based wage-earning kinsmen through urban-to-rural remittances.⁵¹ It is however unclear whether or not Island Fijians consider this type of transaction **kerekere** or remittance.

Remittances may run two-ways between urban and rural kin. Following the coups of 1987, for example, many urban-based

⁵⁰Nair, p. 68.

⁵¹Nayacakalou, pp. 32 - 37.

Island Fijians experienced considerable economic displacement. Without the means to support themselves, these displaced Island Fijians were able to call upon their rural kinsmen for garden produce.⁵²

(6) Kerekere and Production in Draubata Village

Draubuta village, located in the southeastern part of Viti Levu some thirty miles northeast of Suva, was studied by Nayacakalou and Overton. In the early 1950s Nayacakalou characterized Draubuta as a "transitional economy" in which certain elements of the pre-contact socioeconomic system interconnected with some components of the introduced post-contact socioeconomic system.⁵³ In the mid 1980s Overton noted:

Money and material wealth cannot acquire or replace traditional status. Both survive and the relationships between them are important for understanding Fijian society. . . . In Draubuta, for example, the parameters of an ordered village society are complex but understood . . . This social structure and the associated social relationships (including ceremonial obligations, kerekere ect) still exist strongly, though their relations to material accumulation and cash incomes is unclear.⁵⁴

A comparison of Overton's data to Nayacakalou's data shows the population has increased from 159 persons in 1954 to

⁵²Garrett, p. 91.

⁵³Nayacakalou, p. 17.

⁵⁴Overton, 1989, pp. 86, 87.

287 persons in 1984;⁵⁵ the amount of arable land has remained at 160 hectares;⁵⁶ and the number of persons engaged in wage-labour remains at 50 per cent of the eligible population.⁵⁷ A comparative analysis of the work of Overton and Nayacakalou reveals a number of significant changes and, conversely, a number of similarities within Draubuta's society.

First, although the **mataqali** remain the principal land-holding unit, the number of independent Island Fijian farmers has increased from 4 in the early 1950s to 19 in the 1980s.⁵⁸ Second, table 3 which provides an analysis of assets, shows that the most economically active Island Fijians, the so-called **galala**, tend to use the monies accrued from commodity production for the acquisition of capital assets.

Table 3 Household Assets

Asset Category	Draubuta Villagers	Draubuta Galala
	Per centage	
(1) House, kerosene cooking and lights radio.	20	14
(2) `Luxuries'(kerosene fridge, sewing machine.	20	10
(3) Some luxuries plus some farm equipment (sprayer, plough.)	60	75
(4) Many household assets including some electrical appliances.	5	0
(5) Some electrical appliances.	0	0
(6) Electrical appliances, farm	0	5

⁵⁵Nayacakalou, p. 25; Overton, 1989, p. 134.

⁵⁶Nayacakalou, p. 20; Overton, 1989, p. 134.

⁵⁷Nayacakalou, p. 32; Overton, 1989, p. 60.

⁵⁸Nayacakalou, p. 33; Overton, 1989, p. 92.

equipment plus motor vehicle(s)

Source: John Overton. *Land and differentiation in rural Fiji* (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australia National University, 1989), p. 94.

Third, a household survey shows that (in order of perceived advantages) Island Fijians offered the following reasons for being independent Island Fijian farmers: (1) personal satisfaction/tranquillity (73.7), (2) own boss/more time/proximity (68.4), (3) fewer obligations (36.8), (4) better for raising children (31.6), and (5) higher living standards/cash (15.8).⁵⁹ But, Overton noted:

In the villages, *galala*, have daily contact and are still usually called upon to help kin or the church or to participate in village projects. They are not free from social obligations, though their burden may be lighter.⁶⁰

The stated advantages of being an independent farmer demonstrate clearly that neither a reduction of obligations, nor an increase in cash earnings are the principal factors motivating or influencing Island Fijian decision-making. While an increasing number of Island Fijian farmers are engaged in non-*yavusa* based farming operations geared toward the market sector reciprocity and cooperative labour remain significant. Overton, noting the continued significance and importance of the reciprocity sub-system, wrote:

⁵⁹Overton, 1989, p. 92.

These figures represent the frequency of the response.

⁶⁰Overton, 1989, p. 95.

But whereas village level communal labour is almost absent in Draubuta . . . kinship co-operation is not. Assistance with crops (clearing and harvesting), house building (even with permanent materials) and *magiti* still utilized intra-clan *kerekere* mechanisms and reciprocity and presentation rather than cash. This is particularly evident for cashcropping farming in Draubuta, . . . An illustration of the importance of household labour, but also of changing labour relations in the village is rice farming. Rice [a cash crop] is grown in . . . Draubuta . . . and requires a high labour input. All non harvest tasks were carried out by household labour, except for initial land development (drainage, clearing and levelling) which was done by government machines. A number of men said that they did not expand production (or in the past have stopped production) because they do not have enough sons at home to help with the work of ploughing, planting and maintenance. The demand for harvest labour was met in different ways. In Draubuta, all harvest labour came from within the village and mostly from the household (including women and children) or closely-related kin, and was unpaid. There was no monetized labour absorption but a recourse to traditional *kerekere* and reciprocity as a means of getting short-term labour. It is a situation very similar to that observed by Nayacakalou in 1954.⁶¹

Rather than being an impediment to commodity production, the reciprocity sub-system, in this Draubuta example, makes commodity production economically viable. More widely, under increased commodization, Island Fijians have continued to rely on **kerekere** as a means for securing labour and developing commercial agriculture. Indeed, the continuance of **kerekere** is responsible for the growth of the commercial agricultural economy. Unpaid kin labour serves to reduce the cost of production in monetary terms and enables Island Fijians to participate in the market sub-system. Conversely, unpaid

⁶¹Overton, 1989, pp. 56, 57.

kerekere labour has inhibited the development of localized agriculturally supported wage-labour.

Draubuta is a village in which elements of the commodity and the reciprocity sub-systems articulate. Certain aspects of the reciprocity sub-system such as **kerekere** have increased in importance and continue to subsidize the commodity sub-system. Other elements, most notably **lala**, have declined in relevance as chiefly authority is eroded by the rise of villager power brokers such as Sete in example 3.

(C) Commodities, Money, and Solevu

As **lala** and **kerekere** rights and obligations are defined by one's social position, the large-scale **solevu** are a way for one to establish wider social rights and obligations. **Solevu** exchanges provide a means of displaying, establishing, and sanctioning social and political status.

Rutz's field work in the Waidina Valley shows that independent Island Fijian farmers are quite eager to retain the social welfare functions of the reciprocity sub-system. In recent years, independent Island Fijian farmers have taken a more active role in village **solevu** exchanges than those who are politically, socially, and economically entrenched in **yavusa** group organization.⁶² Independent Island Fijian farmers have demonstrated a willingness to invest a portion of their earnings and labour in order to preserve and enhance

⁶²Rutz, 1978, pp. 804, 805.

these social welfare functions of the reciprocity sub-system.

Similarly, a study of Ra province (located in the north-east part of Viti Levu) by Frazer supports the view that independent Island Fijian farmers have assumed a dominant role in the activities of the **yavusa** group organization. Independent Island Fijian farmers provided cattle for funerals and weddings, and the use of farm implements for village gardening. Additionally, they continued to take an active role in church services and are frequently called upon to participate in the **solevu** entertainment of visiting dignitaries.⁶³

The examples in the following section --Deuba, Cautata, and Suvavou-- have been selected to show that participation in the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems has resulted in the introduction of new gifts. The **solevu** has become the method through which commodities and monies obtained from the sale of commodities and labour assume the socially prescribed qualities of gifts. Agricultural produce grown for the market is used frequently for feasts. European commodities such as kerosene and factory-made cloth, obtained with money generated by the sale of agricultural commodities and wage-labour, become gifts.⁶⁴ Yet, ceremonies retain their social

⁶³Roger Frazer. "The Fijian village and the independent farmer," pp. 75 - 96, in *The Pacific in Transition* edited by H. C. Brookfield, (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), p. 92.

⁶⁴Belshaw, 1965, p. 44, noted, "Western articles have entered into ceremonial exchange. In addition to great whale's teeth which have pride of ceremonial place, the bark

significance and continue to occupy an important role in Island Fijian society.

(7) Solevu and Money in Deuba Village

The village of Deuba, located 30 miles northwest of Suva on the Queen's Road, was studied by Geddes in 1945 and Barnhard in 1974. Neither study focused on the relationship between the commodity and reciprocity sub-systems, but when compared, they reveal significant changes in Islander involvement in the commodity sub-system.

Commodity production in Deuba started as a result of the Pacific War.⁶⁵ Allied soldiers were stationed in Fiji for the purpose of preparing Island Fijians for war. This provided Island Fijians with the opportunity to obtain cash by provisioning the troops. Following the war, Island Fijians continued to produce crops for the Suva market and the neighbouring tourist complex, and were able to gain wage employment in the Pacific Harbour Estate tourist complex and the Navua Irrigation Project.⁶⁶

Geddes, supported by Barnhard's observations, noted the

cloth and pandanus mats, pottery and the great piles of foodstuff, the articles now include four-gallon drums of kerosene, bolts of manufactured cloth, and cylinders of salt made from raw material bought in stores." This observation is supported by Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 22.

⁶⁵W. R. Geddes. "Acceleration of Social Change in a Fijian Village," *Oceania* Volume 16 (1), 1945a, p. 3.

⁶⁶Rosemary Barnard. "Deuba: Economic Change in a Fijian Village," *Oceania* Volume 75 (1), 1974, p. 4.

beginning of significant changes in the village. Geddes and Barnhard reported numbers of Island Fijians engaged in commercial agriculture and living outside the nucleated village. But neither reports a decline in the importance of the **yavusa** group organization. The existence of independent farmers and wage-labour demonstrates the commodization of labour.

Geddes reports that Island Fijians began to use money obtained through commodity production and wage-labour as objects exchanged through **solevu**.⁶⁷ Geddes does not reveal the **solevu** under which money was used as a gift. The Deuba example is significant for several reasons. It demonstrates the ability and desire of Island Fijians to earn money, provides an early example of money being used as a gift, and shows that gift-giving is determined by reciprocity, not commodity, relations.

(8) The Solevu and the Yavusa Group in Cautata Village

The village of Cautata, in Tailevu, is the birth-place of Alumita Naivakulua. As a young woman Alumita married Waisea Naivakulua of Nakorosule village.⁶⁸ The marriage of Alumita and Waisea was not sanctioned by either village and consequently the couple's children had not been formally

⁶⁷Geddes, 1945a, p. 3.

⁶⁸Ravuvu, 1987b, pp. 72, 274.

introduced to their mother's **yavusa**.⁶⁹ On May 22, 1982 the members of Waisea's **yavusa** travelled to Cautata with the objective of appeasing Alumita's kinsmen and establishing inter-**yavusa** relations by making ceremonial offerings (**vakacabori**) to Alumita's **yavusa**.⁷⁰

Following their marriage Waisea and Alumita moved to Suva where Waisea obtained employment as a bartender. In the period following their migration to Suva, Waisea conscientiously saved money needed to fund the **solevu** necessary to appease Alumita's **yavusa** and sanction the marriage.⁷¹ Waisea was able to save \$F2,000 from his monthly wages.⁷² This money was used to purchase two head of cattle, which were slaughtered and used for two **magiti** (feasts).⁷³ The **magiti** were staged to secure the support of Waisea's **yavusa** and as an opportunity to offer thanks to Waisea's **yavusa** for their support. The remainder of the money was used to purchase drums of kerosene and bolts of factory-produced cloth and to pay for the transportation of guests.⁷⁴

In response to the overtures made by Waisea's kinsmen, Alumita's kinsmen reciprocated. The members of Alumita's

⁶⁹Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 72.

⁷⁰Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 275.

⁷¹Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 275.

⁷²Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 275.

⁷³Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 275.

⁷⁴Ravuvu, 1987b, pp. 275, 276.

mataqali raised the sum of \$500, which was used to purchase two head of cattle and a pig for a **magiti**.⁷⁵ The food was prepared by Alumita's **mataqali** and offered to Waisea's kinsmen. Additionally, some 80 mats and numerous **masi**, to be used on the occasion of receiving the couple's children, were collected by Alumita's kinsmen.⁷⁶

This example demonstrates the pressures placed on Island Fijians to adhere to the socially prescribed methods of ratifying social relations. Significantly, money and goods obtained with money played a dominant role in the **solevu** exchange. First, money obtained through wage-labour was used to purchase the livestock required for **magiti**. Second, money and commodities available through the commodity sub-system were converted into gifts.

(9) **Solevu and Money and Commodities in Suvavou Village**

The village of Suvavou is located on the south east coast of Viti Levu, near the city of Suva. In 1982, the village had a population of 534 persons and consisted of 10 **mataqali**.⁷⁷ Many of the people living in Suvavou were descendants of those people moved from the land where the city of Suva is

⁷⁵Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 276.

⁷⁶Ravuvu, 1987b, p. 276.

⁷⁷Solrun Williksen-Bakker, *To Do and To Be, Ceremonial Exchange under urban circumstances in Fiji* Oslo: Oslo Occasional Papers in Social Anthropology #17, 1988, p. 2.

located.⁷⁸ Most of the villages' inhabitants are employed in Suva; many as civil servants, construction workers and domestics, but most work in the tourism industry.⁷⁹ Despite the coexistence of the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems, many Island Fijians are concerned about the costs of the reciprocity sub-system. Suvavou villager Isala remarks:

All my life I have complained myself about this **oga** [ceremonial preparation]. It is too much, it is an **oga** every week, if not every day. Just now I have been requested to go to my village and take part in a ceremony. It will be expected of me to take at least a box of biscuits and a **tabua**. I will have to buy the **tabua**. All in all it will come to about 60 dollars. I cannot afford it, but I will have to do it.⁸⁰

Later Isala recounts the events surrounding the marriage of his daughter.

My daughter married this man from Kadavu. They have both studied at the university and they thought they were too clever to have the whole Fijian thing, so they just went and married. The relatives in Kadavu did not know what to do with shame. The same with me. This was terrible. After a little while my daughter came and gave the message that the relatives from Kadavu wanted to come and do the atonement, the **bulubulu**. I stayed here in town with my family, but my village is up in the interior. So my cousins up there got to know, and they said: "Send them up here, we will take care of them", meaning that to go up to the village would be far and so troublesome that that in **itself** would be a punishment. But when my daughter asked me whether I could receive them at home I said yes. When the party was about to arrive they asked: did they have to go all the way to the village and I said: "it is up to you, but

⁷⁸Williksen-Bakker, p. 2.

⁷⁹Williksen-Bakker, p. 3.

⁸⁰Williksen-Bakker, p. 141.

you can come here if you wish." So they came here. The house was full of people, and I had to go around and get food, because the time for preparation had been so short. I had to get it all in a hurry and it cost me a lot of money. The amount of goods they brought! About 40 whales' teeth, bales of cloth, kerosene-many drums. After the **bulubulu** all this was stored in my house. I could have used it, but I did not, of course. It stayed there for a while and then I took it up to my village to share it with my relatives. Now the **bulubulu** had been properly conducted we needed to show that we recognized the respect given to us so we planned to go to the Kadavu settlement in Suva and present our gifts in a **tevutevu** [marriage] ceremony. I hired a bus and a couple of trucks and carried about 70 people down from the village to Suva to take part in this presentation. We brought a lot! It cost me a lot of money. I sometimes ask myself: Why do we do all this, what is the point? But after all, when the **oga** is over I feel happy and I don't care really about what it cost. I think that people think to themselves: "What else shall I do with my life if not this. This is life. Is this not why I live?"⁸¹

Josese and Maraia are a couple, with a young child. Their home is small but adequately furnished, and the grounds are well kept. They earn a substantial income (sometimes several hundred Fijian dollars per week) from the sale of masks, spears and swords to large tourist complexes on the western side of Viti Levu.⁸² In the event of an economic down turn they hold the rights to a small parcel of land in Josese's village as security.⁸³

Josese and Maraia did not marry according to Island Fijian custom. They did not have a **vakamu** (marriage ceremony)

⁸¹Williksen-Bakker, pp. 141, 142.

⁸²Williksen-Bakker, p. 195.

⁸³Williksen-Bakker, p. 196.

--they eloped. Nor did they have a **bulubulu** (a ceremony of atonement that is usually held when people elope). But, since Josese provides Maraia's family with money, there is no social pressure placed on them to comply to Island Fijian custom.⁸⁴ They did have a meal when their son was born. However, since a **vakamu** was not held, this is not considered a formal **solevu**. Nevertheless, Josese is aware of the importance of the **solevu** and says, "It will be done when I have a lot of money."⁸⁵

This couple is an interesting case for several reasons. First, the Island Fijian handicrafts exchanged in the commodity market provide them with a livelihood. Second, they are aware of Island Fijian **solevu**, but through the allocation of money to Maraia's family they seem to have circumvented the **solevu** and do not appear to suffer any retributive action. Third, they say they plan to hold the **solevu** when they have enough money. Fourth, despite their deep involvement in the commodity sub-system Josese continues to hold the right to land.

Ana and Mani have been married for some time and have five children. Mani is employed as a village watchman, while Ana makes and sells handicrafts. Basic foodstuffs for the family are grown in the couple's garden.⁸⁶

At the time they met, Mani was involved with a woman from

⁸⁴Williksen-Bakker, p. 196.

⁸⁵Williksen-Bakker, p. 196.

⁸⁶Williksen-Bakker, p. 186

his village. Apparently, Mani's mother objected to the marriage of Ana and Mani on the basis of religious differences and personal preferences. Following their elopement (**veidrotaki**), Mani did not take Ana to his mother's home, but rather, he took her to his father's home. True to custom, Ana went fishing with Mani's sisters. After the fishing expedition a **vakamama** (drying ceremony) was held. At the **vakamama** Mani's family presented Ana with new clothes and flower wreaths.

Several months after the elopement a **bulubulu** (ceremony of atonement) was held in Ana's village. Mani and his family presented Ana's family with 30 **tabua**, 60 drums of kerosene, and several bales of cloth. Following the presentation and several speeches, a **magiti** was held, then the **i yau** (valuables) were redistributed.

Mani and Ana combine the modes of production found in the commodity and reciprocity sub-systems in order to provide for their family. Moreover, money obtained through the commodity sub-system is used to secure the **i yau** required to meet the obligations of the reciprocity sub-system. Despite their involvement in both the commodity and reciprocity sub-systems, Mani complains, "Things are less clean . . . the empathy among people is less. . . . it is becoming similar to the way it is with you (meaning 'you Europeans')." ⁸⁷

Suvavou is important for three reasons. First, the

⁸⁷Williksen-Bakker, p. 186.

labour of the people of Suvavou is heavily commodified. Second, many villagers produce handicrafts for the tourist industry.⁸⁸ Third, the **solevu** remain an integral mechanism for the creation and sanction of social and political ties. Kini, a local chief, comments:

"The village will make things and relatives will bring things and then they exchange. To give more than is expected gives high status. Status is the return of gifts. Of course we will never get rich in this way!"
"But proud-?"

Kini laughs heartily: "Yes, we will always remain poor and proud. You see, you always feel you are in credit. You always owe them something. They **retaliate** by doing something bigger than you have done. I must fulfil my obligations. As long as I can fulfil my obligations I can even go to jail!"⁸⁹

The evidence presented here tests and validates the proposition that Island Fijians are combining the reciprocity and commodity sides, stimulating commodity activity. I now move to interpret this data and ascertain what the articulation of the reciprocity and commodity sides reveals about (1) Island Fijian development, and (2) Island Fijian society. These issues will be addressed in Chapter 4.

⁸⁸Williksen-Bakker, pp. 83, 84.

⁸⁹Williksen-Bakker, p. 142.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIJIAN WAY OF LIFE, THE MONEY WAY OF LIFE

What do the observations in the preceding chapters yield about conditions in Island Fijian society? This chapter will (1) show that Island Fijian involvement in the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems has resulted in social and economic development; (2) demonstrate that noticeable variations in social, political and economic organization are evident at the local level; and (3) account for Island Fijian desires to maintain the **yavusa** group organization and the reciprocity sub-system.

A. Development and Society

By combining and moving between the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems, Island Fijians are able to draw upon reciprocity and commodity relations to stimulate social and economic development that represents an improvement over the previous decade.¹

¹At the national level, statistics compiled by the Asian Development Bank indicate that during the 1980s, Fiji had a per capita GDP of F\$2168 (compared to the 1975 rate of F\$976), a life expectancy rate of 68 years of age (compared to the 1970 rate of 61), a literacy rate of 79 per cent (compared to the 1970 rate of 73 per cent), and a gross primary school enrolment ratio of 110 (compared to the 1970 ratio of 101). These statistical changes in social conditions have been translated into a tangible improvement in the standard of

Independent small-holder farmers have shown a desire to ensure the reciprocity sub-system and the **yavusa** group organization continue to provide a social safety net for Island Fijians. Independent small-holder farmers who are not legally required to participate in the reciprocity sub-system and the **yavusa** group organization are taking a more active role in group affairs than those whose participation is required.² As Rutz has observed:

So important is the welfare function of ceremonial that those producers who have left the village in order to become independent (*galala*) for the express purpose of increasing cash income tend to involve themselves in ceremonial to a greater extent than those who remain in the village.³

For example, Brookfield's study from Taveuni Island showed that public works projects, such as the construction of communal buildings which in the past had been organized and executed by the **yavusa** group organization, now were being organized and performed by the nuclear family and frequently by independent small-holder farmers.⁴ Additionally, Garrett noted that following the coups of 1987 urban-based Island Fijians, who suffered hardships as a result of the coups, called upon their counterparts in the rural areas for

living at the local level. In the past several decades the **bure** has given way to wood-framed homes. Improved transportation networks have made health care and education available to most Island Fijians.

²Rutz, 1978, pp. 801, 802.

³Rutz, 1978, p. 801.

⁴Brookfield, 1988, p. 33.

foodstuffs.⁵

Chapter 3 provides further evidence of significant development at the local level. The example drawn from Nairukuruku (example 2) shows that land designated 'communal' has been set aside for the **mataqali** descent group. The produce from the communal fields was sold through the commodity market and the profits distributed to the group. This type of practice enables rural based Island Fijians to provide group subsistence and a source of money.

The evidence from the Waidina Valley (example 3) provides a strong indication that money and commodities acquired through the careful orchestration of the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems are being used for community development. Owing largely to the efforts of Sete, the village has a cement housing project, cement sewage facilities, a village meeting house, a new school, and a hydro electric generator that provides electricity to many village homes. Although Sete initiated these projects, they were sanctioned by the chiefly leadership and were brought to fruition through the use of the commodity and reciprocity sub-systems.

Independent small-holder farmers engaged in subsistence and cash cropping continue to participate in the reciprocity sub-system, but according to socially determined rationale. Although independent small-holder farmers are not required to

⁵Garrett, p. 91.

participate in the **yavusa** group organization, the evidence shows that they are using a portion of their cash earnings and volunteering their labour to support the **yavusa** group organization. Independent small-holder farmers have demonstrated a willingness to use earnings accrued from the commodity sub-system to bolster, not supplant or destroy, the reciprocity side.

These examples suggest that the interplay among the commodity sub-system, reciprocity sub-system and **yavusa** group organization enables Island Fijians to effect socioeconomic development at the village level. The evidence indicates that the reciprocity side is not an impediment to the introduction of the commodity sub-system and local level development. In some instances the dialectical interplay among the reciprocity sub-system, **yavusa** group organization and commodity sub-system has resulted in an efflorescence of the commodity sub-system, as expressed in example 3. Sete was able to use the reciprocity side for family commercial ventures and the commodity side for the well-being of the group. This condition will continue while land remains under the authority of the descent groups and has not become a commodity. The **yavusa** group organization and reciprocity sub-system continues to provide a framework through which Island Fijians can provide for the well-being of their membership.

B. Economy and Society

A further analysis of some of the examples presented in chapter 3 indicates (1) that there are noticeable variations in labour organization and relations; (2) land-use has undergone some modifications, although land remains the foundation of Island Fijian society; and (3) money and commodities are being converted to gifts.

In Chapter 1 we noted labour is the way in which people interrelate with the environment to produce gifts and commodities, while in Chapter 3 we observed that the commodity sub-system has provided Island Fijians with other ways in which to satisfy kinship and communal obligations.

The evidence from Nakorosule village (example 1), reveals that the availability of wage-labour has led to a variation in the way requests by the chiefly leadership through **lala** are delivered by the group. Prior to the introduction of the commodity sub-system the Island Fijian chiefly leadership called upon their followers for local materials and labour for group projects. The availability of commodities and money through wage-labour has presented Island Fijians with new ways of satisfying **lala** requirements. This has resulted in the use of the much more prestigious, and therefore socially valuable, European building materials and the exchange of labour for money necessary to purchase these materials. Although, the chiefly leadership is able to garner the resources of their followers to fulfil chiefly obligations, it is sometimes at

the expense of local development. Funds that could be used to fence the gardens and enable villagers to produce cash crops were diverted to the construction of the church.

The data from Nairukuruku village (example 2) illustrates that labour organized at the village level is directed toward the production of commodities for the markets, on specially designated land held by the descent groups. There is no evidence of inter-**mataqali** pooling to suggest that the proceeds are for **yavusa** use, but rather, the proceeds are to be expended at the discretion of the **mataqali** leadership.

Example 3, from the Waidina Valley, traces the activities of one local leader and demonstrates that indigenous and introduced instruments can be used together to stimulate local development. Although, Sete achieved his position within the community by demonstrating strong leadership and initiating successful ventures, he used a carefully balanced approach. In some instances he used kinship based **kerekere** to mobilize the resources of his kin group. In other instances he worked through introduced organizations to pool the resources of villagers. And under other circumstances he utilized the traditional village authority to legitimize his projects. Much of the money and commodities available through the commodity sub-system were used for development projects. Sete's efforts resulted in the completion of several local development projects. This example reveals the emergence of different local leaders and illustrates how organization at

the community level and participation in the commodity sub-system can result in the improvement of the community as a whole.

The evidence from Draubata village (example 6) illustrates that labour obtained through **kerekere** is used for commodity production. Many Draubata villagers are engaged in labour intensive rice production, primarily for the commodity markets. The labour required for rice cultivation is drawn from the household and is unpaid. Significantly, some farmers claimed they did not have a large enough pool of kin-labour to draw upon in order to expand their operations. Consequently, in Draubata, the availability of unpaid labour through **kerekere** is a requirement for Island Fijians participation in the commodity sub-system.

Examples 1, 2, and 3 provide evidence that new ways of organizing labour have emerged. In example 1 labour was organized at the direction of the chiefly leadership and church leaders; in example 2 labour was organized by the chiefly leadership at the direction of the Ministry of Agriculture; in example 3 the chiefly leadership and the leader of the local marketing cooperative organized group labour. In each of these examples the chiefly leadership and newly emerging local leaders worked together.

For many observers the Island Fijian system of land tenure is thought to represent an obstacle to development. Under the land tenure system introduced by the colonial

government, the **mataqali** descent group became the legal holder of Island Fijian land. The membership of the **mataqali** obtained rights to land from the chiefly leadership. For the use of land they were required to participate in group affairs such as **lala**, **kerekere** and **solevu**. The land tenure system served to link Island Fijians with the **yavusa** group organization. Many observers argued that this system of tenure restricted the development of individual farm operations geared toward commodity production.

The examples presented in Chapter 3 provide evidence that the land tenure system and **yavusa** group organization are not an impediment to commodity production; but rather, the evidence shows that in some instances the articulation of the reciprocity sub-system, **yavusa** group organization and commodity sub-system results in a kind of efflorescence of the commodity sub-system. In spite of different forms of land-use and increased involvement of Island Fijians in the commodity sub-system, the **yavusa** group organization and reciprocity sub-system have retained their positions in Island Fijian society. Recognition of the importance of land to Island Fijians will provide a greater understanding of Island Fijian society.

Land, or **vanua**, Asesela Ravuvu wrote, "has physical, social and cultural dimensions which are interrelated."⁶ In the physical sense, land provides people with the means of

⁶Asesela Ravuvu. *Vaka i Taukei, The Fijian Way of Life* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1983), p. 70.

subsistence. Land produces the food consumed by people, the commodities sold by people, and the gifts exchanged by people. Land leased to others provides the chiefly leadership with a source of rental income and recognition of its position in society.⁷ Land is the source of food, commodities, gifts, money, and social, political and economic prestige.

From a social and cultural perspective, land embodies the concept of **vanua**. **Vanua**, writes anthropologist Solrun Williksen-Bakker, "is associated with a 'right' and 'true' way of life."⁸ The examples illustrating the primacy placed on the relationship between people and **vanua** are too numerous to permit a detailed discussion; thus, to make my point I will focus on life cycle ceremonies.

Customarily when an Island Fijian is born great care is taken to gather the umbilical cord and plant it with a tree (which symbolizes the person) on the land, ideally on one's **vanua**. This signifies that land or **vanua** is the source of life. Throughout their lifetimes Island Fijians confirm and renew this symbolic relationship through the consumption of the "water" of life (**kava**) and "true" foods (taro, cassava, and yam).⁹ At death, Island Fijians present **tabua** and the

⁷Ravuvu, 1983, p. 71.

⁸Solrun Williksen-Bakker, "Vanua--a Symbol with Many Ramifications in Fijian Culture," *Ethnos* Volume 3-4, 1990, p. 234.

⁹For a discussion of the 'water' of life and 'true' food, see James West Turner, "'The Water of Life': Kava Ritual and the Logic of Sacrifice," *Ethnology* Volume 25, (3), 1986, pp.

body is enshrouded with **tapa** and mats and returned to the **vanua**.¹⁰ These types of life cycle ceremonies represent a way of life, or **vakavanua** ("in the way of the land or place!"¹¹), a means through which Island Fijians can provide for the cultural socialization of their people, and a cultural and social code.¹²

Land, or **vanua** is the foundation for the chiefly leadership and the **yavusa** group organization; the source of psychological comfort for Island Fijian society; and the origin of money and commodities required for social, political and economic development. Nevertheless, late in the twentieth century land has become a source of tensions within Island Fijian society.

Adherence to the principles of the **yavusa** group organization assures the Island Fijian chiefly leadership of political power, social prestige, and economic affluence. In this period in which the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems coexist and interconnect, the chiefly leadership occupies the strategic and precarious position between the two systems. This provides them with the opportunity to manipulate the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems, and increase their

203 - 214; and "'True Food' and First Fruits: Rituals of Increase in Fiji," *Ethnology* Volume 23, (2), 1984, pp. 133 - 142.

¹⁰Williksen-Bakker, 1990, p. 237.

¹¹Turner, 1988, p. 430

¹²Williksen-Bakker, 1990, p. 237.

power and prestige. Maintenance of the reciprocity sub-system and the **yavusa** group organization results in the perpetuation of the chiefly leadership, which creates tension within the **yavusa** group organization.

Although many Island Fijians demonstrate a willingness (in some cases a reluctant willingness) to preserve the Island Fijian way of life, the desire for individual land tenure, independent small-holder agricultural production, and individually determined participation in the **yavusa** group organization has produced a new political leadership. This leadership which is based on money, commodities, and ability, represents an indirect challenge to chiefly authority which is founded on **vakavanua** and the **mataqali** land-holding system. Island Fijian society is being pulled in several directions. On the one hand Island Fijians want individual forms of land use and selective participation in the **yavusa** group organization and reciprocity sub-system, while on the other hand they are committed to the way of the land.

How, then, does Island Fijian involvement in the commodity and reciprocity sub-system affect the way in which surplus is exchanged within society and distributed to society? The evidence presented illustrates that the interconnection of the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems has led to variations in the forms of exchange.

The most noticeable variant in the forms of exchange is the conversion of money and commodities to gifts in order to

satisfy **lala**, **kerekere**, and **solevu** obligations. Examples 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 all contain illustrations of commodities such as kerosene and cloth being changed into gifts to meet **kerekere** and **solevu** requirements.

The data from example 7 shows that the conversion of commodities to gifts is at least 50 years old. Example 8 reveals that people who have migrated from the rural areas to urban areas continue to recognize the importance of the **solevu**, and that wage-labour was used to acquire commodities which were turned into gifts and to obtain the things necessary to stage the **magiti** that accompany **solevu** exchanges.

Island Fijians are combining elements from the reciprocity and commodity sides of life in order to take part in group affairs and participate in the commodity side. This has resulted in improved social conditions at the village level, new ways of organizing labour, and the conversion of commodities and money into gifts.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Work on socioeconomic conditions in the Western Pacific region by Brookfield¹ and Gregory² suggests that the key to understanding the history of the area is to begin the study of the Pacific in the Pacific. In other words, it is necessary to obtain an understanding of those dynamics internal to the case being studied and explain how the indigenous and introduced social, economic and political systems articulate at the village level.

For several decades observers have been trying to understand the interplay between the commodity and reciprocity sides of Fijian life. The present work has shown that if we begin the study of Fiji in Fiji, and focus on how Island Fijians have combined the Fijian side of life and the money side of life, we can gain a valuable and necessary understanding of the social, economic, and political conditions in Fiji.

From this perspective, this thesis concentrated on the

¹H. C. Brookfield. "Full Circle in Chimbu: A study of trends and cycles," pp. 127 - 160 in *The Pacific in Transition* edited by H. C. Brookfield, (London: Edward Arnold Ltd.), 1973.

²Gregory, 1982.

interplay among (1) money, commodities, and **lala**; (2) money, commodities, and **kerekere**; and (3) money, commodities, and **solevu**. Specifically, this thesis has considered how reciprocity obligations may stimulate participation in the commodity sector and how reciprocity ties contribute to commodity production.

The main points demonstrated by the material presented here are that Island Fijians are:

- (1) using money and commodities obtained from the commodity side to fulfil the requirements of the reciprocity side;
- (2) converting commodities such as kerosene and cloth to gifts that were exchanged in the reciprocity side;
- (3) and using mechanisms such as **lala** and **kerekere** from the reciprocity side for the production of commodities.

The commodity side has presented Island Fijians with new ways of fulfilling reciprocity obligations, while the reciprocity side has provided some of the resources necessary to take part in the commodity side.

Through the articulation of the commodity and reciprocity sides, Island Fijian leaders are able to provide social infrastructures such as schools and meeting halls, and social amenities such as hydro generators and sewage disposal systems for their membership. Thus, Island Fijian leaders are able to provide for the well-being of their membership and maintain the social safety net capacity of the reciprocity sub-system.

This study has shown that commodities and money available from the commodity sub-system are being converted into gifts

for exchange in the reciprocity sub-system. Money and commodities such as kerosene and cloth are used to fulfil **lala**, **kerekere**, and **solevu** requirements.

Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that Island Fijians have taken advantage of wage-employment opportunities presented by the commodity side to fulfil reciprocity obligations. Wage-employment has provided Island Fijians with a source of money that can be used to obtain commodities for exchange in the reciprocity side. Conversely, unpaid labour available from the reciprocity sub-system through **kerekere** has enabled Island Fijians to successfully participate in the commodity sub-system.

Additionally, in recent times new ways of organizing group labour have become evident. New types of leaders such as church, government and business leaders are, with chiefly leaders, organizing group labour. These new leaders draw on labour available through the reciprocity and commodity sub-systems.

New forms of land tenure have emerged. At present, Island Fijians are engaged in subsistence and cash crop production on **mataqali** and individually held lands. The important difference in these tenurial arrangements is that Island Fijians farming **mataqali**-held land are required, as a condition of tenure, to participate in group affairs, while those farming individually-held land are not obligated to take part in group affairs. Significantly, however, many Island

Fijians farming individually-held lands have shown a strong desire to maintain their membership in the **yavusa** group organization. Land and the related concept **vanua**, have retained their importance to Island Fijian society.

By concentrating on the interplay between **na sala vakavanua**, **na sala vakailavo** --the Fijian way of life, the money way of life-- we are able to conclude that Island Fijians have changed, adapted, and preserved various elements from the reciprocity and commodity sides of Fijian life.

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