WOMEN'S RITUAL ROLES IN MATAILOBAU, FIJI ISLANDS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER AND SOCIAL LIFE

by

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN'S RITUAL ROLES IN MATAILOBAU, FIJI ISLANDS:
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This study of Fijian women's ritual roles is based on sixteen months of research in a village in Matailobau, Naitasiri Province. Matailobau is a district in the mountainous wet-zone interior of Viti Levu, the largest of the Fiji Islands.

After residing in the village for several months, I became interested in the cultural meanings assigned to the sexes at public events and rituals, and I decided to focus my work on those meanings. I saw in these rituals the assignment of basic conceptions, relationships, and tasks to the sexes, and villagers corroborated them -- women serve men, men guide women, and men speak on behalf of women at important functions.

An understanding of ritual requires knowledge about other aspects of society and culture; thus, in analyzing these rituals I consider, among other things, Fijian concepts of gender, sexuality, cross-sex siblingship, and social structure. Although many factors and relationships are brought to bear on this study of women's ritual roles, there is one recurring theme in this work: how women's intercalary position between their agnates and affines yields practical benefits to each category.

I describe here a cohabitation ritual, a bisaba, and a funeral ritual. The first celebrates the social creation of a woman; the second honors a new mother and her child; and the last marks the completion of a woman's contribution to affinal relations, when her child's death may affect the link between them.

Within these rituals are contained data that add a new dimension to the anthropological discussion of whether women are, are not, or are merely behaving like connubial chattel. Additionally, Fijian conceptions of the sexes are not founded on their respective reproduction roles, and thus, they differ from some anthropological assumptions about sex and gender.

These interpretations of women's roles and meanings are based on at least two observations of each type of ritual and on a knowledge of the broader social and cultural context in which they occurred. I obtained the latter data by participant observation and by collecting genealogies, doing a census, and recording interviews. I spoke with both men and women. Thus, the account, except where indicated otherwise, reflects both men's and women's statements.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study of Fijian women's ritual roles is based on sixteen months of research in a village in Matailobau, Naitasiri Province. Matailobau is a district in the mountainous wet-zone interior of Viti Levu, the largest of the Fiji Islands. This work begins to fill a lacuna in Fijian ethnology. No anthropological research had been done previously in this area, and of the fieldwork conducted elsewhere in the islands, none had focused on women (e.g., Belshaw 1964; Rutz 1973; Sahlins 1962).

I went to Fiji proposing a general study of village women with an emphasis on their social roles and kinship obligations and sentiments. After residing in the village for several months, I became interested in the cultural meanings assigned the sexes at public events and rituals and decided to focus this work on them. I saw in these rituals the assignment of basic conceptions, relationships, and tasks to the sexes. Villagers corroborated these: women serve men; men guide women; men speak on behalf of women at important functions. I maintain that these are cultural proclamations that greatly influence definitions of gender and identities. They are, I suggest, of a different order than those phenomena also viewed as being instrumental in defining women's status and power (e.g., Reiter 1975; Rogers 1975; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974),

i.e., women's informal powers of gossip, affection, political sagacity, diplomacy and economic leverage.

> In other words, if women have power over men at the level of social interaction, this is not to be taken as an indication that they are not subordinate. Their subordination lies at the level of cultural evaluations in terms of which such powers are trivial (Milton 1979:42-43).

These rituals' messages can be ameliorated by actual relationships and the effects of those variables I mentioned above. The communicative strength of these rituals, however, is that qua events they are unassailable -- there are no other ritual moments at which roles are reversed or opposite meanings are transmitted. In a sense, they make statements that cannot be refuted, much as ultimate religious dogmas, as Durkheim noted, cannot be proved or disproved. Additionally, these rituals convey potent communications about nonritual situations because ritual distills meanings and "becomes the centre of a cluster of different associations" (Richards 1982:164) and contexts.

As rituals can contain information about other contexts, so too does an understanding of ritual require knowledge about other aspects of society and culture; thus, in analyzing these rituals I consider, among other things, Fijian concepts of gender, sexuality, cross-sex siblingship, and social structure. Not only are these cultural and social factors involved in these rituals, they are interconnected; realizing this intertwining of variables contributes to our understanding of women in ritual.

In turn, greater insights are achieved into other parts of women's lives and perceptions of them by reflecting on women's ritual roles. Lastly, an investigation of women's lives must include men's participation because

> one cannot understand women without understanding men and vice versa. The sole focus on women by some ethnographers is a political response necessitated by the logic of Western politics. Theoretically, it makes for a sterile pursuit (Cesara 1982:170).

And thus, I describe men's roles and culturally defined qualities in these rituals and elsewhere.

Although many factors and relationships are brought to bear on this study of women's ritual roles, there is a recurring theme in this work: women's intercalary position between their agnates and affines and how this situation yields practical benefits to each category. Even within this narrower topic, I indicate that this structural phenomenon is facilitated by women's culturally defined qualities and is enhanced by their characteristics that bind people to them and to each other. The traits that permit women to occupy an intermediate affiliation between their own and conjugal kin are their perceived formlessness and malleability. Women are seen as amorphous beings because their essence is more like that of children, whose liquid souls (<u>yalo wai</u>) have not been formed and solidified by internalizing social mores and values, than like that of men. Persons with these unfirm, socially immature characters have to be governed because they cannot contain themselves within social boundaries. Metaphorically speaking,

but with reference to Fijian idiom, their behavior flows around and over these boundaries if they are not restrained. Women's qualities are antithetical to the masculine qualities of solidity and strength that allow men to conform better to social dictates. Feminine qualities indicate weakness, a property that elicits others' pity and, thus, love. Pity and love's emotive connection is lexically shown by the root (loma) that they share. Thus, people feel sorry for weak beings, women, and become sentimentally attached to them (cf. Briggs 1970 -- the Inuit hold similar ideas). Women's qualities, therefore, allow them the flexibility to be incorporated into two kin groups and provide a means for emotionally linking others to and through them.

As gender concepts contribute to our knowledge of women's structural position, so too do we learn more about this position by analyzing the two basic statuses involved in it, those of wife and sister. Likewise, we must use a dialectic tack in analyzing these statuses and in considering how notions of gender and the social structure color them. Yet for heuristic purposes and to express informants' perceptions and statements, these factors and statuses must sometimes be viewed as isolable phenomena. For instance, knowing that women's intercalary position involves them as wives and sisters requires that we understand the differences between these statuses and that the

separation between them works to promote the utility of uxoral relations and women's dual affiliation.

The differences between sisters and wives are clearly drawn and initiated at a cohabitation or wedding ritual. These rituals are also the rites of passage that enunciate that a woman now exists -- a female is defined as a girl until she has entered into a conjugal relationship -- who can occupy these statuses and begin the first phase of uxoral relations. When a woman is thus socially created at these rituals, she enters into and simultaneously promotes the alliance between her own and her affinal kin. It is for these reasons that the second chapter's topic is a cohabitation ritual that includes how Fijian ideas of gender, notions of common substance and corporate identity, and sexuality determine how this ritual has different repercussions for the man and woman, why one but not the other can have dual kin affiliations, and why the statuses and roles of sister and wife are variously valued and why this is not so for those of brother and husband.

The third chapter records the next phase in the female developmental cycle, motherhood, and the addition to the intergroup relationship of a consanguineal dimension. It is the transmission of a group's blood, its symbol and corporate property that, I argue, is involved in this ritual. The new mother is feted in the <u>bisaba</u> ritual whether she is married, cohabitating, or single. This is so in part because children and fecundity in general are

highly valued; this, as I will indicate, has historical precedents influencing it. But I also maintain that all women's maternity is celebrated because they are sisters who are the transmitters of their groups' sacred substance. The rationalization for my position is found in the second chapter's exposition on the concern a group has about its female members' sexuality because the girls and women can allow the corporation's blood to be shared without its consent. A woman's child is the incarnation of her relatives' essential substance, and thus, within or outside of wedlock, their people's holy contribution to the infant should be acknowledged. In those cases where the mother is married, her sister-in-law, the child's father's sister, is a prominent participant who depicts another aspect of the sister's role, the solicitous representative of the child's paternal and thus own group. Both the mother and the child's father's sister express the permanent identification a woman has with her natal kin and the greater responsibility and respect accorded sisters over wives (cf. Sacks 1979).

A woman's importance as sister and transmitter of corporate substance is clearly depicted in the final ritual described here and the last phase in the developmental cycle, the funeral. Usually, a funeral would be defined as the last stage of a woman's life when it referred to her own interment. But here I am utilizing this cyclic scheme to indicate the end of a woman's most concrete contribution

to alliance-making, the demise of her child. The child who shared substance with its maternal and paternal kin is buried by those whom it is believed are responsible for its conception, birth, and life, its maternal relatives. These uterine kin are equated with the mother and her nurturant qualities and activities. Thus, these people perform the final tender act of interring the deceased.

The nurturance of maternal kin reflects the tenderness and care-giving that is supposedly a feminine characteristic. Indeed, in each of these rituals life-giving and life-sustaining activities are associated with female participants. For instance, at the bisaba people pray for the mother's health and the women guests present her with a food that supposedly increases breast milk and thus directly promotes the infant's vitality. At the bisaba a general acknowledgement of women's reproductive capacities is also made, and this is harnessed to propitiations to them to create and maintain life. Women may try to honor these requests for fecundity, and yet their efforts may be thwarted by the men who hold the supernatural means to affect their reproduction and extant children's health, their brothers. Partly because the brother who retains this power over the sister represents their group, uterine kin as a category are important elements in social life and are significant actors in these rituals, particularly at the funeral. Although in certain respects the brother and uxoral kin can be independent components in ritual and

other contexts, the influence of cross-sex siblingship cannot really be isolated from them. Indeed, the influence of brothers and maternal relatives can be mitigated by sisters, who can employ feminine weakness to elicit these others' pity and sway their opinions and then their behavior. The cross-sex sibling relationship has several modes that evolve as the siblings move through the developmental cycle.

These three rituals describe the siblings' relationship: when both are single; when the sister marries; when she bears a child; when her child marries her brother's child; and when her child dies. Cross-sex siblingship is an ideal cross-sex relationship because each sibling receives respect and honor, there is no mention of sexuality, and the brother exemplifies male authority. The marital relationship produces an asymmetry in respect and honor for the spouses because the woman's sexuality devalues her status and role. Likewise, being the mother's brother has a prestige and power that in some ways overshadows that of the child's father (the sister's husband); this is manifested at the funeral.

A woman can discredit her sister's status by her illicit sexual behavior. The brother may counter her dishonorable actions by preventing her pregnancies or harming her offspring. Additionally, the brother retains the ability to continue his and his sister's group by having influence in this patrilineal system over his son's wife, the

daughter of his sister. But both the man's sister and her daughter may mollify him and secure their positions because of their feminine qualities that elicit his goodwill.

Thus, cross-sex siblings share a sacred trust and are more equal than a husband and wife are, and each has ways to influence the other. The sister opens "paths" between kin groups through her marriage and children and because of this is accorded a special prestige. Capable of utilizing her weakness and others' attachment to her, the sister can affect her brother's behavior. She, however, must acquiesce to her brother in most matters because he is the sibling set's moral and political leader. His position is garnered from his masculinity, which by definition is based on a moral and social confirmation superior to that of females.

Because of males' greater ability to internalize mores, which bespeaks their moral strength and the recognition of their physical prowess vis-à-vis females, men and their pursuits are more culturally valued than women and their activities. This male cultural bias is reflected in the rituals described here: men represent groups, and their funerals are more lavish than women's burials. These rituals illustrate the sexes and their relationships and gender, as all rituals do, in relatively laconic terms. It is partially for communicative simplicity that I chose ritual as a vehicle for studying women. Whether the message is ameliorated, falsified, or enhanced by other

events or contexts is not as significant, in my view, as the fact that it is not countered in other similar formal contexts.

Within these rituals' temporal and contextual limitations are contained data that add a new dimension to the anthropological discussion of whether women are (Levi-Strauss 1969), are not (Weiner 1976), or are merely behaving like (van Baal 1975) connubial chattel. Matailobau people define the woman and man as their respective group's "property," which is controlled and transacted at the cohabitation or wedding ritual. The kin groups legitimize a conjugal pair by celebrating the ritual, exchanging valuables, and accepting the couple as a village unit. The fact that Matailobau view men and women as their kin's "property" suggests to me that the anthropological perception of women as valuables with intrinsic worth may not be universally applicable, even in such kinship systems as this Fijian version, where cross-cousin marriage is prescribed. Women do not have to be the gift or price that cements intergroup marital alliance.

If the Matailobau see men and women as corporate "property," then the fact that distinguishes one sex from the other in terms of affinal relationships, I argue, is that women are not valuables, unlike men, but instead are transmitters of something unique -- <u>dra tabu</u> (sacred blood). This interpretation meshes better with the Matailobau idiom of women as "paths who open the way"; women in this meta-

phor are not objects or acting like objects as van Baal suggests, but paths joining units. Even though I have used the concepts "objects/valuables" versus "paths," it can be argued that, regardless of the term, women are still being commoditized here. I maintain that what is more in keeping with Matailobau thinking is that women, like paths, establish a relationship; it is the path's function -- to establish a relationship, not as a valuable that is exchanged -- that is important. A path, as Matailobau say, has traffic flowing in two directions; therefore, it is not a commodity that can be owned by someone but is something that is entered upon for a journey. Women can function in this manner because of the way in which Matailobau define the sexes; women can symbolically flow like the traffic between groups because their liquid souls (yalo wai) make them amorphous beings who can be shaped around the contours of society as a footpath marks a route allowed by the terrain.

The Matailobau do not adhere to the definition of woman that some anthropologists have assumed to be universal: "what defines women as women is the eternal fact of [their reproductive] biology" (Edholm, Harris, and Young 1977:101). Matailobau do define the sexes in terms of their biologic natures, but these are not rooted in their reproductive systems. As I mentioned before, feminine nature's attributes of formlessness, malleability and weakness are justifications for men to act as society's representatives. These attributes explain why brothers are

their sisters' leaders, why women obey their husbands, why the conjugal relationship affects the sexes differently, and why women can affiliate with two groups and bind others to them. They do say that women are care-givers and that the model of nurturance is the mother-child dyad. But these characteristics appear to be accretions, achieved when girls become matrons whose social task or expectation is to sustain household members and, by extension, society in general. Women's nurturance is attributed to them after they have become wives or mothers and have fostered others. It is the maternal and wifely roles that are nurturant and that encourage and expect its occupants to behave thusly. People do say that women are nurturant, that is, they have alo naka (good hearts), but here again it is not because they are essentially and potentially mothers whose need it is to provide succor (cf. van Baal 1975) that they are socially conscious and generous.

These interpretations of women's roles and meanings are based on at least two observations of each type of ritual and a knowledge of the broader social and cultural context in which they occurred. I obtained the latter data by participant observation, collecting genealogies, doing a census and recording interviews. Each day I attended village activities. Such a tactic required energy and tolerating the frustration of not immediately following up on previous events. The benefits of such a regimen were that I was immersed in village life and could see the

connections between people and between activities that I would have missed had I initially pursued a different schedule. Villagers partially imposed these research methods on me. They expect all able-bodied persons to leave their houses daily and interact with others -- to do otherwise may be a sign of antisocial feeling or behavior.

From the first, I interviewed villagers on topics that I or they found interesting. I spoke with men and women. Some topics, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation, I discussed only with women. Women do not speak of these things in men's presence; I believed that it would deleteriously affect my rapport with the community if I asked men about them.

As time progressed, I became aware of the agreement among respondents' replies to my inquiries. For some issues, e.g., customs, ancestors, etc., there were views to which members of both sexes adhered. Men and women differed sometimes in their interpretations of topics, for instance, in conceptualizing the sexes. Thus the account, except where indicated otherwise, reflects men's and women's statements.

My analysis utilizes villagers' explanations of their lives and, as in most ethnographic enterprises, also employs my interpretations of these, especially for the bisaba. Villagers always said the bisaba was done to make the newly delivered mother and child happy. I believed that I could achieve another understanding of their state-

ments and this simple ritual's meanings with a deeper analysis guided by the data and by logic. The data that seemed most basic to this enterprise and to an understanding of the other rituals, plus their common topic of women's intercalary position, concerned kin groups. In one sense, describing these units is a straightforward task; in another sense, it poses definitional problems because there are two models of these groups (cf. Belshaw 1965; France 1969; Walter 1978) and because these groups may combine an ego's maternal and paternal kin that ideally should be separated. I will describe briefly these two models and then list the various recruitment principles of these groups.

The de jure version of Fijian social structure springs from the Native Lands Commission. This commission defines Fijian society as having a single system of hierarchically arranged units, that is, a segmentary lineage model. These interlocking segments have a set of terms that categorize each social level from lineage through phratry. Patrilineal descent is the principle of group recruitment, except in the provinces of Lau, Cakaudrove, and Macuata, where affiliation is optative and descent cognatic. Each Fijian is registered in a kin group in the Ai Vola ni Kawa (The Book of Descendants) sometime during childhood. Kin groups claim land, creeks, and streams; their members have rights to these and to extend usufructory rights to others.

Children born to unmarried women are members of their mothers' groups.

The other model of kin groups is locally defined and reflects more closely the idiom embedded in the term mataqali, a kin unit. In the de jure system, mataqali refers to a middle level group. Villagers call groupings of various kinds mataqali because it means "category," "type," or "species." Perhaps a mataqali is best described in terms of what it does (Hocart 1952): provide a category and a support system for its members who, as the root qali indicates, "have ties with [each] other" (cf. Turner 1983). In villages and in the Matailobau vernacular, mataqali can mean a social unit based on one of several criteria. People who use the same parcel of land, who are joined by patrilineal or cognatic descent or affinal ties, for example, can belong to a mataqali. There is usually an agnatic core to which others are attached, and this facilitates the image of a mataqali as a patrilineal descent group.

The village in which this fieldwork was conducted had five mataqali. Within the larger ones, there were named lineage segments that cooperated closely in daily matters. Also there were mataqali composed of members of named units with different origins. In these latter cases, the people who have joined the mataqali core are "staying with" it. Large mataqali with named sections and those with members "staying with" the core pose somewhat similar identifica-

tion problems for their members. In each case people have to align themselves with the larger unit, and yet there are circumstances when they define themselves first as the smaller units' members. This situational identification is an interesting process to observe and ponder because mataqali are defined by their uniqueness, their separation from other units.

The separation of mataqali is increased by the distinctions in rank that divide mataqali into chiefly and commoner groups. These very differences, however, are the means for articulating mataqali ritually and politically in veiqalaki relationships. Veiqalaki relations are modeled on a type of ramage organization in which ranked persons are ritually and politically interdependent. In this organization the chief is the head and those junior to him are his priests, warriors, heralds, and commoner helpers. These persons' descendents are the mataqali who belong to each occupational/ritual category. Vei is a reciprocal, qala means "to serve" or "attend," and ki is the preposition "to" or "towards"; thus, commoner and chief are bound to each other in service. Chiefs give protection and ritual leadership to their commoner vassals, who reciprocate them with ministration as heralds, warriors, priests, or servants. Rituals clearly express these ties. For example, a chief died during the research period and his warriors stood guard at the corners of his house during the funeral. In another example, when a chief's bier passed on

the way to the cemetery, a man of the chief's herald mataqali bid a formal farewell and presented a whale's tooth to him as a final tribute.

As differences in rank can be a means for linking mataqali, so too can kinship. Indeed, veiqalaki ties and affinity have much in common:

> the pattern of behavior between two moities: mutual aid combined with playful hostility, intermarriage, interburial.
>
> The Fijians call such a reciprocal relation "mutual ministry" (more literally, "facing one another," or "worshipping one another"). . . . It means that if the deceased belongs to one line, the other buries him (Winnabagoes), or mourns for him (Trobriands), or otherwise plays the vis-à-vis (Hocart 1952:186).

Marriage creates affinal bonds between mataqali, and the birth of children establishes consanguineal ties for them. A vasu, sister's child, enjoys certain privileges from its maternal kin and returns respect and services to these highly regarded relatives, particularly the mother's brother, who has a keen interest in the vasu's life and the right and obligation to bury the vasu when he or she dies. The children of sisters are linked through their common uterine kin; these are termed vasuvata (those who are vasu to the same people). Vasuvata are also equated because their mothers are sisters, and female siblings are viewed as being categorically alike. Siblingship is, of course, the basis for the formation and continuance of mataqali and results in its corporate nature.

Because mataqali are corporate groups whose property is the land they claim, the symbols and ancestors they share, or both, they represent each of their members. In turn, each member stands for the mataqali, and each sibling's actions impact on the others. Thus, an affinal or consanguineal relationship of one member can be extended to the unit. For instance, mataqali can be spoken of as being siblings because some of their members are two sisters' children or vasu to the same mataqali. Likewise, a siblinglike bond can be created between mataqali if they are alike in some way, e.g., if they are both heralds, they can be equated in the same manner as siblings. The equivalence between mataqali is similar to that of siblings for it carries with it reciprocal obligations and sentiments of caring.

The siblingship within a mataqali is differentiated from that between mataqali not only on the basis of actual versus fictive or classificatory siblingship but on the basis of propinquity as well. A good proportion of a mataqali's members in the village under study live close to each other. These households are typically headed by the men who are the mataqali members. This and the usually virilocal postmarital residence, along with its potential for agnatically extended families, reaffirms the ideal of the agnatic core for the mataqali. These mataqali households' frequent interactions reflect mataqali values of cooperation and reciprocal aid. The stress on male agnates

here calls into question the nature of the siblingship extended to female agnates. Gender separates siblings into those who, upon marriage, can transmit membership in their patrilineally extended group and those who cannot. It also divides siblings who marry and move into other units from those whose spouses come into their own group. Gender is also employed in assigning privileges to siblings -- some can politically represent the unit and others can transmit its substance to other groups. The peculiarity of female corporate membership is illustrated by their nonrepresentation of the mataqali at most formal and ritual occasions. And yet, the women, who move away from their brothers and do not speak on their behalf, identify with them and have rights in the siblings' property and expectations of these kin's assistance.

Women, who are expected to retain membership in their natal units, are supposed to identify totally with their conjugal groups and work on their behalf. Furthermore, women may extend to their husbands and affines usufructory rights in their mataqali land and assistance from their agnates. However, women's relatives may call on the women's affines for services too. This intricate, seemingly paradoxical position of women and the apparent reciprocity of benefits to affines through them allows women to function like centripetal forces, weaving their respective natal and conjugal mataqali into a fabric for the larger society.

Women's intercalary position is illuminated in these rituals; so too is the place of siblingship and the mataqali with which it is associated. The distinctions between siblings wrought by gender and defining mataqali membership is also marked in them. These rituals also delineate how the developmental cycle affects cross-sex siblingship. Cross-sex siblings become, according to the kinship ideology and terminology, the parents-in-law of their sibling's children. Their children's marriages result in returning a wife to the group that released a sister in the previous generation. The cross-sex siblings' and their children's affinal relations may be the paradigm for the many exchange relationships found in Fijian society. Exchange relationships are important in Oceanic societies (e.g., Clay 1977, Weiner 1976). The structural significance of cross-sex siblingship and notions of exchange are expressed in these rituals by the siblings' and their descendants' participation.

The geographic and social situation in which I conducted this research was a village on the Wainimala River. Namatai, the pseudonym that I use for this village, sat on a bluff overlooking the river and was surrounded on three sides by forest interspersed with gardens. Its forty-six houses were built along three paths, all parallel to the river. The village had "upper" and "lower" sections that corresponded to the river's flow. A Methodist church and rectory and the district school and teachers' compound were

at the lower end. All buildings sat amidst ornamental plants and closely cropped lawns. Coconut palms dotted the village, and breadfruit and orange trees, bananas and other food plants grew on its periphery. Most homes were made of bamboo, which was either split and plaited or covered with reeds and grasses. One residence and the church were made of concrete blocks. Three homes were constructed of sawn timber. All houses were raised above the ground to avoid inundation from the frequent rains. Traditionally, thatching was used for roofing, but corrugated metal sheets have replaced it. At the beginning of this research, only two houses had thatched roofs; by the end of it, those houses had been renovated and their roofs replaced with metal sheeting.

About 250 people resided in the village. The tentativeness of this statement of population is due to the common practice of Fijians to be away from their homes for extended periods, traveling and visiting relatives. During my village stay there were ten births and three deaths, and eight young people moved to urban areas for work.

The village economy was based on horticulture. Across the village was a large floodplain where most villagers' gardens were located. Root crops and vegetable relishes grown here made up the bulk of the diet. Most gardens were planted with taro, the preferred staple. This root crop provides a complete Fijian meal -- the root is one of the "true foods" (kakana dina), and the stalk and leaves can be

prepared with coconut milk to make a relish. The other most commonly cultivated root crops were tavioka and yams. Edible hibiscus was the most common of the vegetable relishes. Some villagers also planted smaller plots of green beans, cabbages, and cucumbers for household consumption and for sale in the village and at the markets.

Gathering and fishing augmented the diet of cultigens. Wild yams were collected, often by women, to give variety to the diet and to supplant crops that failed or were insufficient to meet household needs. Most animal protein came from fish, although fishing was not a daily activity. Eels were the largest fish caught, some nearly four feet long. Several other fish species were also found in the river and creeks. Prawns were the only crustaceans in the area. Both sexes fished; women used nets and poles, while men typically speared fish in the river. The river was murky during the fieldwork period because it was polluted by the effluence from the construction of a dam at its headwaters; this situation affected the men's spearfishing. Flying foxes, mongooses, and wild pigeons were either trapped or shot by men. For Sunday dinners or other special occasions people sometimes ate the domesticated chickens that roosted in village trees and were fed by women and children. The cows that ranged on the floodplain were slaughtered by men for rituals or were butchered and eaten or sold when found dead. Some men hunted wild pigs with dogs, often using only their cane knives to kill the

animals. A few men had licenses to hunt with guns.

The main cash crop was taro. Villagers took the tubers to the truck stop by boat where they sold them to middlemen. Men usually dominated this process, but sometimes women sold small crops alone or in conjunction with other women for money for a community enterprise. Typically, women earned cash by making pandanus-leaf mats, brooms, or bundles of pandanus leaves to sell in city markets. A few women sold cigarettes in the village.

Cultivation tools and techniques were relatively few in number. Dibble sticks, pitchforks, and cane knives were the most frequently used tools. A few villagers employed ox teams to plow the floodplain gardens. Some people applied fertilizers and pesticides in their plots.

In the division of labor, men were assigned the "heavy" tasks of clearing the gardens by a slash-and-burn method and preparing them for planting. Because they were "weak," women worked along with men in the less-demanding tasks of planting, weeding, and harvesting crops. Women also collected firewood; cooked; washed clothes; wove mats, brooms, and baskets; and tended children. Most of the cultivation of taro was done by women.

This outline of the social structure and physical setting in which these rituals occur sets the scene for the discussion of the cohabitation ritual that produces the women and the conjugal union that initiates affinal relations, two of this dissertation's central topics.

Two current anthropological enterprises, whose mutual objective is the clarification of ethnographic terms and frameworks, have influenced my analysis. One of these enterprises questions whether anthropological concepts are universally applicable for "making sense" of other cultures. In MacCormack's and Strathern's (1980) volume, for example, contributors discuss whether Western cultural dichotomies of nature and culture and the antithesis of the genders are universal phenomena. These anthropologists indicate that these paradigms are not always useful heuristic tools and do not reflect their particular non-Western informants' cultural perceptions. Likewise, L. Dumont (1983) points to the interpretive pitfalls that can occur when anthropologists accept certain phenomena as central concepts of another culture, without investigating whether their assumptions about these are responsible for their selection. For instance, Dumont asserts, if we focus on South Indian consanguinity and give little attention to affinity, we have made a value judgment about their respective significances. He says this because "South Indian people . . . look at the two entities in question with equanimity, and make a simple, straightforward, symmetrical distinction between them where we maintain a hierarchical distinction" (Dumont 1983:vii).

These examples of the discipline's self-analysis are part of a multifaceted process that has existed for some time now (cf. Boon 1982; Hymes 1973; Jacobs 1974; Leach

1971; Needham 1971, 1974, 1983). The rethinking of anthropology, however, has taken more dramatic expression within the last five years or so (Barrett 1984; Berreman 1982; Cesara 1982; Dumont 1978; Hoebel et al. 1982). For instance, Schneider (1984) has critiqued his work on Yapese kinship. Schneider's reanalysis may have been prompted by Labby's (1976) examination of his data, but for the last fifteen years, Schneider (1972) has been wrestling with the fundamental issue of whether what is called kinship is a phenomenon separable from other kinds of relationships.

Such terminological and conceptual issues are associated with another major concern in anthropology -- the communication or translation between cultures that ethnography entails. The problem of transcultural communication involves, of course, inquiries into the applicability of our concepts and paradigms to other cultures. Among those interested in anthropology as a communicative endeavor, Boon (1982) and Geertz (1973) have dealt at length with the process of making one culture understandable to another, and in so doing have contributed to fieldworkers' self-awareness of themselves as culture-bound persons engaged in cross-cultural communication.

The realization of the potential difficulties or misuse in employing one culture's terms in explaining another culture is connected to the fieldwork enterprise characterized as interpretive ethnography.

> Interpretive ethnography is, to use Riceour's phrase, a matter of attributing "a meaning to a meaning" (1970:13). It is a descriptive enter-

> prise, which promises neither to uncover "how it feels" to get inside a native's skin nor to facilitate causal generalization, but rather through its organization to promote at once a taste for detail and a sense of pattern and to articulate something about the ways that cultures work by showing how they "mean" (Rosaldo 1980:221).

Interpreting a culture is a comparative process: the ethnographer has "to preserve the 'otherness' and complexity of unfamiliar 'worlds' or contexts, while rendering familiar a hitherto inaccessible form of talk" (Rosaldo 1980:221). In other words, the anthropologists must use their cultural symbols, their language, to express what other people mean in their own -- and different from the anthropologists' -- terms.

Several theoretical and methodological issues have been involved in the facilitation of communication between cultures. Distinguishing between the subjects' view of their existence and actions -- emics -- and the observers' categorizations of the same -- etics -- has been a long-standing anthropological concern. The demarcation of emic and etic interpretations is related to anthropologists' compilation of informants' semantic systems, the purpose of ethnoscience. Additionally, an acknowledgment of the researcher in the fieldwork process has heightened ethnographers' understanding of their cultural concepts, assumptions, and communication models. Indeed, along with an increase in the anthropological literature focusing on the cross-cultural communication process entailed in fieldwork, there has been a proliferation of reports on fieldworkers'

experiences, which help readers understand within a more complete cultural (and transcultural) context the ethnographic communication being presented (Cesara 1982; Dumont 1978; Ruby 1982, among others). And, lastly, feminist scholarship has also affected anthropology by producing the epistemic model based on the premise that one "must not assume that existing categories of analysis are adequate, and [that one can] name new categories" (Thorne 1985:50).

These various concerns and orientations regarding cross-cultural fieldwork and ethnographic interpretations have alerted me to the potential for communication problems and to the need to attend to nuance in cross-cultural translation. It is, perhaps, the nuances, which must enhance our knowledge of other cultures, that suggest that the data itself may be complex, even contradictory. And, therefore, I try to record the many facets of phenomena, for example, that siblingship may be separable from corporate group membership and that the term <u>mataqali</u> can have different referents, various connotations for its members, and qualitative differences in membership as determined by gender.

The various interpretations and aspects of <u>mataqali</u> illustrate why, even though I can find connections between values, actions, and institutions, I do not describe a cultural system in which all elements fold neatly together in a series of Chinese boxes, or, to use another metaphor, do not reach closure. I try to explicate the "reality" of

Fijian life as best I can see and know it, and thus, for instance, I indicate that gender alone does not always affect rank, or ritual and social roles, because age is also a consideration. My assessment of the influence of these variables is correct, I maintain (cf. La Fontaine 1978). Secondly, while I make the bold statement that women in affinal relations should not be viewed as chattel but instead seen as "paths" between groups, I also affirm that the mataqali have a proprietary interest in their members. My assessment of both attitudes and orientations is correct, I believe; they are seemingly contradictory only if we assume that they refer to women (and men) in the same way, but they do not. Mataqali are at once defined as unique entities; as being composed of individual members; as having authority over members; as being largely under the direction of their elder members, who have a qualitatively different mataqali membership than do their junior members; and lastly, as providing qualitatively different mataqali affiliation for males and females. Elders do direct younger mataqali members and have a say in their endeavors, and the junior members belong to the mataqali (and to their elders) in a way that the senior generation does not. I refer to individuals, particularly young ones, as being viewed as the "property" of the mataqali. I use this expression in order to relate the sense of ownership, of authority, and of jurisdiction that elders have over junior mataqali members and the sense of the corporate body

being, in some sense, more significant than its individual members. If this choice of idiom bears too strongly in the direction of the junior people being objectified, I regret this. But I want to stress the tenor of the respective relationships regarding mataqali affiliation. For example, elders frequently can be heard to ask younger people, "O cei lewa?" ("Who has chosen/decided for you?") to determine if their actions have been approved by those who have a say in how they behave. I suppose that I could describe the relationship between the senior and junior mataqali members solely in terms of authority relations. Fijians, however, employ the term taukei, which can be glossed as owner or original inhabitant, to state the relationship between the youth and his kin at the cohabitation ritual described here. Taukei, meaning both owner and original inhabitant, refers to certain powers and privileges of persons to whom some forms of obedience and displays of respect are required. In sum, then, I try to translate as best as I can the seeming contradictions within, the variations of, the shadings in meanings regarding, and the different aspects of phenomena.

Because I am concerned about the heuristic utility of concepts, I have selectively used anthropological concepts to portray Matailobau life. Specifically, I take liberties with the application of the concepts of public and domestic domains in order to delineate the Matailobau distinctions between times, events, and purposes. I do this because

there are common elements that Westerners and Fijians attribute to these terms, and it is for the purposes of making Fijian life understandable "with reference to our construal of its context" (Rosaldo 1980:221) that I retain these dichotomous terms. My basic definitions of these concepts follow those of Ortner and Whitehead -- the public domain is "the sphere of wider social coordination" dominated by men and the domestic domain is not concerned with this (1981:18). I acknowledge that I sometimes figuratively stretch the more commonly accepted usage of the term domestic -- household and familial activities, spaces, and concerns -- to include a ritual that involves nonhousehold and family members and that contains elements of political, public relationships. I include the bisaba ritual within the domestic sphere, partly because the Matailobau gathered for it see it as separate from occasions and activities that they attend as political units, for intergroup exchange, and in nonkinship roles, and partly because women are its focus and major participants. I saw that some Matailobau events, times, and spaces are genderized, so that the public domain is associated with men and the domestic sphere with women. Thus, I utilize the anthropological concepts of the domestic and public to reflect the kinds of distinctions that Matailobau make for gender-appropriate tasks and domains.

Although these current interests in anthropological communication and conceptualization are apparent in this

study, so too are more traditional perspectives. For instance, the holistic orientation to data collection and analysis has facilitated my description of cultural meanings and the construction of social life and gender even as I focus on women's roles within these rituals. Because I take a holistic perspective, I attempt to limn the interconnections between, and the imbeddedness of values, of forms, and of actions that these rituals suggest. Both the outcomes of the analysis and my position regarding it are connected to my view of what ritual is -- purposive action geared to accomplishing social goals, to teaching social norms, and to socializing individuals.

I am most comfortable with the kind of interpretation of ritual that Richards uses in Chisungu, where she emphasizes the social context within which the ritual is set. I dwell neither on the meanings of symbols found within these rituals nor on people's reactions to these. Likewise, I do not review anthropological discussions of symbolism and consider their implications for this study (cf. Douglas 1966; Firth 1973; Langer 1942; Rosaldo 1980). I emphasize the socializing aspects of these rituals in part because of my own responses to them, and in part because of the way I have perceived Fijian attitudes toward these rituals and their orientation toward life.

My reactions to these rituals result from my initial village reception as a European women and from villagers' subsequent modification of my position as one more consis-

tent with that of other village women. When I entered the village, I was honored in the chief's house, along with my husband. We sat together to petition the chief for his protection in the village. For a period of time after this I was accorded more respect and given more privileges than other village women enjoyed. My first taste of what it was like to be a Matailobau woman came when I took my place at ritual events. I sat with other women my age in the last places reserved for women; before me sat older women, younger men, and finally senior men. I resented my position. I also felt humiliated when on my knees I presented tea to elders and learned to be silent at public events. As time passed, I no longer seethed at occupying one of the lowest positions at public events. What created this change in my perceptions of my place and my acceptance or understanding of my situation was a socialization process that turned my initial feminist anger at being placed in a subordinate female position into an understanding of and identification with Matailobau women. Instead of jealously viewing myself in a position against men, I felt a solidarity with women, and if women sat in less prestigeful places, so what? "So what" is what the entire public ritual process had become to me. I learned about and internalized cultural statements about women's roles and places, not only because of the rituals, for my lessons were found in all contexts, but because they were the most pronounced lessons at whose continued attendance I could

measure my acculturation.

It is partly because of my reaction to these rituals that I view them as transformative and boundary-maintaining. I devoted little time to asking villagers how they felt at these rituals. On the contrary, people talked about what the rituals did or should do, or what they or others did during them and why. I did not think about my lack of interest in their emotive responses during the research period. As I wrote this I began to understand that I believed I knew how they felt, that is, I knew how I felt at these events that tutored me in Matailobau ways.

I also limited my inquiry into my informants' affective responses to these rituals because I knew that Fijians are taught who they are and what they do. Fijians tell each other what they do and what they as Fijians can do. There is a Fijian way of life, of performing tasks, of techniques (vakaviti) and with special reference to culture and custom there is the concept of being "in the way of the land" (vakavanua). Asking Fijians why they do thus and so may or may not yield the kind of introspective answers that are so satisfying to Westerners. Some Fijians will explain rituals, e.g., that the first fruit ceremony links the production cycles of domestic and wild yams with the respective procreative efforts of people and the deity. It is not the why of things that is important in Fijian culture but how things are done. And so, given my response to their public, ritual lessons, and my absorption of

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these, plus their orientation to these rituals, I focus on the socializing aspects of these rituals and the goals that they seek to obtain.

CHAPTER 2

COHABITATION RITUAL

Cohabitation rituals and weddings create the women whose ritual roles we want to understand. Weddings do not occur as often as do cohabitation rituals, and for this reason I am describing the cohabitation ritual that produces a woman and initiates the affinal relations to which she is so significant, two central topics of this work.

Fijians do not automatically assign the term yalewa (woman) or marama (lady) to a physically mature female. They usually reserve these appellations for those who are or have been members of a conjugal pair. A girl becomes a woman in this ritual partly because she has publicly entered a conjugal relationship but partly because this union is sanctioned by the community. The point in the ritual at which the transformation truly occurs is when an elder lectures the couple on proper marital behavior.

A cohabitation ritual results from an elopement (veidrotaki), which is viewed as the theft of the girl from her mataqali. This ritual provides a means of rectifying the eloping couple's social and moral errors and a way for the pair to cohabit in the village, where morality and rules of etiquette should prevail.

The couple's social acceptability in the village is vouched for by the youth's mataqali, who host the ritual and in so doing indicate to the village that, by sheltering

them, they will be somewhat responsible for the couple's marital career. The boy's kin will ideally apologize to the girl's group during the ritual and the latter will accept their expressions of regret and accept the union. If the girl's people attend the ritual and exchange valuables with the youth's, the couple will be considered vakamau (married). If the girl's kin do not consent to the union, the pair is defined as vakawati (courting or engaged). The cohabitation ritual then at least results in creating a socially approved couple but not necessarily a married one.

This ritual, like the wedding, lasts for four days; it differs from the wedding in several respects -- it is not preceded by a betrothal and a series of exchanges between the youth's and girl's groups and, by definition, does not include the girl's kin's transfer of their rights to her to the youth's group and thus a marriage. The cohabitation ritual's essential components include the clothing and anointing of the couple and their sponsors; ritual meals and drinking of the beverage yaqona (an infusion made from Piper methysticum roots); the vakamamaca (drying) of the girl on the fourth day, after the couple has bathed and fished with the girl's sisters and the boy's male attendant; gift giving; and an elder's speech to the couple on proper marital behavior, which, in effect, solemnizes their union. The elder's lecture is partially necessitated by the couple's elopement because this indicates that they did

not take the correct path -- betrothal-- to establish their alliance.

An elopement poses several problems that the cohabitation ritual seeks to remedy. First, the boy brings the girl to his household, and its members must decide whether she is to stay with them. Second, the boy's kin, the girl's, and the village need to determine if the couple truly wishes to cohabit. The girl's relatives are sometimes the first to seek confirmation of the pair's intentions by sending a representative to ask her if she "is going to stay forever." The cohabitation ritual acknowledges the couple's intentions to become a unit and the boy's kin's acceptance of this unit, and the village's participation confers community approval of the couple and its enclosure in a mataqali.

The ritual also helps to ease the first few days of the couple's incorporation in the youth's household, particularly in terms of providing bedding and clothes for the girl who left her wardrobe in her parents' house. The establishment of a couple within a household requires that they share a conjugal bed, for couples occupy clearly defined sleeping quarters.Fijian houses are constructed with no walls dividing the living areas. There are elevated beds for senior people, and couples sleep in nestlike beds made from bamboo poles laid on the floor and covered with mats. Other household members, especially single and junior persons, retire where there is available floor

space. Because a new couple needs bedding materials, the gifts most appropriate for the new couple are pillows, blankets, and the curtains that cordon the sleeping area.

The gifts usually given by other villagers and non-village guests, however, are foodstuffs, clothing, whale's teeth, and mats. Food is needed by the ritual's hosts to feed their guests, clothing is useful for the girl, whale's teeth and mats are valuables, and the mats have practical uses as well.

Certain persons and groups are expected to give particular prestations. The youth's mataqali hosts the four-day ritual in one of its member's houses, where presentations are made; the couple is dressed, fed, and ensconced in the sleeping area; and the guests drink and visit. The boy's male agnates should bring yaqona and his female agnates should provide clothes for the girl, mats, and cooked and raw food. In effect, most food for the first two days' meals are provided by the youth's entire mataqali. On the last two days of the ritual his group's sibling-mataqali, mataqalivata (units who view themselves as siblings), are expected to help the hosts with provisions. At each meal, however, other village mataqali may bring portions of cooked "real food" (tubers) to the dining hall. Giving a portion of cooked food to another household is called i takitaki (the share of something). Bringing food and rendering services to the ritual's hosts are expected and valued activities.

As particular categories of persons should present things during the ritual, so too are persons of different sexes and ages expected to perform certain tasks. On the first day the couple is anointed with oil, given new clothes, and draped with garlands by the youth's cross-cousins, the girl's sisters. The couple is joined at a meal by the girl's father's sister and a senior male. The girl's companion, her father's sister, is expected to stay in the house for the duration of the ritual. During these four days, senior men sit in the youth's house, engaging in conversation and drinking yaqona. Women come to this house when their conjugal mataqali present their gifts and when they give food for meals. Youths, girls, and younger children harvest crops, collect firewood, wash dishes, erect a pavilion and perform jobs assigned to them by senior people. Sometimes during the festivities mature women perform a burlesque or humerous, possibly licentious, skit (vakavuru). At night there is singing and some dancing by men and women. On the ritual's last day the couple goes to the river to bathe and fish, accompanied by the girl's sisters and the youth's male attendant. This party returns the fish to the girl's kin to be cooked and presented at the luncheon. While the girl's sisters are at the river, the youth's are preparing the meal in the village. As the group from the river nears the youth's house, they are met by his sisters, who present the girl with clean, dry clothes. Yaqona is given to the girl's

women for returning her to her new home. Afterwards, a meal is eaten by everyone attending the ritual. Following this, a senior man lectures the couple about proper marital behavior; the talk is directed at the girl.

As the senior man focuses his remarks on the girl, so too will I now attend to the meanings attached to her. First, it is important to ascertain why the elder addresses his comments primarily to the girl. I believe that there are two reasons why the girl receives the most instruction; one is that her nature requires that she be tutored in proper social behavior, and the other has to do with the more extensive role she plays in alliance formation in comparison with her mate. At this point I will limit my discussion to why female nature needs to be molded and return to why and how women cast a wider net in affinal connections later.

Women are described as weak (malumalumu), formless beings with unfirm spirits (yalowai); their behavior is not dignified; they are silly. The adjectives applied to women are those used for children. Women and children are socially immature persons -- that is, in comparison with men. During the cohabitation ritual, however, this formless female is given a socially approved shape when a senior man instructs her in how to behave as a wife, as a woman. It is then that the girl, incapable of self-governing behavior, is turned into a responsible woman. Because she has been a relatively formless social being

susceptible to molding, changes can be made in the girl. Unlike the girl, the youth is already able to behave in a socially approved manner because of his male spirit, a construction intrinsically solid and capable of internalizing social norms.

There were indications from informants' comments that perhaps women are not as capable of internalizing social mores as men. As do other non-Western people (cf., for example, Ortner 1974) and some Western philosophers (e.g., Hegel), Matailobau categorize men with the social governing qualities of culture. From the conversations and stories that I recorded, Matailobau women do not appear to be viewed as "undomesticated, natural beings," as they are supposedly perceived by the authors mentioned above. Matailobau speak of women as needing men to structure their behavior. (There are old tales that relate the unpleasant outcomes that happen to women who refuse to marry and grant men's hegemony over them.) They would probably agree with Hegel on another matter -- that "the perfect moral male/female relationship [is] that of brother and sister" (O'Brien 1981:26). What they would not accept is his notion that this is because "female morality is essentially biological" and not directed at society at large. Quite the opposite is argued by Matailobau men and women; this will be illustrated in the chapter on the bisaba.

Men and women hold this general view of femaleness and the value of the senior man's lecture to the girl at the

cohabitation ritual. This is not to say, as will be presented later, that contradictory attributes are not also applied to the sexes. But in Matailobau thinking, men are to be respected because they are male; women are not worthy of such respect. Marriage or cohabitation, however, modifies the girl into a woman because it affects her behavior and being. It also makes a youth (carauvou) a man (turaga), but this can also occur as a result of aging. A single man, after his middle years, can be given the appellation man by virtue of his seniority. An elderly single man can participate in rituals as well as married men do; not so for an unmarried female. This indicates that adult social status is not given to single, physically mature females; marriage or cohabitation makes girls into adult women, and this is most evident in rituals. For example, during a funeral it is only adults who sit in the deceased's house to mourn. Before her cohabitation or marriage, a girl cannot stay with the mourners in this house. An elderly unmarried male may, however, give a speech at a funeral. At domestic rituals, i.e., the bisaba, matrons speak, and if they attend at all, girls sit silently in the places occupied by those with the least social prestige. Fuller participation in community life for a girl begins when she enters a marriage or cohabitation relationship.

The distinctions between male and female natures and how these are associated with differences wrought upon the

sexes by cohabitation or marriage are also linked to their respective roles in mataqali. There are differences in the articulations of the couple's conjugal roles with their most important mataqali statuses of sister and brother. The values assigned to the roles of brother and husband are commensurate in value. Not so for the roles of sister and wife; the former is the much honored mataqali sibling and cherished vessel of mataqali blood, and the latter is the subordinate spouse whose sexuality, which is required for her affinal group's propagation, is partially responsible for devaluing her. Therefore, cohabitation/marriage produces two discontinuous roles for women. This disparity does not obtain for the roles of brother and husband. Shore (1981) finds this to be the same in Samoa, where sexuality is part of the definition of female roles but not a qualifier for masculine roles: "Concern over sexual control and the proper allocation of reproductive potential is focused on the female and not the male" (Shore 1981:201). Because a girl's conjugal role is defined by her sexuality, and because the supervision of females' sexual behavior is so important to Fijians, a girl is guided toward proper conduct by the elder at the cohabitation ritual.

Why is it that sexuality is a definitional element in all female roles but is not expressed for that of sister? The sister's sexuality is not alluded to because of the tabu that cross-sex siblings may not refer to concupis-

cence. For a man, a sister is a person in whose presence not even a verbal or kinetic reference to sexuality can be made. To behave otherwise would make the siblings guilty of ori (a transgression against custom), and a fine can be levied on the sibling initiating such behavior. From adolescence onward, cross-sex siblings are reserved in each others' presence; they should not discuss sexual matters or behave in a licentious manner when together, and formal avoidance may occur when they marry. This behavioral complex, I suggest, is associated with the fact that a brother is the guardian of his sister's sexuality. Their mataqali has a proprietary interest in the girl's sexuality. The brother, as the mataqali representative, functions as his sister's Argus. To indicate the seriousness of the consequences of her sexual behavior, the brother must not condone any licentiousness on her part. Hence the tabu. It is because of this relatinship that, in the following description of a cohabitation ritual, a brother hit his sister when she defended the girl whose premarital affair preceded the ritual, because he did not want his sister to accept such behavior or to imitate it.

The entire mataqali is concerned about the girl's sexual conduct. The brother's interest is more evident because of the relative closeness of their ages, and because he is expected to keep watch over his sister. His junior status in the mataqali allows him to engage in her management and to use sanctions that his more dignified

father would not. For instance, in the example to be described here, the sister hit her brother back when he disciplined her for siding with the eloping girl; this indicates their relative closeness in age. The girl's father did not intervene in the siblings' altercation. In like manner the girl's father did not try to retrieve the girl from the youth's house. He sent his wife to do so. It is more acceptable for the mother, as a woman, to seek her daughter's return. Women are not as dignified as men; thus, the mother has less prestige to lose when she risks the humiliation of publicly going for her daughter. Notions of feminine nature also influence why someone would try to call the girl back. Girls are not expected to behave in a socially approved manner of their own volition. Their liquid souls flow over the boundaries of convention; therefore, they must be brought back within these boundaries. In another sense, girls are not responsible for their actions; they must be controlled. For all these reasons, brothers should supervise their sisters.

A brother and other <u>mataqali</u> members do not lose interest in the sister's behavior after she marries. Traditionally, for instance, married women felt compelled to perform their domestic chores well, fearing their own kin's admonishments that the family's reputation would be tarnished by its members' poor household habits and the sting of their village neighbors' gossip (Griffen 1975). These considerations obtain to a degree today as well. And while

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her *mataqali* cannot address their concerns about her sexual behavior to a woman at the inception of her cohabitation, the elder's guidance should remind her of her *mataqali* obligations, the sacred trust that she carries for them, and her new responsibilities to her affines.

Women are in one sense pivotal in affinal relations. When they "move about" after marriage, they take their siblings' blood elsewhere and "open paths" to other "houses" and groups. Women are valued for their ability to create these new connections. Matailobau conceptions of all of this appear to be similar to those of Moalans in the Lau Islands of Fiji, who

> describe the mother's brother, the father's sister, the offspring of these, and the sister's child [as] "sacred blood" (*dra tabu*). A man's sister gives *his* "blood" (*dra*), *his* "descent" (*kawa*), to her children. A man's father's sister carries his "blood" also, and gives it to her children. A man again carries the "blood" of his mother's brother, carries the "descent" (*kawa*) of that man through his own mother. "My sister's son," said Taka of Keteira, "is very 'serious' [*dredre*]. It is my blood; my sister went to give rise to that man. Brothers are only brothers [*veitacini sa veitacini ga*], but the sister's child is a new path [of relationship]. Your daughter or your sister makes a new line [*kawa*]. Brothers are only in the house; they have been there from the past to today. But the line of my sister is a new line" (Sahlins 1962:168).

Building these networks is not accomplished, however, without some sense of peril to the blood that is taken from the group in the forms of the sister and her children and to their well-being. An elopement is the "theft" of a sacred commodity, the sister and, in her, her *mataqali*

blood. Disregarding momentarily the mataqali's proprietary rights to her and their sense of authority over her, I want to focus on the meanings concatenated to the girl. She symbolizes a corporate essence, blood, and the ability to transmit it. Stealing her is not only an insult to her kin but a kind of sacrilege affecting their being. She represents not only what the group is but what it can be by regenerating itself through her in other units. The power of transmission of self is found in the mataqali sister. Not to control this sister and where and how this essence is transmitted can result in outrage for the group.

I have referred in the last several pages to three topics that are given expression in various women's roles in the cohabitation ritual, i.e., the discontinuity between sister and wife roles, how the distinctions between these roles facilitate women's interstitial position or dual mataqali affiliation, and the fact that sisters transmit mataqali substance. Each of these aspects of women's lives points to the importance of mataqali membership, a fact that will be reiterated in diverse ways throughout this work. For now, I want to concentrate on the associations women have with kin groups as I discuss these topics and women's ritual roles.

In the cohabitation ritual to be described, some women affiliate with the girl's relatives at one point while their husbands align themselves with the youth's. Although this situation is peculiar to the circumstances surrounding

this couple, there are structural principles and cultural meanings that underlie it -- women's dual mataqali affiliation, their malleable natures, and the equivalence of groups defined as siblings. This ritual also illustrates a common feature of women's ritual roles; they transmit persons and substance between mataqali. Women's flexible group affiliation and their transmitter roles are linked to the cultural definitions of them as malleable, weak, formless beings; thus, women can act as transmitters partially because of their intermediary "pathlike" social positions and flexible natures. In other words, women described as paths may move people and corporate property between mataqali because, like paths or boundaries, they exist between these groups and can be used as conveyances. Both of these types of functions and roles emerge from particular female statuses, those of wife, sister, and mother. I will describe how these statuses are involved in transfers in the cohabitation ritual and then talk about how women align themselves with one mataqali while their husbands stand with another.

There are four kinds of transfers in this ritual that women generate as wives, sisters, and mothers. One transfer involves the girl/woman who, as the new wife, moves into her spouse's home and is expected to behave as a member of his mataqali. The girl's movement entails her taking the potential of her mataqali's sacred blood to her affines, and in so doing, her significance as sister

emerges. A second transfer occurs if the girl's relatives come to the cohabitation ritual to allow her to marry the youth; the transferral of their rights in the girl is accompanied by her mother's laying down of the marital mats (tevutevu). The mother is assisted in this act by the youth's mother. The girl's mother makes the transfer as wife of the girl's mataqali, but, I suggest, also as sister of the group who receives the girl as wife and potential mother, for the girl is terminologically/ideally marrying her mother's brother's son. Likewise, the youth's mother's participation is based on her duties as wife to the mataqali receiving the woman, but she is given not only her new daughter-in-law but her brother's child, whom she should supervise as mother-in-law and care for as member of her natal mataqali. Thus, the mothers act on behalf of their natal kin as sisters even when they perform their ritual labors ostensibly for their affines. Sisterhood is also expressed in another act of transference, this one by the woman's sisters, who take her for her bath on the ritual's fourth day and then return her to her new mate's people. In all these instances, sisters can confer important mataqali possessions on others, either through their own sexuality or by transmitting other persons'. One may view this as performing services for their male agnates, a thing women should do for men. But again, it is connected, I maintain, to women's ability and intrinsic power to open "new paths" and to function as such themselves. Sisterhood

is the more enduring status for a woman, and as the couple's mothers' actions indicate, even when a woman does something on behalf of her affines there is always the possibility that she is aiding her consanguines.

Women in their roles as sisters and wives do have things in common. When women fill interstitial places and when they transfer persons and substance at this ritual, they do them to continue social life; this, in part, is why they are called _givers of life_. Women nurture others, give food, and keep a watchful eye on others' needs in order to obtain community aid for them. The ritual roles previously enumerated articulate with other women's ritual contributions, i.e., the presentation of food, clothing, or mats. These gifts indicate, along with women's functions as transmitters of people and substance, that their generic social role may be care-giver or sustainer of life, for each of these services yields utilitarian or essential items for existence. Indeed, the youth's sisters' preparation of the fourth day's meals and bestowing of clothing upon the girl is another example of women's sustaining and nurturing role. The care given their brother's spouse is a means of ensuring the union and thus the chances for procreating new members of their _mataqali_. Care-giving is a significant action and value in Fijian life, and because of this the cohabitation ritual has special meaning: it creates a woman, whose worth and function is tied to beneficence.

As I said before, Fijians do not automatically assign the term yalewa (woman) or marama (lady) to a physically mature female; they reserve these appellations for those who are or have been members of a conjugal pair. The Matailobau term for woman connotes a high female status, the privileges of which include receiving a special greeting upon entering another's house and being entitled to return the salutation. Certain respected community obligations fall to matrons; for instance, they bring and serve village guests food. I once prepared food for a tea given to visiting delegates to a church meeting. The woman in whose home the tea was held asked me to assist her because "only a girl" was available to help her in the kitchen and a matron was required to serve the male guests properly. This example indicates that visitors are honored if they are the objects of matrons' ministrations, because relative to girls, women are prestigious. Their prestige is also exhibited by the fact that they can give speeches at rituals and at public events, e.g., when they all participate in making a mat for a particular occasion. Membership in the soqosoqo vakamarama (village women's society) is limited to matrons. This society can initiate community projects and exert influence in deciding village activities. Because of its ability to mobilize people and affect decisions on village matters, the society and its members are respected.

It is not merely women's marital status that determines the relative high regard in which they are held, but also the value attached to their role-specific tasks. Women are bibi (heavy, significant) because they are settled into and responsible for households, and because they give services and resources to the community. What they do as matrons is considered important, and so too are they. These activities can be performed only by women; girls are prevented from doing them. Girls' jobs devalue them; they move between their parental and various relatives' households, rendering domestic and horticultural services because they are persons of low status. The girls' mobility and purported undependability contributes to the low esteem in which they are held. Females, then, gain prestige when they engage in matronly work, but are precluded from doing this until they are defined as women.

A woman is socially valued because she is a wife. Ironically, her affines respect her because of what she can bring to them via her status as sister in another mataqali; a woman may extend usufructory rights in her mataqali land to her husband and her husband's relatives. Women can provide this benefit to their affines because they are identified with them yet expected to remain loyal to their natal kin. Because they are intermediary in mataqali identification, they can be emissaries and also, by virtue of their qualities that elicit others' affections, bond the two units. Women can be valued for their parts in mataqali

alliance, but this same function and position may pose difficulties for them (e.g., they must abide by the mourning restrictions imposed on their natal and conjugal relatives). While having responsibilities to two units may, as in mourning, be hardships for women, there are compensations. Women's consanguines will protect them against their affines' poor treatment or serve as a refuge when women want to leave their husbands. The permanence and value of sisterhood is shown when a woman's spouse (sometimes with his agnates) must approach her agnates with a whale's tooth -- the Fijian valuable par excellence -- to ask their permission to return her to his home.

In the past, improper treatment of women was harshly responded to by her kin. As Brewster (1922) reports, a man was stomped by his affines because their sister had been impregnated by him during the postpartum tabu period. A sister's children reward their mother's mataqali's concern about her and them. Today, villagers say that their first paycheck or parts thereof should be given to their mother's brother. And the mother's brother is given the best repayment of all -- his sister's daughter as his son's wife, a point we will soon discuss.

Although I have been stressing that women seem to link and create reciprocal benefits for mataqali, the couple is, in some sense, the center of their relatives' attentions because the partners affect mataqali relationships. Each

group has an investment in the continuance of a union that provides them with various benefits.

Even though marital partners may be sometimes viewed as alike, cohabitation/marriage affects them differently. Women change group identification, their husbands do not; women change residences by custom, their husbands by choice or need; and it may be assumed that women's traits make them, relatively speaking, socially immature and more likely to disrupt affinal ties. For this latter reason, the girl is lectured on proper wifely behavior at the cohabitation ritual. It might be that the homily is also deemed necessary because this is a girl who has eloped and for that reason has shown a special lack of social decorum and thus a need for such instruction.

The girl who requires assistance in becoming a good wife is, as I noted before, the mataqali sister who is carefully watched because she is the vessel of their sacred blood. Throughout this section I have been referring to the significance of the girl's and other women's mataqali affiliation and their greater worth as sisters than as wives. I now want to discuss other aspects of mataqali membership, particularly cross-sex siblingship, and how these are expressed in this ritual.

Matailobau view the couple as their respective mataqali's "property." The girl's people hold rights in her that they transfer to the youth's group upon her marriage. The youth's kin are the taukei ni tagane (owners of the

male); their proprietary hold on him is shown by their determining the ritual's format, one of their senior men speaking for the unit, their choosing his attendant, and senior members presenting gifts and redistributing those received. This orientation does not reflect the usual anthropological focus on the woman and her children as the corporate property involved in a cohabitation or marriage and the transfer of rights in them as a hallmark of the institution. The exchange of gender-specific prestations may represent the couple and signify that the youth and girl are their respective _mataqali_'s gift. I suggest this view of the couple because the masculine gift, the whale's tooth, is given by the youth's group in exchange for the mats, the feminine valuable, presented by the girl's _mataqali_. Equating the girl and youth as their group's possessions modifies the anthropological discussion about whether women are connubial property (Levi-Strauss 1969; van Baal 1975; Weiner 1976). When the youth is viewed as his _mataqali_'s "property," then we must consider him possibly to be used in _mataqali_ alliance formation in the same way that women are employed. The youth appears to be "given" in the cohabitation ritual in the same way by his group as is the girl by hers. For if the group does not approve of his choice and sponsor the ritual, the youth cannot reside with the girl in the village as a proper couple with accepted affinal connections.

Although I have been stressing the mataqali as the significant actors in a cohabitation ritual, their hold on their members should not be viewed as coercive because it is matched by the individual's corporate group identification and loyalty. These sentiments are perhaps best illustrated by those Fijians who marry in civil ceremonies away from home but who return for village rituals. Not only are these persons responding to the dictates of ancient Fijian custom -- a mighty incentive -- and reacting to the possibility of not having their unions fully accepted by their mataqali, they are also reflecting those deep concerns about corporate identity that necessitate the sharing and approval of their new alliances. It is for these reasons that exchanges between mataqali, which I will now outline, are important aspects of this ritual.

The specific act of giving a whale's tooth to the girl's kin, called the bulubulu (the burying), accomplishes two things. First, it expresses the youth's apologies to the girl's mataqali for having "stolen" her instead of approaching them and seeking her hand in marriage (this is the Fijian idiom). Second, the acceptance of the whale's tooth and other valuables by the girl's mataqali and their counter-prestation transfers their rights in her and in her children to the youth's mataqali. The apology and its acceptance can occur soon after the elopement or years later. If she is married, the woman's children are patrilineally affiliated. Before a woman's children can be

included in her mate's mataqali, she and he must be considered married. Until her family yields their rights in her and her progeny, a woman has "a strong hold on the children." Before the transfer of rights in the children and her occurs, the woman can include her children in her mataqali's roster. The genitor would have a difficult task in trying to place the youngsters on his mataqali's list. Mataqali membership is a legal status that involves registering a person's name in a kin group and having a claim to mataqali-held land.

When rights in a women and her children have been relinquished, compensation must be made to her mataqali for fear that they may use supernatural sanctions against her conjugal kin -- Matailobau people maintain some notion that a woman's fertility is under the influence of her natal kin, particularly her brother. The mother's brother is feared (voro) because of his power to harm his sister's children or to prevent their conception. And that is one reason why at the cohabitation ritual -- or sometime afterwards -- the youth apologizes for having eloped with the girl.

The mother's brother's influence on his sister and her children continues through time because the ideal marriage occurs between the children of a brother and sister. The kinship terminology equates the mother's brother with the father-in-law and the father's sister with the mother-in-law, and after two generations of marriages between such

ideal spouses the mother's brother is married to the father's sister. This pattern includes two advantages emanating from the cross-sex sibling relationship. First, a man has influence over the fecundity of the girl who should marry his son, and thus possesses a means to protect his and his sister's mataqali's continuity. This feature is, I suggest, tempered by the man's sister's ability to secure love and care for herself and her children because of her relationship with her brother and also her feminine qualities. Villagers said that there is something about women that evokes others' pity, love, and care (love, gift, and pity have the same root, loma). The sister may also use her brother's feelings for and obligations to her to benefit her son when she approaches her sibling to request his daughter in marriage for her child.

The siblingship of a couple's parents is particularly important for women's wedding roles because what the mothers' actions show, I maintain, is the tenacity of their natal mataqali affiliations and their bonds with their brothers. Women are in a particularly useful position in terms of assisting their brother's son's marriages to their daughters. Both men and women said that the girl's mother permits her to marry, even though it is the girl's father who receives the youth's request to wed her (that is, when a betrothal is sought, and in cases of elopement when apologies are proferred). Why and how this seeming incongruity comes to be is explained by villagers in this way: a

mother is the girl's manager; she teaches her skills, has her as a helpmate, and is her guardian. When the request to marry the girl comes, it is the mother who relinquishes her managerial control to the youth's mother, who will be the girl's new household supervisor. Jural rights may be transferred by the men of the girl's mataqali, but this is signaled by the girl's mother's presentation of mats that make up the nuptial couch.

Interestingly, the action that completes the transfer of rights in the girl is performed by the couple's mothers, for in the elaborate form of marriage they make up the marriage bed on the first day of the ritual -- on behalf of mataqali with whom they have no permanent connections (that is, if viewed in terms of their conjugal mataqali ties). But if we look at the girl's mother's task, particularly, we can see how the mothers act for their consanguines. I propose this because the daughter takes her mother's place in the latter's mataqali or is the person who can replace her. Thus, it is the mother's right to release her control over her child and make her the bride of her brother's son. Looked at in another way, the mother's group should have the first opportunity to bring back a woman to replace the one they lost when the mother married.

The importance of the cross-sex sibling tie is also evident in the relationship between the daughter- and mother-in-law. According to the logic of the kinship system, the daughter/bride shares mataqali membership with

her father's sister/mother's brother's wife, her mother-in-law. Because of this, the women are supposed to care for one another as mataqali sisters. Women connected in this fashion can be expected to live amicably and, I suggest, to ease the difficulties built into their relationship. Their reciprocal support and the strength of their kin affiliation may actually be founded on the older woman's bond with her brother, the girl's father. I say this because the kinship system is based on the notion that marriages occur between two kin groups: sisters go to the same place as wives. Brothers take back their sisters' daughters. Sisters hand their daughters to their brothers and act as guardians of their brothers' daughters, their daughters-in-law.

Two other aspects of the cross-sex sibling relationship should be noted here. The demarcation of authority between the brother and sister and their roles as mother's brother and father's sister are preparatory for and continue into their affinal roles. Villagers said that neither in her role as father's sister nor as mother-in-law is this woman viewed with the awe that is reserved for her brother, as both mother's brother and father-in-law. Depending upon their respecting gender, the children of a woman perceive their mother's brother a bit differently; this disparity in sister's children's reactions is useful -- the child who is less afraid of the uncle must go to live with him and the one who is more so must ask his

permission to marry his daughter. And thus it is claimed that the niece is less fearful of the uncle than is her brother. Women said that their relationship with their mother's brothers as fathers-in-law is more reserved than it was with them as uncles before the women were married.

I have been describing the reserve and authority structure surrounding the cross-sex sibling relationship. Let me turn now to the relationship between these siblings' children, who are potential spouses. Cross-sex cousins' interactions are nearly mirror opposites of those between their sibling parents. First, cross-cousins are terminologically separated from siblings; siblings are equated with both matrilateral and patrilateral parallel cousins. Teasing and ribald behavior are permitted -- indeed, expected -- between cross-cousins, tavale. In contrast, as indicated before, the reserve between cross-sex siblings graduates into formal avoidance when the siblings marry and become parents; then they use their children to transmit messages between them, and the brother does not face his sisters while eating.

At cohabitation rituals, the differences between the behaviors of cross-cousins and cross-sex siblings is clear. The youth's cross-cousins, i.e., the girl's sisters, anoint, give new clothes to, and garland the couple, and tease the guests, covering them with powder and smearing them with oil; their behavior is aimed at producing a convivial atmosphere. The youth's sisters, by comparison,

are very reserved participants. They do not dance or behave in a bawdy manner in the house where the ritual is celebrated and where their brother's conjugal role is beginning and sexual aspects of it -- that is, the nuptial bed -- are evident. While the party is fishing and bathing on the last day of the cohabitation ritual, the youth's sisters remain in the village in order to prepare the feast and to collect dry clothes for the girl, who left her home without her wardrobe. The youth's sisters must act with him and on behalf of their mataqali to honor their obligation to the girl. The division between the cousins and siblings is also shown by the contributions that each makes to the fourth day's midday meal. The youth's sisters provide cooked food "from the land" -- tubers, a fowl, or a cow. The girl's sisters, the cousins, contribute the fish that they have caught. One side gives something from mataqali-claimed gardens, while the other harvests what it can from outside its own milieu.

The divisions between the youth's and girl's kin's presentations to the ritual and the disparity between the roles of sister and wife are manifestations of a prominent element of Fijian social structure and cognitive organization, viz., the construction of sides (yasana). The siblingship that promotes the sense of "we" and "they" is associated with the predisposition toward lineage connubium and the social and cultural emphasis on exchange. The principal's groups' involvement in this ritual is emically

viewed as significant. First, there must be sides to accomplish the ritual tasks that create the celebration and establish the couple. There is also the need to emphasize the siblingship within these categories. During the ritual, mataqali ideals are expressed by working and eating together and by amassing and then distributing gifts as a group. For some parts of the ritual, the actual kin of the couple need not attend or perform their functions; their structural equivalents can do so. Actually, groups that are equated are expected to assist each other, and it is only a modification of this principle that allows them to represent the couple's units.

Equivalence between mataqali is made on the model of siblingship. Siblingship is based on common descent and propinquity resulting from origins in the same yavu ("housesite"). The political aspect of the sibling relationship has two modes:the cross-sex sibling set, in which "a brother is his sister's leader" (liuliu), and also the same-sex sibling relationship, in which the elder can command the respect and obedience of the junior sibling. When viewed as siblings, then, mataqali are somehow alike and yet somewhat different, as are siblings per se. Thus, kinds of siblingship between mataqali are created by virtue of the fact that they belong to the same phratry; they occupy adjacent territories; they are descendants of two sisters; they are sisters' children to the same group; they

perform the same function, e.g., are heralds; or they act as a co-residential unit.

Mataqali that are separated into "sides" or exchange partners are bound by the women who share in their respective identities. These women can substitute for their male counterparts in their affinal and natal units; this is illustrated twice in this ritual. Women's identification with two groups is made more useful by their ability to bridge them; it is because of this function that they are referred to as "paths" (sala/gaunisala). Their linking capabilities are founded on their status as sisters. I suggest that the Matailobau term for sister (salavolo) linguistically points to their social usages and cultural meanings because sala means path and volo is to go aside. Villagers tended not to want to divide the word and ferret out meanings from its constituent parts, as I have done here. But I believe that salavolo's elements fit neatly with women's role in network building and, for instance, Sahlins's quote and my informants' statements about them.

The bridging of groups that women facilitate entails reciprocal privileges and obligations. For example, the wife's brother and her husband should be especially helpful to each other. House-building parties and garden-preparation activities, for instance, are often headed by the householder's wife's brothers. I recall also, as an illustration of sister's husband's help, a man working with

his wife's brother for two entire days to build the latter's kitchen.

When a couple has a child, reciprocal respect, obligations, and privileges mark the relations of the sister's child and her brother. For instance, one day I saw an adolescent enter his uncle's house, walk past his aunt, and reach into the food chest in order to take out some food. His aunt made some mild protest that she needed the food. This same behavior on the part of the child in his own house could result in him being slapped and called a thief. But, as women bragged to me, in their maternal kin's houses children could do things that would not be tolerated in their own agnatic relatives' homes.

The inter-married mataqali are said to be part of these avuncular relations because the genealogical connection between members of groups are extended to the corporate bodies of which they are members. Even without the benefit of structural relationships and expectations of aid, villagers indicated that women could bind groups and persons. Affective bonds through women tie their offspring to their natal kin, and vice versa. The mother is nurturant and the children identify with and love her kin, who are equated with their mother's tenderness. The mataqali loves its sister's children because the mother was her brother's protected sibling and her sister's loving companion. There is, as I said before, something intrinsic to females and femaleness that evokes others' pity and, thus, love.

Therefore, people involved with a woman as mother and sister are, by their sentiments for her, attached to each other. For example, at least seven people's participations in the cohabitation ritual to be discussed here are attributable to their matrilateral ties to the couple.

Women's incorporative abilities may be symbolized in the fishing nets used on the ritual's fourth day. Just as fish, which are the patrilineal mataqali's totems, are caught in the women's nets, so too are mataqali enmeshed through the women who move between groups and whose blood mingles them. That women have this function may also be shown by the name of the chief's speech on this day, the net/law (na lawa). The chief's admonitions are directed at the girl in order to instruct her in how to behave as a respectable, industrious, responsible matron. Implied in this focus, I maintain, is the notion that she will play a stronger, more far-flung role -- she, like the net, is made of separate bits of "twine" and will be used to collect "fish." An astute informant said that the fishing net and the speech's title have the same meaning.[1] I suggest further that both refer to the fact that the couple is now caught in the communal expectations for mates and that the net symbolizes this.

As in the English idiom, the couple might be said to be enmeshed in the net of the law regarding domestic life. This same type of idiom is employed by the people of this area, as Brewster, an early colonial administrator, has

shown in retelling the case of a man who committed adultery with an unmarried woman. The man wanted to leave his wife because her tribal totemic animal was the snake. His children followed their father's dietary habits and, like other members of their mataqali, ate snakes. The children were said to

> partake of their mother's nature, and when they [ate] of the same food as [the father] or that which [had been] cooked in the same pots in which snakes [had been] boiled, they [suffered] from swollen faces, necks, and glands (Brewster 1922:109).

This man tried to commit suicide with his sweetheart; she succeeded, but he merely injured himself from a leap off a mountain. He was still held to his wife and bemoaned his fate: "I [was] determined to take up with another woman who had not a like disability, but lo! I am enmeshed in the net of the law" (Brewster 1922:109).

Starting with the events that led to the elopement being examined here, I will now describe how this net is cast in order to illustrate the various structural relationships and qualities of women expressed in a cohabitation ritual. A girl, her parents, and siblings had been visiting in Namatai for two months. They had been staying ina household that was considered to be their "door" into the village, i.e., each formally entered the other's village through their respective "houses" or "doors." This Namatai household belongs to Navulavula mataqali, a commoner group who acts as the messenger for the girl's chiefly mataqali.

For several weeks during the family's stay in Namatai, a number of village youths had been sleeping in the house next door to their hosts' house. It is a common occurrence for male adolescents and older unmarried men to sleep ina kind of village "club house" (bure), i.e., a house (or its kitchen) that is headed perhaps by a young man and his widowed mother. The house where these young men slept belonged to a newly married chief who still behaved like a single man, entertaining and housing his younger, unmarried fellows. In retrospect, I realized that this chief's house was the site of a couple of weeks' worth of nightly serenading and boyish pranks, the purpose of which was to attract the attention of the girl visiting next door. The result of these activities was the elopement of this chiefly girl and a commoner youth, who was the lead singer and guitarist of the nightly recitals.

Various matrilateral kinship ties existed between the girl, the youth, and the young chief that facilitated these young people's behaviors. The chief, unfettered by the reserve accompanying the relationships of agnates, was bound tohelp the young man, who belonged to the chief's grandmother's mataqali. The couple were cross-cousins and potential spouses and were thus expected to flirt with each other. The one relationship that was not honored was that between the youth and the girl's father, his classificatory mother's brother whose person and position the youth should

have respected and thus whose permission should have been sought for the girl's hand in marriage.

The elopement occurred during a celebration for a youth who had returned to his village after overseas employment. A dinner and dance were given for this young man, and most of Namatai's residents attended it. A huge and varied menu was provided; beer and yaqona were plentiful. The occasion was marked by exuberance, tempers were oiled by the amiable commotion, crowding, and beer. At night the sated guests began to dance. Emotions were high, and as the conviviality and banter increased among the youth, an argument began: the girl's brother had heard some playful remarks about his younger sister's relationship with the youth. This is a transgression against proper cross-sibling behavior and causes "shame" and anger. Thus, the brother, infuriated by even a hint of impropriety on his sister's part, hit her in the face. Her friend, the girl in whose house she and her family were visiting, defended her. The altercation that then ensued involved several people. It was at this time that the couple left for the youth's house.

Particularly among the older people at the party, a discussion ensued about elopement, morals, and cross-sex sibling behavior. This episode had contradicted proper sibling conduct and insulted the girl's family. The discussion helped to correct the young people's refutations of collective values and thus to reestablish them.

While this was going on, the girl's friend and her brother began to argue about the elopement. The brother, incensed that his sister should aid the girl and anxious that she not become involved with a youth in the same way, punched his sister in the mouth, splitting her lip. His sister returned his blow. This brother, like the eloping girl's brother, was left to discipline his sister, while his more prestigious father remained on the sideline.

The next day the youth's sister-in-law awoke at day to begin the elaborate Sunday breakfast. She found the young couple dozing in the midst of the children, who sleep in the center of the house. Shortly after this, the household stirred to the entrance of the girl's mother. This woman came on behalf of her husband, and in doing so she helped him to retain his dignity, something that men should possess. She demonstrated by her actions how women provide services for men. Her presence also showed that girls need to be controlled because they cannot be expected to have internalized mores well. Spurred on by her humiliation of the previous night's events, and no doubt by her husband's goading, the mother demanded that the girl leave with her. The girl replied that she was going to remain with the youth. The angry mother slapped the girl and then left. The girl began to cry.

This interaction between mother and daughter points to another general feature of the differences in treatment of boys and girls by their parents. Mothers appear to hit

their grown daughters more frequently than fathers do their sons, thus expressing the qualitative differences attributed to the sexes, their relative worth and dignity, and the expectations of their respective moral development.

With the girl's statement of intent to remain with the youth, his household had to proceed this day with the cohabitation ritual that would allow them to live in the village as a couple.

First Day of the Ritual

Cohabitation rituals, like weddings, are celebrated for four days. To accommodate the needs of those hosting the ritual, the days may be collapsed, e.g., if food is in short supply, the third day may be considered as the last and fourth day. For this cohabitation ritual, the first day happened to fall on a Sunday, when villagers honor the Sabbath by refraining from boisterousness, work, or burials. It also occurred after a scandalous elopement and began with a bitter exchange between the girl and her mother. All these factors contributed to the lack of community participation and enthusiasm for it. But after lunch some men and a few women came to the youth's house.

This building, like all other village residences, was organized and utilized on this day to reflect the rank, age, and relationships of those within or entering it. Houses are rectangular and have at least three doorways. The largest doorway, which is approached by stairs cut into

a log, is used by visiting women and children. Men, especially those of high rank, may use the side door to enter a house. When a group enters the house, they use the main doorway. The house's interior is conceptually divided into an "upper," reserved area and a "lower" one. The householder and his wife's sleeping area is at the upper end and is cordoned off by drapes. Some houses have a drape that is pulled across this entire section. Even in houses where there is no actual means for demarcating it, people recognize a boundary between this section and the lower space where visitors should remain. In some persons' houses, visitors feel an obligation to stay in the lower area, e.g., in their mother's brother's houses. One old man told me quite emphatically that he would not think of sitting in the upper end of his uncle's house because of his respect for him.

On this first day of the ritual the allocation of space in this house marked the couple, the ritual's focus on them, and the changes in their statuses. First, the couple occupied the householder's sleeping area. Second, when the youth joined the men in the main part of the house, he sat amidst elder, chiefly men, far from his usual place appropriate to his age and rank. People sit at public events in order of their ranks and their ages. Highest ranked and senior-most men occupy the positions closest to the upper, most prestigious end of the house. The lower-ranked, younger men sit closer to the large door through which

women, children, and young people enter, especially those who are not household members. Women occupy the floor space closest to the large door at the house's lower end. On this day, the only exception to these patterns was the position of the youth who was being honored for the start of his conjugal life and full-adult status. Likewise, the girl was placed in the household's conjugal bed and treated like a woman.

The ritual began, as do all Fijian ceremonies and all significant social gatherings, with the drinking of yaqona (known as kava in other Oceanic societies). Yaqona drinking is itself a ritual; yaqona is always formally presented by someone and accepted by the recipient. On this day the tanoa, the serving bowl made from the greenheart of India tree and shaped like a turtle, was full. No one would begin the ritual until the village paramount entered the house. When he walked into the house, he used the door at the higher end of the house, adjacent to the sleeping area shielding the girl.

Household members provided the fresh yaqona root for the initial serving. Young chiefs helped the youth's mataqali brothers grind the root. Commoner youths poured the drink from the bowl into serving cups, and the young chiefs passed them to the company. This ritual assistance is part of the veiqalaki obligations operant between liege and vassal. Each participant helps the other in this

political-ritual relationship; to that end, the older chiefly men brought packets of powdered yaqona.

The mood in the house indicated a distinctive communal reserve, a quiet cheeriness instead of jubilation. Three factors contributed to subduing this gathering. As I noted earlier, raucousness is forbidden on the Sabbath, and the previous evening's ruckus tainted today's celebration. Third, no appreciable number of women were in attendance. Men are reserved at public events. Levity is generated by women, who will generally talk louder, tease more, and start dancing or singing more often then men. Women take the initiative to create a merry atmosphere. They ask men to dance the taralala, a European-derived couple dance. This is all in keeping with the dignified behavior expected of men, and the anticipation that women are not so reserved and do not mind being "silly."

Throughout the afternoon, men came to the house and slowly filled it. The men who attended were either from the youth's group or from the chiefly mataqali to whom his mataqali are vassals. No man came from the mataqali that the girl's family stays with in Namatai. Until midnight, men visited the house. The couple stayed within the bed curtains. Early in the evening the household's women and children ate and then went to sleep in the kitchen building. It is typical for children and women, especially when they are few in number compared to the men, to leave the ritual area.

Women would not attend the ritual until they came with their conjugal mataqali to present their gifts; they would not do so on the Sabbath. A few women came into the house; however, they were the youth's mother, sisters-in-law, nieces, and sisters. I attended this afternoon because the youth's sister-in-law came to tell me about the couple and to invite me to drink yaqona. In the kinship system I was classified as the youth's sister-in-law, and my husband was his elder brother. The sister-in-law and I were karua, that is, "sisters." We were each other's "seconds" (ka means "a thing," and rua, "second"). Theoretically we could be substituted in the sororate. We were also the equivalents of the girl and her sister and would call each others' husbands, and they us, daku ("my back" or, as some people said, "one can look over one's shoulder and see one's spouse's siblings waiting").

The sister-in-law in whose house the youth lived was a serious, intelligent woman of chiefly heritage. She sat more quietly than the other women in the lower right-hand corner of the house. I recognized the tension in her face and bearing. Chiefly people are expected to behave decorously and to uphold social custom. This elopement was conducted in a way that abraded her aristocratic sensibilities. Because this "theft" happened at a public gathering, in front of the girl's father, and involved brothers and sisters insulting each other, it was all the more disrespectful. And added to this were the complica-

tions that this was a hypogamous union and that there were avuncular relations between the youth and his prospective father-in-law. The youth had behaved disrespectfully to his mother's brother, and his actions contradicted cultural ideas about proper behavior between members of two ranks. (The commoner youth's behavior was to be expected, a chiefly woman angrily said later; he acted like a kai si, a servile person acting in a plebian manner.) The sister-in-law, who in other contexts told me that she was an aristocrat but not her husband, was not pleased by her brother-in-law's conduct for these reasons. She also identified with the girl, for at another time she mused that she also had been deprived of the privileges of a proper wedding because she had been "stolen."

An elopement partially reflects the relationship of the couple's mataqali, the financial and political abilities of the youth's mataqali to acquire prestations enough for a wedding, and the predictions for the success of the union. Women indicate that they are pleased to have been wed in a vakamau vakavanua ritual because it shows their worth to the mataqali involved, their own mataqali's prestige, and the commitment of all concerned to their marriages. There is, however, a delight in the romance of an elopement that is shown by the household and neighbor women's shouting and laughing as the suitor comes to take the girl from her home. Romance and merriment do not mean

as much, though, as the more somber prenuptial exchanges and mataqali interests in the formation of a couple.

Although few women were in evidence on this day, kinship ties through them influenced several men's behaviors. For example, the paramount's mother and the girl belonged to the same group. Thus, in passing her hidden behind the curtain, he greeted her with "good health, little mother." Their tie was strengthened by his wife's origin in the same mataqali. Indeed, it was his wife who would be the girl's attendant for the remainder of the ritual and stay in the house with her. Another man whose participation was influenced by matrilateral ties was the village headman (turaga ni koro), who functions much like a town crier; he called passersby into the house in order to encourage village participation. He had a kinship connection to this family that made him concerned about the ritual's success -- his grandmother had come from the youth's mataqali. People who are descendents of a woman (kawa) maintain a sense of loyalty, affection and obligation to her group. An even closer connection to the youth's mataqali encouraged a young chief to help with the yaqona. The young chief was the son of a Nakoroniu woman and his family "stayed with" Nakoroniu and cultivated on its land. The young chief was thus the youth's sister's child.

Second Day of the Ritual

Monday was the second day of the ritual, but activities that should have taken place the day before happened then. People were moving around the house with supplies, cooking utensils, building materials, and tools early in the morning. Young people perform most of the ordinary tasks at rituals, and so it was that before 8:30 a.m. young men went to the forest to collect the bamboo needed to construct the pavilion that would be erected next to the house to accommodate guests. Women of the youth's matagali were preparing food in the cook house, and the other village women were cooking food in their own homes to bring to the dining hall later in the day. Senior men's ritual task is to sit in the house where the ritual is located and to drink yaqona and converse. Their ritual preparation and consumption of yaqona is their work (cakacaka) because it promotes the event's efficaciousness and other participants' well-being and safety.

By 10:00 a.m., chiefly lineages began coming into the house. The paramount's lineage was the first to enter. It was followed by the lineages related to the youth's group by matrilateral ties. Their respective gifts were mats, clothes, and whale's teeth. Women carried the mats and clothes because these are feminine prestations. The teeth are masculine gifts and are given by men. Two flower-and-leaf garlands and two shirts and complementarily colored sulu (cloth two meters in length that is wrapped around the

waist) were brought for the couple. These gifts were formally presented by senior men of the respective groups and received by the brother in whose house the youth lived. A benediction was then prayed by a man of a commoner mataqali. Men make all the speeches for exchanges at cohabitation and wedding rituals. If a woman attends one of these alone, her gift will be offered by a man who is her "brother" or her husband's or her mataqali's "door" to the village.

The man who spoke on behalf of the youth's mataqali was his elder full brother, not his senior half-brother. (The senior brother's mother had died and his father married the younger men's mother, who now lived with them.) It was the older of the full siblings who acted as taukei ni tagane (owner of the man), organized the ritual, and represented the mataqali. Their mother, who was recovering from a stroke, had very little input into the event; she also contributed little to decisions on everyday matters.

The girl's "sisters" and her "father's sister" were the most visible female participants on this day. Both kinds of women functioned as aspects of the ritual's most important female role -- bestower of the girl upon the youth and his kin. This role is personified by the girl's mother, a point that I will come to later.

I first want to address another part of the girl's sisters' behavior. These women directed the festivities for a time; they did so as embodiments of the "wife" role.

The wife role, I suggest, symbolizes what a cohabitation or wedding ritual seeks to establish. Thus, these women, who stand for the transformation of the girl into a woman/wife, are the ones who mark the girl and youth's permutations into full-fledged adults and a couple. The girl's sisters marked these changes in front of the gathering by removing the couple's upper garments and metaphorically stripping them of their former identities, then oiling/cleansing the couple's faces, arms, and chests, thus renewing their beings. They helped the couple into clean shirts and placed the garlands around their necks, thus signaling their new personae. The couple stood and wrapped the new cloths over their own; they loosened and let fall the old ones and securely tied the new clothes. Somewhat self-consciously, the couple resumed their places in front of the curtain while these women turned their attention to others. It was then that one might perceive further evidence of these women as symbols of marriage/cohabitation. They rubbed oil on the faces, arms, and sometimes chests of guests and sprinkled baby powder on them; they aimed especially for their cross-cousins and avoided their brothers. As people tried to dodge the oil and powder or an embarrassing remark from these frolicking women, spontaneous singing, dancing, and spoofing began.

While the girl's sisters were thus engaged, the paramount's wife -- who, unlike all other women in attendance, except the girl who had just been given new clothes, was

dressed in her good clothing -- was given a garland by her cross-cousin, her husband's mataqali-brother (and a descendant of a woman of the youth's mataqali, Nakoroniu). Thus, the girl's father's sister and the couple were similarly adorned.

The youth's mataqali chiefs and their wives entered the house amidst this noise and mischief. When the youth's elder brother accepted their prestations, he began to cry. He beseeched all those parties offended by the elopement to forgive them. He disliked his brother's discourteous behavior and the unhappy way that the couple initiated their conjugal life. Like a chorus, many commiserated with him, sniffing and wiping their eyes.

After the emotional release produced by this statement of shame, the expenditure of energy in merriment, and the several hours of sitting in an increasingly warm house, a pall settled on the festivities at noon. At this time the paramount's younger brother joined the couple and the father's sister in front of the assembly. A chief always occupies a place of honor at an important gathering, such as this one. This particular chief had a kinship tie to the youth's mataqali, viz., his wife was the half-sister of a Nakoroniu man and thus a classificatory sister to the youth. If the kinship system was operating ideally here, the youth's sister's husband would be the girl's brother. The two couples were given an elaborate lunch consisting of chicken, beef, yams, cabbage cooked in coconut milk, and

bananas in coconut milk. Three plates were given to the couples. The senior people each had a plate and the young couple shared one. The youth's forthcoming role as his mate's leader (liuliu) was symbolized by his actions at this meal. He placed food on the plate he and the girl shared and separated chicken pieces for her. No one else in the house was given luncheon by the youth's household. After the couple ate, people left to dine in their own houses.

Guests returned after their meals to the house for more drowsy chatting; their conversation centered on whether the girl's family would attend. Members of several village mataqali, and those from other villages, also came and brought gifts to the house. Most of those who stayed in the house were men, because women had to prepare the evening meal and tend to other household needs. The youth's mataqali was supposed to eat together for the four-day period because this was a time to reinforce and to express their solidarity by being together as much as possible. At suppertime, the youth's mataqali and guests ate at another house selected as the dining hall for the ritual's two remaining days. The house chosen for this purpose, however, indicated the fragility of the mataqali ideal and the impediments to achieving it. The decision to use the youth's sister-in-law's natal house as the dining hall did show how women bind their own and their affinal kin and facilitate the more relaxed "cross-cousin" ties of

their respective husbands and brothers. As household head, the youth's brother asked to use his brother-in-law's house, which was next door, because his was too small to accommodate all the guests. It was supposedly his decision to request the use of this house; at least, this is what his wife told me when I inquired about how the site happened to be chosen. This is, of course, what should happen, i.e., the male householder making decisions for the unit. I do not doubt that she promoted this plan and discussed the possibility with her brother before her husband petitioned to use the house.

The youth's brother could have had access to a mataqali-brother's house 50 yards from his own, but relations between these two "brothers" had been strained for several years. Each was about forty years old. The neighboring brother was actual (but not titular) head of his household and keen on becoming a respected senior man. These two men were too close in age for one to be clearly the senior of the two, and in that capacity to be able to "lead" the other in the relationship by virtue of his age. Thus, the selection of the wife's brother's house for serving meals reflects the greater ease of interaction between brothers-in-law/cross-cousins than between brothers. Brothers are expected to treat each other with respect, and the senior has the right to direct the younger's activities. Brothers-in-law, by comparison, are supposed to joke with each other and to tease -- in a word, to interact

without the constraints imposed by relative rank and age. This relationship is also affected by the woman who links them as wife of one man and sister of the other.

As this woman facilitated an affinal relationship and was an expediter of the ritual meals, so too do other women's roles provide important elements of the ritual process, viz., food, valuables, demarcation of the couple's changing status, and merriment, which may be extrinsic to the cohabitation process but is viewed as a desirable component nonetheless. If these outcomes of women's ritual involvement have qualities in common, they are those of facilitating bonding and utilitarian concerns. These attributes of women and their activities will be more closely associated with women in later sections.

Third Day of the Ritual

By 9:30 a.m. there was revelry inside the youth's house, and outside of it a circus of ducks was being pursued under and around my house by children and adults. A widow, the ducks' owner, wanted to present them to the youth's sister-in-law in order to help her feed the guests. The widow was not the only one eager to aid the youth's kin. Navulavula sent some of its members to the store five miles downriver to buy frozen or live chickens for the day's meals. The youth's *mataqali* would later compensate these donors with a mat for each animal given them.

Certain persons or groups are expected to help (veiqaravi) the group hosting a ritual. For instance, the widow was tied to mataqali Nakoroniu through her grandmother; the widow was thus its kawa (descendant of a woman). As such, she should have a continuing interest in Nakoroniu and they in her. She and Nakoroniu shared blood, and blood ties through a woman draw persons to each other sentimentally and through reciprocal obligations and privileges. This widow also assisted Nakoroniu in her role as wife of their chief. Her late husband had headed the mataqali that is Nakoroniu's liege. She was thus acting in a "chiefly" manner, as would her deceased spouse, by showing her concern for the success of her vassal's ritual. This is the first example given here of a common phenomenon -- married/widowed women's identification with and efforts on behalf of their husbands' mataqali. Navulavula assisted the youth's group because the two were structural equivalents -- they had previously lived as a unit and were thus mataqalivata (mataqali together, or sibling-mataqali). They were obliged to assist the youth's kin to provide food on the third and fourth days of the ritual. (Table 1 lists those who should aid the youth's mataqali on those days, and those who did so.)

The provisioning, preparation, and serving of food, especially the tuber stables, falls largely to women. Indeed, if we had to generalize the sexes' ritual labors, we could say that men consume yaqona, speak for groups, and

Table 1. Schedule of food giving at cohabitation ritual

Who Should Give Food		Who Did Give Food
Youth's siblings	Day 1	No one; observation of Sabbath
Youth's siblings	Day 2	Youth's sisters Navulavula man*
Youth's siblings Youth's sibling-*mataqali*	Day 3	Youth's sisters Navulavula wives Woman born Navulavula and whose mother was Nakoroniu; she is sister's child to Nakoroniu
Youth's siblings Youth's sibling-*mataqali*	Day 4	Navulavula man* Navulavula wives

* His mother-in-law is natally of girl's *mataqali* and is the youth's mother's namesake

make exchanges; women give food. Women's involvement with food was most clearly seen on this, the first day that meals were served to large numbers of people in the dining hall.

The women most responsible for feeding these guests were those associated with the youth's mataqali. They spent most of the day in the youth's family's cook house and that of the dining hall, tending large, smoky fires and preparing piles of hibiscus and taro leaves. These women were primarily the youth's sisters, sisters-in-law, and nieces, but there were other female helpers too. Two girls from a neighboring village said that they assisted because their mataqali is the "door" for Nakoroniu in their village and because they and the youth share a common ancestor -- their respective grandfather and father were brothers. A third reason, which they did not mention when I first asked them about their participation, but which others informed me about, was that their mother was born in mataqali Nakoroniu.

A middle-aged woman participated in the food preparation because she and her chiefly husband live on Nakoroniu land and thus have a commitment to the group and its affairs. Her husband had asked a Nakoroniu man for permission to plant on mataqali land by appealing to their relationship through their mothers, who were cross-cousins. Figure 1 is a diagram illustrating the connection.

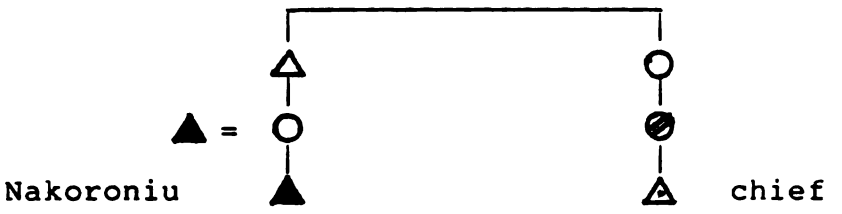


Figure 1. Matrilateral tie between Nakoroniu and chief living on its land

This chief acted with Nakoroniu and honored his responsibilities to them when his own mataqali membership did not have to take precedence, for example, when he had to perform his function as chief in a ritual or when he had to vote on a possible new use for his own kin's land. His relationship to Nakoroniu had an interesting aspect -- when they needed a chief to sit at one of their feasts, he often obliged them with his presence.

The other female helper was the girl who had defended the couple's actions to her brother and at whose grandfather's house the latter's family had stayed prior to the elopement. Her participation reflected her mataqali's obligation to the youth's; her Navulavula kin and Nakoroniu were considered "siblings," and thus she was scouring pots while women born into or married into Navulavula brought food to the dining hall. There was also one youth who worked with the women. He often participated in women's activities, even at public events. He belonged to the youth's mother's mataqali.

The food was served by the following six women:

1) born in Navulavula (her elder brother was married to a Nakoroniu woman), she was married to a man of

a sibling-mataqali of Nakoroniu
2) born in Nakoroniu and married to Navulavula
3) born in Sika and married to Nakoroniu
4) village school teacher who is associated in the village with Navulavula but calls the youth "father"
5) youth's elder sister and married to Navulavula
6) born elsewhere and married to the youth's sister-in-law's brother; thus, it was in her house that all the wedding meals were taken

These women were associated with the youth's side and therefore hosted the meal.

Matrons serve meals because it is a prestigious and demanding activity. It requires knowledge about the diners' respective ranks and number in order to serve properly; it demands the good sense married women should have. Portions are designated by rank; heads of the flesh foods, if there are any, and the largest and choicest shares of the relishes go to the most honored guests. The server has to give ample amounts for the first serving or so and also reserve enough food for the later diners.

Late in the afternoon a boat from the girl's village docked at Natamatai's north end. People in the youth's house supposed that the girl's family had come with mats to signal their acceptance of the couple. Their expectations were disappointed when the village headman along with his wife and children came laden only with their own prestations -- a live duck, a bundle of four large taro, a mat, and hibiscus leaves. These visitors entered the house with one of the youth's sisters, the wife of the chief who was the village headman's "door" in Namatai, and the wife of the chief who lives on Nakoroniu land. The youth's

sister's escorting of the family illustrates how a married woman becomes associated with her husband's mataqali and can represent them by taking her husband's roles. She ceremoniously led the party into the house, where her role was completed because no woman makes a speech for an exchange at a cohabitation ritual. The other woman who entered the house with the headman and his family was affinally related to him -- her husband's brother was married to the headman's sister.

The headman had these ties to Nakoroniu and also the one through the youth's mother, who belonged to his mataqali. His mataqali was not coming to the ritual because they were mourning the death of the son of its leader. The mataqali leader's family had very close ties with the youth's family, because their respective wives and mothers were full sisters. This connection through sisters shares some elements with the brother-in-law relationship, viz., the sentimental attachment and ease of interaction is facilitated by the linking women. In one sense, however, the relationship between the mourning lineage and the youth's was much closer than that between brothers-in-law because they were "siblings," i.e., descendants of two mothers-sisters.

About 5:00 p.m., an hour after the lunch serving was completed, three older women came into the youth's house to perform the vakavuru (a burlesque). It is not uncommon in Oceanic societies for older women to take the part of

clowns. These women put on a skit about the recent accidental sinking of a half-ton of concrete by the Public Works helicopter in the gardens across the river from the village. This unfortunate incident occurred during the construction of a service road to be used to transport men and material to the hydroelectric project at the headwaters of the river. Donning men's trousers, boots, and hats, the women imitated the helicopter, its pilot, and a ground crewman. One woman directed the pilot, who manipulated the helicopter. The audience roared at the accurate depiction of the seeming inanities of the ground crewman and the pernickety pilot; their appreciation was a tribute to the performers' keen observations and kinesic alacrity. The intensity of the laughter and the foreign costumes of these women started the youngest children wailing and pleading to leave the house. The skit lasted about five minutes and had the effect of cleansing the fatigue from the party, who then settled down for more yaqona and conversation.

The vakavuru performers were all women over 50 years of age; all were born to mataqali other than the groom's; two were from another village, and one was from Namatai. Their common purpose was to make the celebrants happy (marau) by entertaining in the house. The women were not classified as "sisters" of the youth. The women's behavior depicted the differences between wives and sisters at such rituals, e.g., the boisterousness during the previous day of the girl's sisters (the youth's cross-cousins) as

opposed to his siblings' reserve. The skit's principal performer was the youth's eldest brother's wife; she said that she wanted to entertain her brother-in-law, her potential spouse. The second woman came to amuse "her woman" -- she and the girl belonged to the same mataqali. This woman had another tie to the girl, perceived of as secondary: her daughter was married to a man whose mataqali resides with Navulavula, the youth's sibling-mataqali and the girl's mataqali's "door" to Namatai. By the logic of the kinship system, the third woman should not have participated in the skit; if one traced her relationship to the youth through one line, she was his classificatory sister. This classificatory siblingship was not within one mataqali; it was based on the fact that the youth's mataqali and the woman's mataqali were like siblings. No informant said that she should have conducted herself as a real sister, for whom doing vakavuru is forbidden -- vakaroqoroqo na yalewa baleta na ganena nona liuliu (a woman honors her brother because he is her leader). A real sister has to go outside to the pavilion or nearby the house if she wants to dance and be merry. A sister is shy (madua) at her brother's cohabitation ritual. To engage in the often lascivious songs and pranks of a vakavuru would make a sister transgress against customary behavior and perhaps be fined.

Late in the evening and past midnight, the house was filled with the men's strong singing. The men sang

traditional Fijian songs (meke) accompanied by rhythms beat with two heavy wooden sticks on a short length of bamboo. The drummer was the eldest Navulavula man, whose role reaffirmed the unity of the two mataqali. Navulavula and Nakoroniu's solidarity was not apparent on the first day of the ritual because, in one sense, the girl had eloped from a Navulavula house, and thus they had to honor their obligations to their guests, the girl's family, by remaining at home and respecting the girl's family's avoidance of the occasion. Sometime during the ritual, however, Navulavula had to join Nakoroniu or risk insulting their brothers. Thus, by the third day they donated food and supported the youth's kin in the house. Navulavula still had a strategic problem to solve the following day when the girl's sisters should take her to bathe and fish with her. Because they were the girl's "door" in Namatai, they were geographically the closest of her people and would be expected to function as such. Navulavula resolved this issue by having its men sit in the house with the youth's side while its wives and sisters went to the river with the girl. The intercalary position of women, their ability to affiliate with two mataqali, based on their malleable natures, eased Navulavula's dilemma.

Around 10:00 p.m., the tempo of the music and the volume of the audience increased when the women joined the men. As usual, women livened up the gathering, but their

merriment was only a hint of the jubilation they would express the next day at the river.

This day's activities exemplify the concept of veiqaravi (helping) in Fijian culture and some of the things I have mentioned already about women. Helping is positively valued, and although it is expected on certain occasions, e.g., at rituals, it is also spontaneously given. For instance, a woman may chop up yaqona root for a neighbor because he has no wife, or people may help a bachelor to meet his church tithe. Certain categories of persons were expected to assist the ritual's host -- their sibling-mataqali, Navulavula, and those persons related uxorally; however, their respective reasons for helping were different. For Navulavula, siblingship entails reciprocal aid because siblings belong to a body that should maintain itself. Uxorally connected people's service emanates from sentimental attachment expressed by caring and succor. Although "blood," fictive or real, can be used as a metaphor and explanation for siblings' and uxorally related people's assistance, it is mainly in the case of matrilaterally connected people that it is employed. Kawa (descendants of a woman) rationalize their commitment to these kin by reference to their shared blood. Several persons' participation resulted from uxoral ties, and in the cases of the youth's family's relationship to his mother's sister's family and the host's use of his brother-in-law's house as the dining hall, we have good examples of

the ease and yet tenacity of relationships wrought by women.

Uxorally related persons' interactions may be associated with the characteristics of the women who link them -- women's weak spirits and their fluidity prevent them from achieving the austerity and dignity characteristic of men that make agnatic relationships more reserved and circumspect. Women draw people to them because of their qualities that elicit others' affection, and thus they draw their kin into ritual participation when their relatives are not normally required to do so by mataqali ideals or expectations.

Women's more malleable natures also facilitate their joining their husbands' mataqali and representing them, as did the chief's wife who escorted guests into the ritual's house. This and other feminine characteristics also permitted women to act as clowns in the vakavuru; their formlessness and their relative lack of social decorum apparently are prerequisites for such entertaining, i.e., taking on other personae.

The vakavuru performers followed the same pattern of carefree behavior as did the women who anointed the couple. Both these sets of women portrayed the wifely persona in this ritual and her opposition to the youth's sisters, who quietly prepare meals and tend to the needs of their sibling's new spouse.

Fourth Day of the Ritual

The girl's kin would not come to solemnize a marriage, and someone had to perform some of their tasks. Navulavula women would substitute for the girl's kin and depict how equivalences are drawn and how women fill the interstices of the social structure.

The day began with Nakoroniu wives and sisters sweeping out the dining hall and sending children, older girls, and youths for food. In their homes, women of other mataqali were cooking the food that they would bring to the dining hall. Men were settling down in the youth's house to their first serving of yaqona, which was dedicated to the women and their work.

Shortly before noon the paramount directed the villagers to "kill the cow," "go to the river to bathe," "bring the yaqona here," and "make the feast for the fourth night." The youth's attendant and a bevy of women joined the couple for their bath; the youth's sisters prepared the food; and young men slaughtered the cow and gathered yaqona.

The male attendant was chosen by the youth's brother. These two young men were close in age, companions, and matrilaterally related. The attendant's mother was the woman in the vakavuru skit related to the youth as classificatory sister. The young men were described as rousalavata (two from the same path) and routabavata (two from the same branch). Their kinship connection was as

follows: the youth was the attendant's mother's brother, and the attendant was the youth's sister's son.

The avuncular relationship is marked by respect and reserve, especially on the part of nephews. The youth and his attendant did not portray the customary behavior involved in this relationship. The attendant did treat the youth's older brother with the customary respect; there was no sharing of food, joking, or familiarity. Indeed, the youth was said the voro (fear) his mother's older brother. Such discrepancies in behaviors between people who call each other by the same terms has been a topic for inquiry among anthropologists interested in kinship.

Clay (1977), reporting on the Mandak, a Melanesian society with some similarities to the Matailobau, suggests that "behavioral differences within single categories may be described in terms of the varying application of the moral force of symbolization to these categories" (1977:47). Differences in ages may be behind the moral force that Clay refers to. For Fijians, age is a very important discriminator of people and their activities and may be the variable influencing the differences in avuncular relations. Deference is paid to seniors, who precede juniors in eating, giving opinions, access to things, and influencing situations.

Although the youth's attendant was chosen for him by a senior mataqali member, no one directed any of the women to accompany the girl. Each woman knew if she could be

expected to be with the girl -- that is, if she was classified as someone other than the youth's sister. Women who joined the bathing and fishing party were either of the girl's mataqali or from a mataqali associated with it. The principles used to define women as the girl's people and a description of the individual participants are given in the appendix. Of the women attending the girl at the river, the paramount's wife, who sat in the house during the celebration, and another senior woman of the girl's mataqali, whom she called "father's sister," were her main escorts.

The party was in a very festive mood. Each person bathed at the river, and when all were finished they moved to a creek just north of the village. The youth's attendant poled a boat containing the couple up to this spot. Fishing nets were erected in the creek by the women. One woman steadied a net while one or more drove the fish into it. Four nets were used; three women brought their own nets and a new one was given to the couple by the youth's sister-in-law. Table 2 lists the owners of the nets -- all were women closely associated with the couple.

Table 2. Ownership of nets used in fishing on last day

Net	Owner
1.	youth's older sister, married to Navulavula
2.	woman natally of Navulavula
3.	woman natally of Navulavula
4.	gift from youth's sister-in-law

Women took turns holding the nets and driving the fish into them. Neither man held a net, because this is the way that women fish. Men fish with spears. The bag into which the fish were placed was held by the girl. During this entire time there was a great deal of noise and excitement due to the women's high spirits and joking. When the party had decided that enough merriment had been made, the bag was sufficiently full of fish, and they were chilled from the cold rain, the party returned to the village.

Once inside the village the girl took the bag of fish to her "house," the Navulavula house where she had been visiting. The house's senior woman took the fish to cook for the luncheon. Shivering, the party continued on to the dining hall. They hesitated when they reached the boundary-marking ditch in front of the house in order to let three Nakoroniu-born women meet them. What took place here gives its name to the entire sequence of events of that afternoon and to the day itself -- the <u>vakamamaca</u> (the drying [of the girl]). The bathing and fishing are subsumed lexically and in significance by the act of the youth and his sisters providing dry clothing for the girl, who eloped without her wardrobe.

The youth's sisters and patrilateral parallel cousin slowly approached the bathing party carrying neatly folded clothes for "drying" the girl. The youth's eldest sister oiled the woman who had sat in the house as the girl's father's sister. At this, the attendant and the couple

moved a bit away from the main group. As they did so a Navulavula man (husband of one of the youth's sisters) brought a bucket of yaqona from the house and placed it where the youth's sisters and the couple and women met. Villagers said that the women, the girl's people, receive the yaqona because they have returned her to her mate and his mataqali.

The yaqona's actual donor was the chiefly woman who yesterday had donated the ducks. She was kawa to Nakoroniu and the widow of its chief. Through both these connections she counted herself as part of the youth's people and presented the yaqona on their behalf. Her gift demonstrates several things. Multiple ties can influence persons' participation at events. Kinship and political relationships should be expressed on ritual occasions through prestations and by donating services. Widows have the option of affiliating with either one or both of their mataqali. Thus, this woman could continue to fulfill her husband's political and ritual obligations to his vassals. Her yaqona also exemplified the tenacity of uxoral bonds.

Although women do not speak for exchanges at this ritual, when the yaqona was presented to them they represented the donor and the recipients. It is at this time, when women are the immediate, perhaps ultimate, transmitters of the girl, that they represent their units. At the river the women have an opportunity to take the maiden back to her kin. They, like her mother, who finalizes the

transfer of the girl to her conjugal kin, have the power to withhold or bestow her. No group of men are available at the river to contradict the women's wishes. It is this part of the ritual that defines women's powers to continue or extinguish groups, and it points to women's opportunities to avoid men's control. All that men can do at this time is to request various powers via the yaqona that their desired outcome at the river will materialize. Thus, when the girl's sisters bring her back they must be rewarded. It is perhaps fitting that they receive the yaqona that may be responsible for their return. The chances for restoring the girl to her new people are boosted by a natural means -- the father's sister's presence, who is defined as the girl's prospective mother-in-law.

After the yaqona was presented, the wet, chilled women went to their respective houses to bathe at the taps, change clothing, prepare their food gifts, and return to the dining hall. The couple and male attendant bathed at the youth's house. While the girl kept a distance between herself and the young men, the youths appeared to move as a pair. The couple was behaving according to Matailobau norms for married persons. Female informants said they are ashamed to be seen spending too much time with their husbands or sitting next to them at public events. Cross-sex siblings, cross-sex parents and children, and couples do not publicly display affection and generally attempt to avoid each other.

Inside the dining hall the couple and the youth's attendant ate at the first serving with the eldest and highest-ranked men. The youth sat with his attendant toward the middle of the food mat, which is placed in the center of the room and around which people sit, and thus in the middle of the male ranking series. The girl sat four places away from them and toward the lower, less prestigious area. Note that on the first day of the ritual the couple sat together to eat, but by the fourth day, when their transition to the status of a conjugal couple was more complete, they sat apart. If these young people were not being specially honored this day, they would have eaten at later servings with their age and gender mates. After they had finished eating, the couple socialized with members of their own sexes.

After the usual post-prandial rest period, the couple entered the youth's house for a chiefly speech about the law or code for conjugal conduct (na vosa yakaturaga, na lawa). Cohabitation establishes a person's social maturity, particularly for a female. As I said before, because a single girl is viewed as immature, frivolous, and childlike, the chief's speech is directed primarily at her. As yet, she is not formed in a socially acceptable manner; hers is a formless, watery soul. Cohabitation gives a female a socially approved solidity. She must be instructed, however, in how to achieve and to maintain this confir-

mation. Both sexes agree on the necessity of this chiefly talk. The chief thus tells the girl how a matron behaves.

The chief also advises the couple as a unit. He admonishes them not to quarrel; to love each other; to keep a quiet household; to eschew divorce; to stand by each other and go through life together. After the chief's lecture, people said, the couple is considered vakawati. As noted before, vakawati is applied to sweethearts, affianced couples, and mates; it does not mean "married." The chief's lecture thus prepares the pair for proper conjugal life and allows them to cohabit in the village, where standards for couples exist.

In the description of this day's activities, another aspect of the avuncular cross-sex sibling relationship emerges. Throughout these three days the relationship between the youth and his sisters has been depicted as reserved and helpful. The same can be said for the relationship between a man and his sister's son, as the reference to the youth's attendant's interaction with his classificatory mother's older brother attests. Even though their interactions are seemingly circumspect, the sister's child and mother's brother anticipate reciprocal privileges and caring. Again, because they are linked by women, they can seek out each other for aid and comfort in ways that agnates do not; hence we find the youth facing the girl's sisters' intimidations and innuendos at the river with a man who is his sister's child.

As this matrilateral tie between the attendant and the youth is colored by the qualities of the woman who links them, so too do we find women's characteristics surfacing in their ritual behavior and functions at the river. Women are expected to be less self-controlled, less self-restrained than men, and so we see them frolicking noisily in the water. Women occupy an interstitial position, and this may be illustrated by the fact that no one told them which women should attend the girl; those who knew that they could fill this ritual role accompanied her. Likewise, women's "silly" spirits were put to special use on this day -- with their exuberance they broke the tension created by the ritual.

Women seemed to energize the proceedings at the river. We may think of the women themselves as a source of energy that society metaphorically needs to harness in order to continue its existence -- the type of vitality that a cohabitation ritual addresses and wants to channel properly. So it is on the fourth day that the women are away from the directing, controlling men and are at the river, engendering the joie de vivre, the vigor necessary for social and biologic regeneration, where the girl refreshes herself after four days without a complete bath and fishes to bring her contribution to the feast. The girl uses a net to ensnare fish (patrilineal totems) -- a net that functions as she will in affinal relations. Thus, at the river the women are the unfettered source of enthusiasm, of

life, but also the care-givers and sustainers who give the girl to her new mataqali. Upon their return to the village, the women "speak" for the first time in this ritual; they represent their natal mataqali. As the sisters who transmit substance and life, they yield this girl to begin the reproductive cycle.

The woman who stands for the girl's people is her father's sister, and it is this woman who is anointed by the boy's sister, the sister of the father of the girl's future children. These are the women who can control their own mataqali's transmission of sacred substance and who wish to encourage the continuance of it through their brother's spouses, the only women who can bring new blood into their group, new ties, and members created by mataqali men. Thus, these two women, one already a father's sister and the other eager to be one, represent two aspects or phases of this status and role.

Summary

This ritual depicts the significance of groups and siblingship. It is the sameness of a group's members and their opposition to other units that is stressed. Individuals' group memberships determine their involvement in the celebration. Specific actors are not stressed at the ritual. A couple, as individuals, may elope, but they must have others' approval to be considered a marital pair and to reside as such in a village. The greater significance

of groups over individuals is also found in the facts that a couple is considered to be fully married only when exchanges have been made between their respective mataqali and that mataqali have the right to sanction marriages because they are perceived of as the "owners" of the couple.

All women's roles involve them in providing something life-sustaining, especially the women of the youth's side, who give the feasts, and the girl's women, who have the ability to yield her. The girl's father's sister supports the girl in the youth's house, her sisters transform her and her mate into a couple, and her mother finalizes the transfer of the rights in her to the youth's people. This common quality of women's roles is particularly significant because it is men who represent mataqali for exchanges and proffer and accept apologies for the elopement.

The sexes' natures were described here as they were pertinent to understanding this ritual and women's roles in it. The quality of the statuses of sister and wife were also discussed because they reflect a major division in the ritual roles women occupy. The dichotomy between the wife and sister statuses and roles affects the meaning of this ritual following an elopement. The wife's sexuality results in diminishing her prestige relative to a sister. A sister is the cherished vessel of mataqali blood whose sexuality is never referred to by a brother. Eloping with a girl is an act that impinges on the meaning of sisterhood

and the honor and sacredness (dra tabu, sacred blood) of the mataqali blood she carries and has the potential to share. Thus, the "theft" of a girl is the stealing of a group's corporate essence, its blood. The insult's gravity is diminished by the girl's mataqali's ability to retain her children until they relinquish their rights in her and her progeny.

Both sexes are concerned about giving their mataqali blood to other groups. This interest is based on the strength of their siblingship, which is draped with an ideology of support and love. Although men speak for the mataqali during most parts of the ritual, the women's roles indicate that they can refuse to release the girl to her affines and that the ultimate transaction of the girl involves her mother and the youth's mother. Women's roles are thus significant, although they appear to be "inaudible," in Arderner's (1975) terms, compared to the men, who dominate the exchanges and represent the groups for most of the ritual.

Notes

1 Some villagers found other associations between the use of fishing nets and the girl. I had asked why nets were employed and not poles, and I was told by women related to the youth that there was no particular reason for the use of nets. The youth's niece actually became uncomfortable when I suggested that nets may have some practical or symbolic purposes. Then I inquired about the nets among the youth's cross-cousins, the girl's "sisters," and they entered into a mirthful discussion of the custom. Because the women stand in the water, net fishing allows the girl an extra-long bath after her three days of showering beside the wedding house. When I said that I had not heard this explanation about the

use of nets before, they laughed raucously. A word of caution about this interpretation of the use of nets -- cross-cousins are supposed to tease each other and are permitted to speak licentiously to and about each other. The youth's cross-cousins may have been responding to my questions in this spirit.

CHAPTER 3

THE *BISABA*

The cohabitation ritual transformed a girl into a socially acceptable woman. Women's roles in this ritual, I argued, centered on their bestowing the girl on the youth and his kin and providing food. The *bisaba* ritual is an extension of women's contributions to the continuance of life. Whereas in the cohabitation ritual women delivered the promise of fecundity to a group, in the *bisaba* ritual they fête a new mother and child and present food to sustain this pair.

The *bisaba* guides and inspires women to be mothers partly because women have been viewed as exacerbating the colonial processes that deleteriously affected Fijians and resulted in population decimation. Thus, the *bisaba* ritual blesses and encourages fecundity and women's reciprocal help in child care. In doing so, the ritual also expresses the same cultural notions about women found in the cohabitation ritual -- i.e., women are weak souls in need of others' guidance.

The importance of the sister is again seen in the *bisaba*'s father's sister's role, in the fact that a newly delivered mother is fêted regardless of her marital status because the sacred blood of her natal *mataqali* has been created anew in her child, and in women's representation of

their natal _mataqali_ as they give speeches for and provide services on behalf of their group.

Affinal relations and those between cross-cousins are salient in the _bisaba_, as they were in the cohabitation ritual. We see once more how exchanges are involved in these relations, not only in transactions of categories of persons and common substance, but also in the mundane giving of items for redistribution at the ritual.

Like the cohabitation ritual, the _bisaba_ focuses participants' attention on the ritual's principals by ensconcing them within the sleeping area's curtain, within the house's "upper," reserved section. Unlike the cohabitation ritual, the _bisaba_ typically does not include bringing the principals from behind the drapery at some time in the ritual. Indeed, some villagers said that the _bisaba_'s purpose is to mark the appropriate time when the child could be brought into the house's main section.

The _bisaba_ is held at the home of the person in whose honor it is given and consists of villagers, usually women, bringing gifts of "raw food" -- especially taro, plus sugar, kerosene, tinned fish, soap, or flour. The ritual's name is taken from the words _bisa_ (to give) and _ba_ (cooked taro stalk). All prestations are referred to as the feast and designated as _ba_; this is in keeping with its primary purpose of increasing a woman's breast milk by having her consume the _ba_ that stimulates lactation.

Originally, villagers said, the bisaba celebrated only a child's birth, but it is now also observed when a person recovers from an illness or when new residents are incorporated into a village. Each of these events is the successful completion of a difficult task or passage through a period of stress. In all cases, the person is blessed at the bisaba by others as he or she returns to more regular tasks and, in the cases of new residents and mothers, occupies a new status.

Women's life-giving and life-sustaining activities are best exemplified in the bisaba ritual. The needs that prompt such actions are most vividly portrayed by the dependent newborn, whose existence relies on its mother's milk. When women carry the taro stalks to the mother and child, they contribute to the mother's milk supply and the child's life. To refrain from giving assistance to the new mother could show the evil power that women may wield. The bisaba is not just an expression of happiness, as villagers claimed it to be. It is also an opportunity for merriment and to lift others' spirits; these are women's contributions to social events, as we learned in the preceding chapter. Women's attendance at bisaba, but more specifically their contributions of food, also illustrates their social solidarity and social concern.

Let me turn first to women's associations with food, since this is the bisaba's focus. Women have several relationships to food. Matrons supervise household food

supplies, serve meals, share food with other households, and provide hospitality for village guests. It is in this latter activity that women's associations with various forms of prosperity, which food can represent, are publicly expressed. The feminine nurturant role, and women's ability to invert it, is manifested in the following example. Nayacakalou (1975), reporting on ceremonies welcoming him to a village in Kadavu, an island off the southern Viti Levu coast, said that after the formal presentation of whale's teeth to the village chief and ritual yaqona drinking were completed, it was understood that his intended visit had received chiefly blessings.

> [But] this approval to stay in the village was given concrete and formal acknowledgement when, on the Sunday following, the village women presented me with a feast, including a whole cooked pig, in acknowledgement of the boka [presentation to the chief] I had presented and implying that I would now be "looked after" during my stay (Nayacakalou 1975:61; emphasis added).

The women who brought food to Nayacakalou, thus indicating their hospitality, have something in common with the women who carry food to the bisaba. Both sets of women substantiate their good wishes for another by giving something life-sustaining, food. Matailobau perceptions of women are that "Eratou taura vakalevu na bula na yalewa ni viti" (Fijian women hold life very much in their hands) because they engage in salubrious activities -- nursing, child care, giving food in takitaki, and being committed to assisting those in need. Women are also credited with

having some ability to make things flourish, especially the taro that represents the bisaba.

The bisaba's interest in producing a thriving infant and thus in group continuity is, I suggest, affected by the Matailobau people's colonial experiences: the high infant mortality and low birth rate that followed pacification was largely attributed to women's behavior. It is for this reason, I argue, that bisaba are given for each child, not only for firstborns as they are in other areas of Fiji, and are celebrated for the recovery of ailing persons and the incorporation of newcomers in villages. The ritual's significance also emanates from the ideas and values attached to tina (mother) as a symbol of nurturance and love. Mothers' beneficience, however, is shadowed by the possibility of their withholding it and, the darkest thought of all, their preventing or terminating life itself. Thus, the bisaba participants rally around the newly delivered woman and call for blessings upon all who support her as they seek physical, social, and cultural continuity. The cultural importance of motherhood is, I believe, influenced by the Matailobau memory and interpretation of colonization; for this reason, I will sketch this event and its effects on women before describing the bisaba ritual.

I became aware of the significance of the bisaba for Matailobau people when a village visitor, a man from Lau (the easternmost islands of the archipelago), remarked to me about their relatively frequent occurrence in Namatai.

I then realized that one occurred nearly every month during my fieldwork -- six were given for newborns, two for sick persons, and one for new village residents, i.e., for my family. This Lauan said that in his area bisaba are celebrated only for firstborns and for persons recovering from serious illnesses. In Matailobau, bisaba are held for each child and even for people recovering from mild ailments. The differences in the number of bisaba in these two districts might be explained by their respective responses to colonialism. In the interior, where population losses due to the stresses of European domination and diseases were recovered from more slowly than in Lau, bisaba are held for every child and for relatively mild ailments. Indeed, as I read archival sources, I began to think that there were other connections between women, population demise, and subsequent bisaba celebrations that should be considered. For instance, one of the factors suggested as responsible for the poorer rate of replacement in the interior was the quality of women's child care. Government reports indicate that women in this region lost their incentive for proper nurturance:

> A mother, now that she no longer fears the old consequences of neglect, cares little for her child. She neither feeds it, oils it, nor does anything for it, as was done in the days of old (Notes of the Proceedings of a Council of Chiefs, 1882:24).

The catechist of Lomaiviti also noted that

> We some time ago permitted some of the young [coconuts] to be used for children, the immediate result has been that the mothers have taken to drinking nuts. It is almost impossible to lay

> down any hard and fast rules, people won't adhere to it (Notes of the Proceedings of a Council of Chiefs, 1882:54-55).

This negative image of women should be set against the colonial background impinging upon them. The first European-introduced factor that probably affected women was the administration's demand that Fijians increase the amount of land that they had under cultivation. For the Hill Tribes a call for more gardens perforce involves more work for women, who tend to perform domestic tasks, collect firewood, fish, provide child care, and cultivate. A second ramification of their lives concerned their postpartum tabu. Prior to European contact, Fijians maintained a postpartum tabu on marital coitus for three or four years; transgressing this custom "was considered an outrage on public decency" (Brewster 1922:189). Any man unable to exercise continence with his wife was literally stomped by her kin. The shortening of the postpartum tabu in Fiji may have been associated with the implantation of Christian ideals of conjugal behavior, as was the case in Tonga, where

> By insisting on sexual availability as a wifely duty, missionaries also put an end to the sexual abstinence of women after childbirth, which had lasted until all the child's teeth were in, and was explicitly intended to prevent pregnancy and premature weaning (Thompson 1904:357; quoted in Gailey 1980:314).

Within the first decade of colonial administration, Hill Tribe women utilized European courts as a means of discouraging their husbands' recent increases in amatory behavior.

After this time, colonial officials noted that conjugal behavior was changing in the direction of European mores, because, they surmised,

> our milder system and the examples set by Europeans brought emancipation from the restriction set on the intercourse of the sexes, although in the first years of [our] service public opinion still condemned undue uxoriousness on the part of the man (Brewster 1922:190).

A third innovation made by Europeans in Fijian society was the change in sleeping arrangements and in the encouragements of nuclear family households. Men's houses were used as sleeping quarters by adult males in the precolonial period. Women and children returned to their respective households to sleep. Europeans wanted the people of the interior to live in nuclear family households and to prevent the men from sleeping in the men's house. There was Fijian resistance to this colonial demand, as is indicated in a report written several decades after its initiation.

> There are still houses with more than one couple in them. This is in a measure owing to the conservative manners of some of the older people. We all know that previously men never slept in the same house with women, & that custom is dying hard amongst the elder of the kai Colo [inhabitants of the hills] (General Report -- Colo East, 1903: 121).

I suggest that the European insistence on nuclear family households and other regulations further burdened women and affected their health and well-being. Nuclear, as opposed to extended, family households may create more work for their adult members because each person must do all the

tasks assigned to his or her gender, whereas in households with more adults of the same sex the jobs can be divided among them.

Some of the other regulations that I maintain had negative outcomes on women's health and that of their children were those pertaining to fishing. Minutes of a meeting held in 1899 (Colo East Provincial Council Book, 1898-1904) refer to rules prohibiting pregnant women from fishing at any time and all other women from fishing at night. During my stay in Matailobau, I noted that pregnant women increase the time that they allow for fishing, which yields the most common source of animal protein at a time when mother and fetus have increased nutritional needs. The women boil the fish in water, and then they eat the flesh, suck the bones, and drink the broth. This method of preparation and consumption provides a good source of calcium, also needed in larger amounts during pregnancy and fetal development. Night fishing allows women who have been otherwise engaged during the day the opportunity to fish either for themselves or for other women, especially for those who are pregnant.

Colonial administrators do not appear to have linked their policies to the outcomes that I have proposed here. They studied women mainly in terms of how women's positions could be improved and how they could modify women's behavior, most particularly to avoid "evasions of maternity" (Notes of the Proceedings of a Native Council, 1885).

These women, who were the object of European and Fijian concern regarding high infant mortality and low birth rates, were at the crux of a paradox -- they had to produce more food and more children when institutional changes mitigated against doing both very well. If women's work had been confined to what Europeans perceived to be their job (that is, housework), perhaps not sharing it with one or more women and having more children than they had before would have been the "improvement" in their lives sought by Europeans. Many Europeans believed that colonization would free indigenous women from their supposed inferior social position, especially when they compared them to European women (Etienne and Leacock 1980). But, as Brewster (1922), an administrator in Fiji, wrote in retrospect, the position of women that colonizers held up for comparison to those whom they conquered was the position of the European "lady" and not the European working woman.

Fijians must have understood some, if not all, of the associations among the colonial government's program and its influences on their lives, and especially infant mortality and its tie to women's work:

> Some of you say, "The children of the whites live because they get cows' milk, our children die because we have not cows' milk to give them." How many Fijians are present here that were brought up on cows' milk? Yet ye are strong men and so were your fathers, and they were brought up on the produce of the land. The truth is that you, chiefs, were reared by women that were well fed, that were kept comfortable, and had nothing to do except to care for you. But the only food employed was that of the land, the same as had been used by your fathers from time immemorial. . . . But if a mother has rest, a dry comfort-

> able house, and an abundance of good food, the produce of the land, she can nourish her child herself until it is able to eat (Notes of the Proceedings of a Native Council, 1885:7).

It may be that Fijians began remedying their situation, for when a native administrator of Nabubuco, an area north of the present Matailobau territory, was asked by colonial officials why the population had rebounded there, his reply was that

> the reason must be that when some of our people are sick, their friends go and attend to them well. When children are born their mothers are tabued for three weeks -- after which they are inspected by the Turaga-ni-koro [village headman] -- and food [is] taken to the mothers (Notes of the Proceedings of a Native Council, 1881:16).

This practice appears to be similar to a bisaba, and if not designated as such, it surely sprang from the same values and orientation that underpin the Matailobau ritual. The bisaba is a collective statement about helping others, regeneration, and sustenance. That women are the ones visibly associated with regeneration might explain why they are the ones to give the neophyte the life-making ba. But, I suggest, the larger meaning of the bisaba is a wish that all women be fruitful and that they all be committed to motherhood, in terms of both their own children and those of other women. It was supposedly women's negation of these activities that was responsible for the population demise that indicated their individual and collective malaise. This orientation may be an outgrowth of the belief that in pre-pacification times women had opportuni-

ties to limit the number of their children and to punish their affines' and spouses' maltreatment of them by practicing infanticide (Brewster 1922). Infanticide was supposedly at women's discretion because no male was permitted within the house for four days after childbirth.

The bisaba may also have increased in frequency as a result of Matailobau consciousness of the discontinuity in their lives and identity due to intrusive political forces. I propose this because the ritual employs symbols and references that tie the Matailobau to their pre-colonial past. Taro and yaqona, the two important bisaba elements and symbols, were significant in the pre-Christian religion. The autochthonous religion associated men with yams and women with taro and used yaqona as a sacrifice and communion (Turner n.d.). Yaqona root is ground, thus sacrificed, and served from one vessel to all participants at a ritual. Every important ritual and social gathering includes yaqona because of its intrinsic qualities and its ability to be a conduit to supernatural powers. For instance, in the bisaba speeches, yaqona is defined as a potent substance, kalougata (blessed or auspicious) and vakaturaga (chiefly, respected). Yaqona's power is likened to chiefship. Blessings come from ancestors and chiefs, two sources of power and vitality. Ancestors may provide their descendants with good fortune or punish them. Likewise, chiefs who give patronage are pater sui generis, like ancestors. Villagers seek chiefly assistance and

succor, e.g., in cases of domestic quarrels or spirit possession. Yet chiefly wrath must also be avoided. Like the chief, yaqona is ni bula (life-giving) and kaukauwa (strong) and can confer good fortune on others.1

Yaqona and chiefship are associated with maleness. The link between chiefs and maleness is apparent, so I will briefly describe the connections that I perceive between yaqona and maleness. Prior to pacification, it is reported that yaqona had been drunk periodically only by men. Today, men drink it nearly every day in villages, while women enjoy it infrequently. When yaqona is ritually presented as a complete plant, it is solemnly carried by men. Thus, yaqona is a male symbol and a celebration of and invocation for human perpetuation. The power of yaqona is articulated in the bisaba speeches, where it is used to call for blessings for the mother and child and for all others in attendance.

The propitiation of autochthonous sources of power is apparent not only in the ways yaqona is described and used but also in the prayers said at these rituals. Such an invocation was most explicitly made at a bisaba celebrating a birth in the mataqali of the original chiefs of the Namatai area. It was said by the paramount's wife after the benediction; indeed, it followed a Christian prayer. She called it na lotu vakavuravura (a prayer to ask for continuance).

> E vitu, e walu, kena vuravura. Kemuni na marama, kena vuravura veivavisiko. Veiira na tamata cakacaka. Va'kabukabu.

> Seven, eight [said when one wants to add a statement at a proceeding], its stalk. You women, the stalks make the visiko (bisaba). To them, the workers. To the sowing, tomorrow.

Vuravura in the Bauan dialect (the lingua franca of Fijian speakers) means sugarcane stalks, but here I am assuming that it should be applied to the taro's stalks as a symbol of continuance per se. Vuravura has another meaning -- world. In this context it may refer to the local society. As either definition, vuravura has a meaning applicable to the bisaba's intent. It is the women and the taro stalks that are the essential ingredients of the bisaba, which is dedicated to people's well-being and exemplified by nurturing the newborn infant.

The prayer focuses on the implied wish that the vura, the infant, the women, and the society flourish, but it equates the operationalization of this wish with women's efforts, their cooperation. Women's cooperation seems to be something that cannot be taken for granted. For example, wives in a Sigatoka Valley village (a region west of Matailobau) frustrated the construction of a school compound by refusing to bring their husbands' lunches to the worksite (Belshaw 1964). Withholding food is an effective feminine social control mechanism in a society where men are not expected to cook for themselves and women can plead poor scheduling or unforeseen circumstances for the lack of food, or can remain mute and passive. This prayer then acknowledges women's control of life-giving activities

and seeks their commitment to them. Regardless of the alternate interpretations of words and meanings here, the prayer's thrust is in keeping with the bisaba's orientation and employs two of its central elements, women and the regenerating stalk. There are, I suggest, connections between women and the taro stalk; to illustrate this I will first explain some things about taro.

A stalk generates several plants that can be harvested in turn. Each plant is completely edible, and before a tuber and its stalk is uprooted, leaves can be plucked from several plants without jeopardizing any of them. Taro is the only plant that provides Fijians with a complete meal: "real food," a tuber, and "relish," leaves or stalk. When taro is presented at the bisaba, it is given as tuber and stalk. The tuber may be eaten and the stalk may be used to make ba or it may be planted to produce new plants. Taro and women each provide immediate and future gifts. A woman provides her labor and then children for her affines, but her children are also the potential spouses for members of her natal group. Likewise, the taro and the women who bring it are both identified with the husbands' mataqali. Women, nevertheless, have some autonomy in allocating their labor and the food.

Women are associated with taro in another way, as I noted in passing above. In the past, people averred "that the [taro] will only flourish under female care" (Brewster 1922:163). Villagers retain some of their ancestors'

notions about women's ability to cultivate taro but explain them in pragmatic terms that have to do with the division of horticultural tasks between the sexes, that is, whether the work is appropriate for the "strong" men or the "weak" women. The cultivation process begins with the men loosening the dense soil with dibble sticks. Members of either sex can transplant the stalk with a bit of the tuber base. Women often plant the stalks and, after a month or so, dig out some soil around the plants to give them more space for growth. During approximately the second month the young plant is banked with soil so that it will grow tall and strong; women do this as well. Because they assiduously use a short-handled knife on the small, delicate plants, women commonly weed them. Some women informants stressed that these tender plants are often destroyed by the men's wide, powerful sweeps of their long knives, which are due to their impatient dispositions. The last phase in the process, harvesting, can be done by either men or women. Women, then, tend taro more than men do because they supposedly weed better and can perform those simple but back-breaking chores of digging out and banking up the plants. I do not discount, however, a lingering notion on villagers' parts that taro <u>needs</u> a woman's care to flourish.

The taro that women bring to the <u>bisaba</u> is given with the idea that they are assisting someone and not expecting a return. In Matailobau dialect, <u>bisa</u> means to leave something. When I asked for a synonym for <u>bisa</u>, people

gave me the word biu (to throw out, to leave, to put out). Initially, I thought that bisaba derived its significance from the Bauan usages of bisa, i.e., to rain upon or to accomplish an arduous task. It seemed to me that these definitions concurred with the meaning of the ritual since people were "showering" the recipients with presents because they had recently gone through arduous processes. But Namatai people assured me that the meaning of the bisaba lies in the phrase bisa na ba (the leaving, or to leave the ba). Given their orientation, I suggest that a cultural statement emerges from the bisaba: as the women donate the ba with no thought of reciprocation, so too are they expected to produce children. I take this stance because I believe it corresponds to the societal needs that required women to produce more children without the reciprocation for and control over their fecundity that they had prior to colonization. Thus, I maintain, the roles of women and gift-giving in the bisaba are symbolically combined. Women carry food to rituals and other households as a means of giving men respect. To be a woman is to provide services and food, to be a "giver of life." The ba is a means to make the baby's "real food," its mother's milk, which will sustain it.

Food is an important cultural category to Fijians. Giving food signifies positive feelings, and withholding it indicates negative sentiments. As I said before, women are associated with the presentation (and retention) of food.

Perhaps their link to food is connected to their being the first persons to give food, the mothers. Tina (mother) is an honorific that conveys many sentimental connotations of nurturance and love. When Fijians discourse on mothers, as they can (and often do), they refer continuously to the mother's milk, which provided them with life. Mother's milk symbolizes all activities undertaken to help a child survive. Vakasucu (to bear a child) is a verb based on the word for milk (sucu). They know that parturition is associated with lactation, without which the neonate could not live (this knowledge represents both traditional and typical contemporary conceptions that eschew milk-substitute formulas and wet nurses). Mothers are thus praised for providing life-giving and life-maintaining services and for having loving sentiments for children over whom they have no legal claims (that is, if the mothers are married).

The focus on the new mother and child at the bisaba is usually signified by cloistering them within the curtains of the sleeping area. There were two bisaba at which the mother did not stay with the infant. One was when the child was given the bisaba one month after its birth because the mother had been convalescing from a tubal ligation. At that bisaba the mother was quite past the postpartum period dedicated to resting with the infant. The other case was the one in which the child was adopted. The adoptive mother helped her husband to host the affair, while the natural mother sat in the least prestigious part

of the house, where a seventeen-year-old commoner girl would normally sit.

The seclusion of the mother and child, particularly the child, may be associated with an earlier form of the bisaba, sometimes called the roqoroqo (to pick up and hold or carry a child). Traditionally, villagers said, the roqoroqo was performed on the tenth night after the birth. For the first ten days of a baby's life it was secluded behind the mosquito nets and sleeping curtains of the parents' bed. After the roqoroqo was held, the baby was brought into the main part of the house. The child is still sheltered within the curtains while the bisaba is held. Thus, the ritual is the prelude to the infant's debut into the center of the house, the realm of social life.

At present, the village headman selects the evening for the bisaba, confers (or may not confer) with the honored family, and informs the village of his decision during his morning and evening walks through the village, when he notifies the residents of community events. The bisaba is first announced a day before it is scheduled. On the day of the celebration, the headman reminds the village about it in the morning or early evening. The headman's call is directed at the women, without whose participation the ritual does not seem possible. A special relationship exists between the headman and the women; he is to "bring"

the women to the ritual and to present their gifts for them.

At the appointed hour, women leave their homes with their gifts. Wives of a mataqali are expected to walk together to the bisaba. When they enter the house where the ritual is to be held, the women place their prestations near the center doorway through which all female and child visitors enter. Then they move into sitting positions along the walls according to their respective ages and ranks -- chiefly and older women sit near the upper end of the house, where the beds are. Women usually take their places according to their natal mataqali's hierarchic positions, but their seats may be in terms of their conjugal mataqali's places. As it becomes apparent that most of the guests have arrived, the women's gifts are presented. If the headman[2] has "brought" the women, he may dedicate their prestations to the bisaba recipients. A spokesperson for the ritual's principals and their household acknowledges the women's generosity and thanks them. A benediction over this transaction is said by an autochthonous commoner who can call upon the spirits of the land for the most efficacious blessings. The women's prestations are reciprocated by the householder's yaqona, which is dedicated to the women in a speech. One of the senior chiefly women formally accepts and thanks the hosts for the yaqona. Again a benediction is prayed for the parties involved. These speeches contain various data: structural relationships

between mataqali, the positions of women in mataqali and the effects of their marital status on these rankings, and the bisaba symbols and meanings.

Structural relationships that were prominent at the cohabitation ritual are also emphasized at the bisaba. We will again see the effects of rank on persons' participation. Women's dual mataqali affiliation is most pronounced at this ritual, where they may represent either their natal or affinal units. The father's sister's role is also an important feature; I will discuss her involvement first because, although structurally relevant, the role is muted by the specific circumstances of these examples I have chosen. Then I will outline the cross-sex siblings' and cross-cousins' participation. Women's structurally ambivalent positions will be demonstrated as they occur at these events.

The tasks of receiving the bisaba feast and presenting the yaqona to the women can fall to the child's father's sister. At one bisaba, the baby's father's real sister did accept the feast. When we discussed her role, she said that this is what the father's sister should do because she will call this child her vugo/vasu. She thus referred to the two relationships that she has to the child -- one through her cross-sex sibling, which makes the child her vugo (brother's child; "child-in-law") and the other through her husband, when she employs his term for the infant, vasu (sister's child; "child-in-law"). When the

system is functioning ideally, one's vasu and vugo are the same individual for Ego. A woman's/man's same-sex sibling's child is called child (luve).

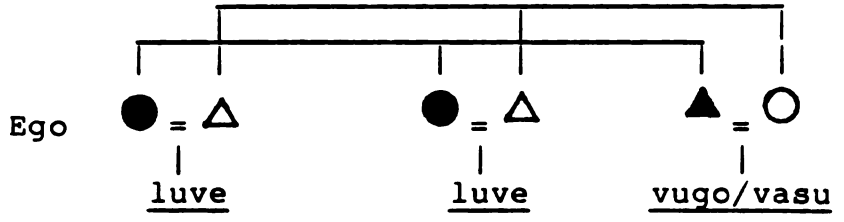


Figure 2. Terms for offspring of own children, same-sex siblings' children, and cross-sex siblings' children

The father's sister occupies two roles or, viewed from another perspective, has one role that emphasizes different aspects through the developmental cycle. After her marriage, a woman has connections with her natal mataqali and can function as its representative in certain approved ways, e.g., at bisaba. Within the definition of and expectation for the father's sister is her potential role as brother's children's mother-in-law. This is reflected in the kinship terminology, where nei is father's sister, mother's brother's wife, and mother-in-law based on the ideal of cross-cousin marriage. The father's sister gives a daughter to her natal mataqali and receives a niece from the same group. At the bisaba one might think of her receipt of the feast as an acknowledgment of her natal affiliations and an act on behalf of her brother. Viewed from her position of prospective mother-in-law, as she

receives the ba today, she will have the woman for her son in the future. On the other hand, today's ba may be a compensation for the loss of her daughter to this male child of her own natal mataqali. In keeping with women's flexibility in mataqali identification, the father's sister may speak for the mataqali of the newborn's parents (her own natal group) and for her conjugal group.

The father's sister's bisaba role must also be analyzed in terms of cross-sex sibling ties. Respect for one's cross-sex sibling is also rendered by one's children (with the child's gender affecting the degree of respect shown). The mother's brother is held in awe but not the father's sister, and it is this quality of the father's sister that facilitates her representation of her natal and conjugal units. She is more approachable than her brother or her husband, can share in both their statuses, and can move between mataqali and roles.

The father's sister's dual roles may be associated with the assumption that the bisaba has some associations with the child's future marriage: the ritual solicits health and fecundity for the infant and provides it with nourishment. The woman who receives the feast (the father's sister) shares an identity with the child's natal and potential conjugal groups. She is the maternal source of the child's future spouse, the child's cross-cousin. The feast in this ritual for continuance is thus associated with a woman who embodies the continuance of both her natal

and her conjugal mataqali. The woman who receives a feast to feed a girl (who will in turn produce children for the woman's own kin) or to feed a boy (who will produce children for her husband's people) is herself a symbol of continuance. She is wife and mother to one group, and the transmitter, the sister, of the other group's common substance, its blood.

The respective marriages of a brother and sister separate them spatially yet bind them together, as they retain the other's children as in-laws. The expectation of this will be signaled by two things at the second bisaba to be described. The newborn's grandmother calls upon her brother's son, her "son-in-law," to offer the yaqona to the women. A father's sister's request or command is authoritative, and this, along with the reciprocal help and sharing intrinsic to the cross-cousin relationship, is why the young chief assisted at the bisaba. Additionally, if he and the new mother had acted according to cultural expectations, he could be the baby's father. His explanation for participation in the ritual was that he was the baby's mother's potential spouse/cross-cousin and her mother was his father's sister. As he said, his child and his cross-cousin's child were "the same" for his father's sister.

The prospect of exchange is inherent in these cross-gender sibling and cousin relationships; this exchange, as noted above, concerns marital partners and children.

Exchanges of other sorts between these categories of persons occurs at the bisaba and reflects those exchanges based on marriage and substance. For instance, at the second bisaba the householder gives tobacco to his female cross-cousin as a remuneration for the women's gifts. His gratitude for his wife's and daughter's reproductive powers is shown by this presentation to his wife's sister, his cross-cousin. People said that when things are to be distributed in such circumstances, individuals look to their cross-cousins to help them to do so. We learned in the last chapter that helping and sharing are parts of the relaxed, jovial cross-cousin relationship.

Another shared element of the cohabitation and bisaba rituals is the respect given to men. The bisaba gifts are dedicated to the male householder even though they are intended for the mother and child. To add prestige and integrity to the proceedings, men are invited to represent groups, or they may come of their own accord. Indeed, the practice of acknowledging men before women and using them as representatives of units is signaled when the village headman refers to the house where the ritual is to be held by the householder's name in its teknonymic form based on his firstborn child's name, e.g., father of Litia; on the house's lineage name, e.g., the second house of Sulisuli lineage; or on the house's platform's name. No bisaba for a firstborn with the child's name identifying the household was announced during my stay. Thus, the neonate for whose

ostensible benefit the bisaba is held is subsumed within a social body that is headed by a male.

This ritual differs from the cohabitation ritual in several ways. First, women speak for mataqali throughout it. Second, the women's prestations are not viewed as the same kind of exchange as were those of the cohabitation ritual, and perhaps that is why women are functioning for mataqali. It should be recalled that women spoke at the cohabitation ritual when the girl was returned from the river and her women were honored with the yaqona. Giving, or bisa (leaving), the ba probably has more in common with presenting the girl to or leaving the girl with her mate without receiving a commensurate compensation than the men's formal prestations at the cohabitation ritual, because men's gifts or exchanges are viewed as officially representing relations between mataqali and women's do not carry the same meaning. Because the bisaba allows women to deliver speeches and focuses on them, and because its participants are mainly women, it may be viewed as being quite different than the rites of passage that men dominate. Also, the bisaba somewhat suspends the usual public, political roles of villagers, and this too contributes to separating it from rites of passage. Thus, for all these reasons, I prefer to describe the bisaba as a domestic ritual of reintegration wherein the mother returns to her more normal activities after the birth, the child is brought into the center of the house and social life, and/

or the recovered patient and new resident become participants in village life.

The First Ritual

Let me now illustrate these general statements about the bisaba by describing and analyzing two celebrations. The first bisaba I will discuss is the first one I witnessed, the one for the paramount's granddaughter. The participants were quite reserved because of the high chief's presence and the dampening effect of an older child's discomfort from measles. At this ritual the infant's father was a very active participant, but usually this is not the case. This bisaba was also unique in that it occurred nearly a month after the birth because the mother had been hospitalized in the capital for a tubal ligation after the delivery. After the mother recuperated for a couple of weeks at home, the bisaba was called by the headman. The celebration was held at the paramount's home, in which the child, its parents, and siblings lived. The household also contained the paramount's other son and his wife and child, who at this time were visiting in the wife's natal village.

Most of the village's married women came to the event carrying taro or another root crop. One mat was given by a woman from another region who was married to a man of a nearby village who in turn was related to this household. This was the only mat I observed given at any kind of

bisaba.[3] My gift was tinned fish, the only store-bought item.

When it appeared that most of the participants had arrived, the headman made the first speech -- the presentation of the women's gifts.

> Vakaturaga e Sika delai Navaulele Nabena vi na Taukei na Waluvu. Dua na ba lailai na ibe sa taura mai na marama, me mai baleti rau na vitinani. E lailai sara warai me rauti komodou na turaga, veiluveni. Keimami mata mai vakamarautaki rau no na vitinani. Cabe vakaturaga tu e Sika, Waivou.
>
> A chiefly greeting mataqali Sika from Navaulele Nabena now the Owner of the Floods! A small amount of ba, a mat are what the women hold in their hands here because there is a mother with a child. These are really small gifts not enough for you [three] to eat, you sir and the mother and child. We want to make the mother and child happy. We want to continue to praise in a chiefly manner Sika, Waivou.

The respect for the chiefly office had to precede the significance of and consideration for the mother and child. A second sign that the paramount was the focus of the evening's event was that the tanoa, the wooden, turtle-shaped bowl filled with yaqona, was directed at him, as he was the highest-ranked person present, the honored guest. This is not to say, as indicated in the speech, that the bisaba was for the paramount. The bisaba's purpose was for the felicitation and sustenance of the mother and child. Clearly, however, the mother and child are subsumed under the householder's leadership, and the gift must be given to the mother and child through him, thus expressing the hierarchic positions of men, women, and children.

The householder's importance was also expressed by the statement that the gifts were too small to feed the chief, mother, and child adequately. (Disparaging the amount of the prestations is also a common feature of these offertory speeches.) The comment bears on their respective worth and does not reflect the actual disposition of the food, which is not adult food but a means to produce an infant's nourishment, breast milk. It is necessary to emphasize that the ba, as the ritual's central symbol and metaphor, represents all prestations except mats. Mats are the only other things that are categorized separately because they are "real," traditional feminine valuables that express dokai (respect) for their recipients.

Women give gifts, said the headman, to make the mother and child happy. Women also responded to my questions about the bisaba's purposes by saying that they wanted to make this dyad happy or to signal their own happiness. I could always understand their latter motivation, but the former one puzzled me. The solution to this enigma may be found, I believe, in the colonial period when women supposedly lost interest in child care. Thus, the bisaba might function like a rally that inspires or reassures the new mother for her duty to the child. Maternal tasks had involved other women, however, and it was women's lack of mutual support in child care that was also held responsible for the population demise. Therefore, the bisaba may addi-

tionally be seen as a means to encourage other women to assist her.

Villagers also gave an alternate explanation for the frequency of Matailobau bisaba that, I maintain, dovetails with this ritual's meanings and goals and their history. Their ideas center on women as givers of life and as being more socially concerned than men. They describe Matailobau women as kind, generous, and concerned about others, i.e., as alonaka (good souls). A woman who is not generous, does not give food as takitaki, etc., is an aloca (bad soul). Men, or so remark the women (and observation bears out their perception), do not concern themselves as much with other villagers' situations in order to determine who needs help. Indeed, they say, it is because Matailobau women have these characteristics that bisaba are so common here. I argue further that the bisaba is a means of encouraging and rewarding women for such behavior by calling down blessings upon them. To emphasize women's significance in creating a viable society, women are allowed to fully participate in this one ritual instance -- i.e., to give speeches that they do not make at rites of passage or political functions. There is, however, a subtle reminder included in the bisaba celebration about women's life-giving functions -- they are to view their claim to their children in the same way that they view their bisaba gift, as something that they give without expectation of compen-

sation or return prestation, thus reflecting women's position in their conjugal mataqali.

Even in this ritual that focuses on women, their places in groups per se are determined by their relationships to men, as is evident in the headman's address. He not only mentions the paramount's presence first, but in his closing sentence he also refers to the presence of the only other man from outside this household in attendance, a member of Waivou mataqali. Waivou is the paramount's warrior mataqali, and one of its members sat next to the paramount during this speech. The relationship of these mataqali is especially close because they belong to the same phratry (yavusa).

After the headman had finished, people began to look around to see who could respond to the presentation by "touching" (tara) the gifts. Several criteria have to be met by the person who delivers the response. She/he must be the eldest, highest-ranked person who can speak for the honored recipients. A chiefly woman married to the paramount's father's brother's son received the gifts for the household. In interviews with me, she explained that her participation was due to the fact that she is chiefly, a member of the paramount's mataqali but of another lineage; that she is married to the paramount's cousin; and that the feast was given to the matanitu (chiefdom or government).

In her speech this woman acknowledged the gifts and thanked the household for the yaqona that they had pre-

sented to the women. Thus, she spoke serially for the bisaba recipients and for the women gift-givers. Her selection as spokesperson for the women was equally attributable to her conjugal and natal mataqali affiliations. Usually, a speaker for the recipients does not include a reference about the yaqona for the women. These tasks are divided into two speeches. The general format is for the acceptance speech to follow the presentation immediately. This matron combined the acceptance of the gifts speech with the speech of thanks for the yaqona. She said,

> Au cavute vakaturaga Sika
> vakaturaga Navulavula
> vakaturaga Waivou
> vakaturaga Vutu
> vakaturaga Navua
> vakaturaga Navanualevu
>
> dua memudou na yaqona na marama. Au vakacabore vi kemudou me tara na magiti levu dou kaute mai na siga nikua. E lailai warai me kaute kemudou. Au vakacabere na vakaturaga Navulavula, Nakoroniu, Vutu, Navanualevu, noqu vanua.
>
> I name in a chiefly manner mataqali Sika
> chiefly Navulavula
> chiefly Waivou
> chiefly Vutu
> chiefly Navua
> chiefly Navanualevu
>
> and on their behalf acknowledge your yaqona for the women. I give praise to you because I touch this large feast that you brought here today. What you brought is not little! I give chiefly praise to mataqali Navulavula, Nakoroniu, Vutu, Navanualevu, and my land/government.

When she spoke for the household, she praised the women's generosity vakaturaga (in a chiefly manner), that is, in a respectful way. Turaga, both in the sense of chiefs and of

men, are worthy of respect. In all speeches we hear these words used to honor others and to give kudos.

The vosa na vinavinaka (speech of thanks) dedicating the first round of yaqona to the women in gratitude for their gifts was made by the newborn's father. Another member of his mataqali could have given this speech, but at the time, of those present he was the most appropriate for the task. He followed his elder cousin's wife in the speaking order because he is her junior, the greater prestige of his maleness notwithstanding. His speech was as follows:

> Vakaturaga Nabena
> vakaturaga Nasau
> vakaturaga Waivou
> vakaturaga Navulavula
> vakaturaga Vutu
> vakaturaga Navanualevu-Mataiqereqere
>
> dua memuni yaqona qoi i so ni magati nu mai cakave tiko. E leilei sara tiko na yaqona qoi kenai kuri no me tovi lomani tiko. U kera tiko me niu taure e na alo loloma yaqoni leilei sara u cakave tiko qoi. Vacacabere me cabe. Vakaturaga Nabena, Navanualevu, Navulavula, Nakoroniu, Waivou, Vutu, Nasau.
>
> Chiefly Nabena
> chiefly Nasau
> chiefly Waivou
> chiefly Navulavula
> chiefly Vutu
> chiefly Navanualevu-Mataiqereqere
>
> let this be your yaqona then for the feast that you are making here. Yours is a small amount of yaqona in its pot and I am sorry about the manner in which I am serving it to you.
>
> I am asking you to be of good heart and accept this small amount of yaqona that I am making here. I am slow in praising the chiefly Nabena, Navanualevu, Navulavula, Nakoroniu, Waivou, Vutu, Nasau.

The headman accepted the yaqona with this speech.

Tara na yaqona vakaturaga. Yaqona ni bula. Yaqona ni kalougata. Na bulabula tiko na marama. Rau bulabula tiko na viluvena. Vakaturaga Nakoroniu, Navulavula, Nabena, Vutu, Navua, Mataiqereqere. E mana! e dina! a muduo!

I touch the chiefly yaqona. Yaqona for life. Yaqona for luck. Let the women be healthy/flourishing. Let the mother and child be healthy/flourishing. Chiefly Nakoroniu, Navulavula, Nabena, Vutu, Navua, Mataiqereqere. Oh power! Oh truth! a great thanks!

In this speech there is a reference to the efficacy of the chiefly, respected yaqona and its use in ritual to produce salubrity. The yaqona, associated with males, is connected to life forces and given the same adjective as are ancestors, kalougata (auspicious or, more idiomatically appropriate, that which or those who bring blessings)[4], and is used to secure blessings for women. Utilizing a male medium to obtain these boons may be interpreted as reflecting men's leadership and greater cultural worth and women's dependency upon men for guidance as well as the lesser value attributed to their gender.

The official serving of yaqona consists of the first few cups, which express important hierarchic, age, liege-vassal, and interchiefdom relationships among those present. These servings are paired into "chiefly" and "follower" cups. The highest-ranked or specially honored person receives the first cup, and then the second cup goes to his or her follower, i.e., either a commoner vassal or a representative of a chiefdom that is related to the first person's territory. The third cup is presented to the

next-highest-ranked or honored person and the fourth to the follower, and so on. The determination of the number and order of servings is the pourer's province.

On this occasion, six cups were given. The first one went to the paramount and the second to his warrior follower, the wife of a Waivou man. The important point here is that no Waivou man was in attendance at that time, so the senior Waivou man's wife substituted for him. There was then an opportunity for me to drink because I was someone given respect as a European and as a guest who might have high standing in her own society. I too had to be accompanied by an aide; this person was the second senior-most Navulavula man's wife (the senior man's wife did not attend the bisaba because of illness). The last chiefly cup was taken by the paramount's wife, the radini levu (high queen), who was natally of chiefly Nasau mataqali of Nasau chiefdom. Her follower was a woman natally of Nasau mataqali and married to a Navulavula man whose mataqali is vassal to both Nasau and the paramount's lineage. These women displayed matrons' structurally ambivalent positions because they came from one group, but one acted on behalf of it and the other on behalf of her conjugal mataqali.

The paramount's son gave his mother the cup, I suggest, because he wanted to honor her as the child's grandmother. This sentimental display (if, in fact, my attribution of such motivation is correct) had to be done within the context of structural relationships. Thus, the

grandmother was given the cup as the representative of another chiefdom.

After these first cups were consumed, the pourer completed the sequence by saying the formula, "the chiefly yaqona is now ended," and giving the three claps that signal its termination. Then cups were given to everyone else present. While these servings were being passed, the newborn's mother was adding water to the yaqona root that her older children were grinding for the second round. This was an unusual thing for the child's mother to do, but as I noted before, she had borne the child a month earlier and was not confined to bed, as a recently delivered mother would have been. After a while, a younger woman married to a Navulavula man and born in Nasau mataqali took over the mother's task when the latter went to attend to the youngster suffering from measles. About this time the infant's father stopped pouring the yaqona because two men came to "help" him. The first man to enter the house was a young chief, who said that he and the baby's father were "siblings"; he served the cups. Shortly after his arrival, a young commoner took the father's place as pourer. This young man's mataqali does not have a vassal relationship to the paramount's house. When questioned as to why he attended the ritual, the young man said that he and the baby's father were viluveni (bound by a distant mother-child tie). Of importance here is that these helpers couched their explanations for their participation in this

domestic ritual in terms of kinship obligations.

It will be noted that the speech of benediction is not included here; this is because there was some disagreement about whether the new father delivered it. Since the bisaba occurred only two weeks after my arrival in the village, and I did not know that I should have brought along a tape recorder,[5] I had to obtain the speeches after the event. At that time the new father only recalled making the yaqona dedication speech; however, the women attending the bisaba said that he also gave the benediction. Clarification of which speech the father made is not a minor point in light of several factors -- the feast was presented to the paramount, thus indicating its possible public, political nature; no chief prays a benediction at a public event; if the chief said the benediction, it would mark the bisaba as a domestic ritual because, according to informants, he may say the benediction in his own house but not in another's or at a public event. The general consensus was that the newborn's father prayed the benediction.

Members of the bisaba recipients' household do not have to present speeches or pour or serve yaqona because others can represent them. The baby's father's performance of these tasks may be viewed as a sign of some lack of social support. On the other hand, the fact that his son occupied these roles was a sign of respect for the paramount.

When the tanoa was empty, a bucketful of yaqona was

poured into it. A second round of dedication and acceptance speeches was made. A similar series of first cups were offered to special people, but fewer than during the first round (and without my participation -- I could not drink very much). When the guests tired of conversation and the tanoa was empty, the evening closed and the guests departed.

The Second Ritual

The second bisaba to be discussed is the one for a child born out of wedlock to a young girl who lived with her parents, siblings, and maternal grandmother. They were an affluent household but without much prestige and influence in the village because the householder was from another village. He was in the irksome position of living in his wife's village and thus not generally being expected to contribute to public discussion, although he was infrequently, and sometimes facetiously, asked to do so. Although this man was chiefly, his children were not addressed with the titles that were their due. Even though his own mataqali had kinship ties to the paramount's lineage, this relationship had little influence on his household's social position in the village. This family's situation exemplifies that, although benefits accrue to men through their wives, these situations somewhat degrade the men because they are not part of the main structure of the group with which they live and which claims the land they

cultivate. Fijians sometimes react to such families' circumstances as deviations from an ideal pattern.

The household's village integration was facilitated by the wife, who drew upon her womanly qualities and kinship obligations and sentiments to obtain others' aid. For example, for the bisaba she had asked some individuals to participate; her natal mataqali sisters felt the usual obligation to help one of their own; and there was also an element of sympathy for this household, which had suffered from several serious illnesses and a child's death.

This bisaba was a bittersweet event. There was joy over the birth of a beautiful, healthy child, but sadness about the lack of paternal kin. Gone ni sala (children of the path) are not a rarity, but their numbers do not assure them others' acceptance of their status. An onus falls on such children; e.g., they are sometimes reminded of their lack of paternal affiliations by their taunting grade-school classmates. Often they become the responsibility of the maternal grandparents when the mothers move away "to have their husbands' children." The fate of such children rests with the maternal kin with whom they live, i.e., the mothers' parents, sisters, or brothers. Some children are educated and well cared for, while others sometimes are given minimal attention. Unmarried women who work in urban areas may keep their children with them. A married woman may have her out-of-wedlock child live with her after she and her husband have had a child.

In the case presented here, the grandparents supported the mother during her pregnancy, purchased baby clothes, and accompanied her to the hospital for what they thought might be a complicated birth. Their caring was evident at the bisaba, which both attended and at which both presented yaqona and cigarettes. At most bisaba only yaqona is given to the guests. Interestingly, it was at the two bisaba for unwed mothers that I attended that yaqona and cigarettes were given by the hosts. It was only at the bisaba to establish the new pastor and his household as village residents that no yaqona was given; he reciprocated the women's gifts with a whale's tooth.

This bisaba began about 9:00 p.m. As the women arrived, two aspects of the assemblage became apparent. One was that the most common gifts were kerosene and sugar. Only a few taro were presented because villagers had smaller than average food stores available; they had underestimated their subsistence and cash crop needs, and the weather had been poor. The second attribute of the group was that women immediately began performing tasks for the household. A neighbor poured the individual quart-sized bottles of kerosene into a large plastic container. Another woman consolidated the prestations of sugar into a large jar. The yaqona was stirred by the wife of the paramount's younger brother, who was shortly relieved of this job by a woman from the grandmother's mataqali. This second woman became the pourer for most of the evening.

When she decided to sit in the pavilion adjacent to the house, her place was taken by the first woman's son. A Sulisuli chief served the yaqona and gave some of the speeches. People involved with the yaqona traced their relationships to the family in these ways: one woman shared natal mataqali membership with the grandmother; the other woman and her son were associated with the grandfather; and the Sulisuli chief traced his connection through the grandmother.

The caka na ba vakacabore vi Tamai Verenaisi (the task of "offering the ba to" the newborn's grandfather) was done by the headman.

> Tamai Verenaisi, vakaturaga Nacoicolo, qo dua na ba lailai sa taure mai na marama. Me na ba nomu itani tukuna Taukei ni Waluvu. Me mai bisaba veidrau veiluveni. Vakacabera, vakaturaga Naceicolo, Nakoroniu.
>
> Tamai Verenaisi, chiefly Naceicolo, this is a small amount of ba that the women bring here. This should be the ba of your distant place says the Taukei ni Waluvu. Here the bisaba should be for you two, mother and child. I praise the chiefly Naceicolo, Nakoroniu.

This speech's cordiality is due to the grandfather's kinship with the paramount and the headman's uxoral link to the grandmother's mataqali, Nakoroniu. The headman is the descendant of a Nakoroniu woman, and as such, he felt an obligation to help at the ritual, as he did when inviting villagers into the house for the cohabitation ritual. Like the other dedication speech, this one is addressed to the householder but implies that the ba should be prepared for the new mother and child; it too laments the smallness of

the women's prestations. A recognition of the householder's origin is included, along with a comment that he should feel that the feast is the kind that he would receive in his home village. Unlike the other dedication speech, this one includes the natal mataqali of the grandmother, something that appears to be done usually when the baby's mother is from the village. At the bisaba for the paramount's granddaughter, the omission of the mother's mataqali may have been accidental, or it may have been due to the fact that she is a commoner from another province. Either reason is plausible. Regretfully, I did not inquire into this matter.

The grandfather formally received the feast by saying

> Au tara tiko na magiti, magiti ni bula, magiti ni kalougata dei tiko na veiwekani. Soko tiko na kena dra; kalougata na noda vanua; tubo tiko na cakcaka ni kalou. E Mana! e dina! A muduo, muduo, muduo. A muduo, muduo, muduo.
>
> I touch the feast, the feast of life/health, the efficacious/lucky feast brought here by relatives. The blood is thick here; our land is blessed, god's work is continuing to grow. Oh power! Oh truth! A great thanks, a great thanks, a great thanks. A great thanks, a great thanks, a great thanks.

The grandfather stressed the life-giving qualities of the prestations (focusing on the few taro actually presented). He gave kudos to Namatai village, and to associate himself more closely with his guests he categorized them as non-agnatic relatives and did not list their specific mataqali.

The Sulisuli chief who would serve the yaqona that evening offered the yaqona to the women on behalf of the

grandfather. This speech is the na vosa nai cavu ni toka-toka se mataqali (the speech that calls out the lineages or mataqali) of the people present. It listed the women's houses (na bure ni marama).

Vakaturaga Nabena delai Navaulele
vakaturaga Navulavula
vakaturaga Waivou
vakaturaga vutu
vakaturaga Nakoroniu

kei na veidela ni yavu ni marama.
Dua na tanoa yaqona au vakacabore tiko ya qoi.
Qoi nai so ni magiti levu ko do kaute mai na marama me baleti rau na veiluveni.
Kitou niutake ni va mai magiti ni bula, me rau mai bulabula na veiluveni, me mai to na wai ni sucu, ke lailai mo dou vosote.
Mai balabalavu na vosa ni yaqona, mai vakacabere cabe vakaturaga e Nabena, vakaturaga e Nasautoka, Navua, kei na vei matabure kece sara e sogo ni vata tiko e loma ni vale.
Ka tu.

Chiefly Nabena delai Navaulele
chiefly Navulavula
chiefly Waivou
chiefly Vutu
chiefly Nakoroniu

and the housesites of the women.
I am offering this bowl of yaqona.
I am giving this to repay the women for the big feast that they brought to the child and mother.
We think that this feast of life will make the mother and child grow well, to give more milk to the mother's breast, pardon us if what we brought is too small.
I have talked for a long time, here let me praise chiefly Nabena, chiefly Nasau, Navua, and all the houses attending in this house.
Let this be/It is coming up.

The chief enumerated the village mataqali first, i.e., the women's conjugal kin, and then included the women's natal mataqali. He listed all the things that people say are of concern in the bisaba -- honoring the mother and child,

hoping for their well-being, providing a means for increasing the mother's milk, and respecting the women's contributions to these goals. At the end of the speech, he mentioned the natal mataqali of an old widow and of two women from other chiefdoms.

This chief's presence at the bisaba is a direct result of his kinship connections to this household; he was the new mother's cross-cousin, a potential spouse. It was the grandmother who asked him to give this address. He felt obliged to assist at the bisaba because, in his words, "I am the path from Verenaise's mother, because I call her my father's sister. Verenaise's child is the same for her [my father's sister] as my child." If the kinship and marriage system was operating perfectly, this chief might be the father of this newborn, and his father's sister would be his mother-in-law. The persuasive grandmother could call upon her brother's child to add his aristocratic presence and oratorical skill to her grandchild's bisaba based upon the potential in-law relationship between them, but more especially because of the respect and deference he owed her as his father's sister.

But let us look at the chief's relationship to the new mother, his cross-cousin. Cross-cousins not only enjoy a relaxed relationship, but one in which sharing and assistance are expected. Therefore, the chief's aid could be anticipated merely on the basis of his tie to the new mother. This aspect of the cross-cousin bond was also

illustrated in the grandfather's behavior, when he handed five packages of cigarettes to his cross-cousin, his wife's half-sister (the women had the same mother), to distribute to the other women.

Then with a speech essentially the same as the one he used at the paramount's grandchild's bisaba, the headman received the yaqona on behalf of the women -- but made no mention of the cigarettes. After he concluded, he glanced around to find the appropriate woman to bless the yaqona. His selection criteria were twofold: the eldest and the most highly ranked woman present. A 75-year-old widow born in Namatai in Sulisuli lineage, who was visiting her sister, was chosen by him to give this speech. This was her benediction:

> Yaqona dina e caka
> Caka vakaturaga mai Naceicolo, mai Nakoroniu, Nabena, Navaulele, Nasau, Navua, Vutu, Nabena Nasautu.
> Yaqona ni bula,
> Yaqona kaukauwa.
> Bulabula vata tiko.
> Tubu na lotu
> Mana e dina. A vura. A muduo, a muduo, a muduo!
>
> Real yaqona is made
> Made in a chiefly way from Naceicolo, from Nakoroniu, Nabena, Navaulele, Nasau, Navua, Vutu, Nabena Nasautu.
> Yaqona for life,
> Strong yaqona.
> Let us all here be healthy.
> Faith/power grows,
> Real power. I repeat. A great thanks, a great thanks, a great thanks!

As did the paramount's son, this chiefly woman gave the benediction, which is the privilege of commoners at public, political events. Her prayer again expressed the domestic

nature of this ritual. She, like the paramount's son, was related to the bisaba's principals: she was kawa, a descendant of a woman of Nakoroniu mataqali, the newborn's grandmother's mataqali with which this household affiliated in Namatai.

The first cups of yaqona were given to chiefly women and their followers at the other bisaba. I was given a cup, but this time for a special honor -- the child was my namesake. To demonstrate my relationship with the infant, I sat at the center of the gathering in the highest-ranked position and directly in front of where she slept.

The child was named after me by her maternal grandmother, who said that she did so because we had qualities in common -- relatively fair skin and, by implicit reference to her non-Fijian father, foreign extraction. Namesakes have a special bond; they are yacadrau (those two with the same name) and should support and assist each other. As a relatively wealthy and powerful person, I was therefore a good choice to help a child whose social inheritance had been affected by her parents' ethnic differences and unmarried state.

After these first few cups were given, the formal serving was closed. As the remainder of the guests and hosts had their turns for yaqona, laughter and joking filled the house. A second serving of yaqona was brought in a metal bucket from the pavilion into the house. The young chief also dedicated it. This time, however, the

paramount's wife received it for the women; she did so for two reasons. First, she was the second senior-most woman present; her rank, however, was based on her husband's, who was the highest ranked and oldest villager. Secondly, her husband had a kinship tie to the grandfather's group. This woman's participation, which was related to her marital status and her husband's kinship ties, depicts some important features of Fijian society. Matrons are affected by principles of age and rank that govern social interaction differently for them than they do for men; they are sometimes ranked according to their husband's hierarchic positions. The chief, however, was younger than the widow and thus behind her in the ranking order according to age. As did the woman who gave the first speech, widows can act according to their own or their deceased husbands' ranks in some circumstances.

This second serving of yaqona is called the last offering (na otioti vigaravi). It is understood that, after it, no more yaqona will be given, and that when it is consumed the women are expected to leave. The village headman's benediction for it calls upon the yaqona's and the paramount's blessings.

> Kacivi tiko na yaqona. Yaqona vakaturaga. Nabena Taukei na Waluvu. Yaqona tiko na bula. Veilomani tiko. Rau bulabula tiko veiluveni. Mana e dina. A muduo, a muduo, a muduo!
>
> The yaqona is calling. The chiefly yaqona. Nabena, Owner of the Floods. The yaqona is for life. It is for everyone here. Let you two, mother and child, flourish. True power. A great thanks, a great thanks, a great thanks!

Because it has potent qualities and can be a means of relating to powers that can confer human longings, yaqona is called upon to grant the speaker's wishes. It is partially the verbalization of the wishes, the calling upon the power of the yaqona, that can make human desires reality. Yaqona is drunk in the hopes that its qualities and those of the powers with which it communicates will be transmitted to those who consume it. At this ritual, the yaqona is called upon to make the mother and child and the other participants, i.e., the other women, flourish.

Thus, the bisaba's goals meet the needs of a society that has been affected by foreign domination, high infant mortality, low birth rate, and malaise. The bisaba is directed at the women, who are believed to be responsible for the loss of their children and thus of their culture's vitality. Cheering the mother and child is part of women's usual function at gatherings -- that is, to enliven, to energize, as we saw at the cohabitation ritual -- and may be at the bisaba a metaphor for the reciprocal support that women should extend to each other in the interests of social survival. Women may be expected to assist others because they function as the community's care-givers, which is illustrated by their provisioning others with food. It is no wonder that women should be identified with taro, that is, the preferred food, one that yields a complete meal and that contributes to the production of breast milk, everyone's first food.

Taro and women may also be equated because both must be assiduously cultivated; this is shown in the bisaba and cohabitation rituals, where women are guided toward socially approved behavior. Steering women to proper wifely and maternal behavior is of utmost importance because these are society's sustainers and care-givers, whose intrinsic regenerative energy can be subverted. Women are capricious because their souls are weak and fluid; if left uncontrolled, women might undermine communal goals.

The bisaba and the cohabitation ritual are alike in their illustrations of the importance of sisterhood. In the bisaba the sister's worth is manifested in the fact that, regardless of her marital status, the mother is fêted because her child is the expression of her sisterhood and her mataqali's sacred blood. Secondly, women speak on behalf of their natal units. Lastly, the father's sister's role conceptualizes the utility of women as intermediaries in mataqali relations.

Women's dual mataqali affiliations are also shown in the bisaba. Indeed, the flexibility, the contextual influence in their group identifications, is reflected in women's bisaba participation, where they can act on behalf of their natal or affinal mataqali. The bisaba, like the cohabitation ritual, appears to say that however, whenever, or wherever women will contribute to social well-being, they will be assigned a place in a group.

Although there are similarities between women's participations and perceptions of them in these two rituals, there are differences between them too. At the cohabitation ritual, women moved quietly, preparing food -- that is, they did not speak for groups during the gift exchanges, as men did, and while some of them dressed the couple in their new clothes, no women addressed the gathering. Indeed, it was only when the women were alone for the "drying" of the girl that they formally spoke, and then on behalf of their natal mataqali. Women spoke only as vakavuru performers, when they occupied other personae and were, as clowns, in a liminal position -- that is, outside a structurally acceptable status and role.

At the bisaba, women can give speeches throughout the ritual and on behalf of either their conjugal or their natal mataqali. Additionally, women are spoken of as the focus of attention in the bisaba, as the ones who organize bisaba for ailing persons, and as the important actors in it. I suggest three explanations for these differences between the cohabitation ritual and the bisaba in regard to women's involvement in them. One is that the cohabitation ritual is a rite of passage that consists of men, representing corporate groups, who are expressing changes in status for mataqali and two of their respective members. Second, the bisaba is a domestic ritual that does not necessarily entail the participation of mataqali as corporate entities and, therefore, does not require that men

lead the ritual. Lastly, childbirth is a process that traditionally was supervised by women; likewise, women, with their agnates' support, controlled their fecundity. Perhaps the bisaba is dominated by women to prevent them from rebelling against men's domination by refusing maternal care to the infant and sororal assistance to the mother.

Summary

A child's birth occasions the celebration of Matailobau continuity and the recognition that this new life must be nourished. The bisaba is part of the wish to fête and nurture the neonate. Women are largely responsible for these processes and outcomes, and this is significant in the bisaba. They give the infant's mother a substance that should increase her milk; the substance is the regenerative stalk of taro -- the symbol of the bisaba and the plant with which women are associated in several respects.

Both women and taro give immediate and future prestations. As taro provides a complete -- but separable -- food for adults and infants, so too do women provide a complete means for social regeneration, i.e., giving children to their affines and making these same offspring the potential spouses of members of their own groups. Women are identified with the bisaba because they are viewed as having life-maintaining and life-sustaining func-

tions. Thus, they are the ones who present, or withhold, food, the symbol of and basic requirement for existence.

Women's significant relationships are also depicted in the bisaba: cross-sex sibling bonds are expressed in it, especially in the role of father's sister but also in that of cross-cousins. We again see that women's structural position is ambivalent, but we see this more clearly in this ritual, where women represent their natal or affinal group, than in the cohabitation ritual. The argument is made that the father's sister's role epitomizes women's dual mataqali affiliation.

Notes

1 Power (mana) can be obtained by having contact with a person rich in it. For instance, the paramount's wife is in a position to call upon her powers to bless others by virtue of her sharing in some measure her husband's qualities. The mechanism for obtaining blessings that are associated with powerful persons was illustrated to me by an experience that my daughter had in the village. An hour before he died, a highly ranked chief kissed my infant daughter, who was visiting at his house with another child. People told me that my child would be lucky for the rest of her life because she was the last person to receive a kiss from a "big chief" before he died. Another example of the luck that can be conferred by the touch of a chief occurred when the Tui Bau, the paramount of the Fiji Islands, came to visit Namatai. In my exuberance to greet him, I stood up and extended my hand to him; he grasped it, and I began to shake it enthusiastically. People were aghast by my impertinence -- to stand when I should have decorously taken to the shadows and to dare to touch someone of great power. The result, however, was that I had taken the hand of the highest ranked Fijian chief and had obtained good fortune and some of his personal power from him.

2 During the course of my research, two men alternated as headman. The first one, who was divorced with children, presented the women's gifts; the second, who was the headman's brother's son, acted as headman when the senior man was out of the village. This young, single

man did not represent the women. When he brought them to a bisaba, a senior woman gave the speeches.

3 The man who pointed out the disparity in the number and kinds of bisaba between Lau and Matailobau noted other differences as well. In Lau, celebrations of first-borns' births include, besides the raw tubers, prestations of elaborately decorated mats and other costly items, e.g., whale's teeth. Matailobau bisaba can include store-bought goods but do not include clothing, and rarely mats (recall that the one mat was given by a woman from another area). In regard to the store-bought goods, he said that it was obvious that these were recent innovations and perhaps indications of these people's misunderstandings of the form and meaning of bisaba, i.e., the prestation of raw tubers. Presenting a store-bought gift, he suggested, may be due to having forgotten to harvest crops for the events, which may in turn be due, in part, to the frequency and perhaps the spontaneity of these events.

4 Yaqona is presented and consumed with ritual precision because of its mystical properties. Two people serve the yaqona: one pours a portion into a cup made from a coconut shell and the other gives the cup to persons at the gathering. People drink in turn from a single cup. After the "official" first few rounds, several cups may be circulated at a large affair. There are two ways to serve yaqona. It may be presented in the server's right hand with the left hand steadying the right elbow while the server is squatting before the recipient. Yaqona may also be dispensed with the server maintaining a military-type posture of erectness and deliberate movements -- the server's eyes are devoid of any focus, the cup is supported with both hands, the server squats or kneels before the cup's recipient. The recipient first gives several short claps with her cupped hands, then reaches for the cup with her right hand. Hand claps are signs of respect, e.g., before touching a chief to administer a bandage, one should clap. Because it is revered, yaqona is guarded against careless spilling. Indeed, to sova na yaqona (to spill out [this is the verb used for the disposal of garbage]) is a significant part of the sorcery technique.

5 Using a tape recorder was a folly, I learned, because when it was on, speeches became a field for competition in erudition, length, and genealogical acumen. In natural settings, people give speeches according to the formulae that they learned from parents or other elders. Even when the speaker's emotions would flood through a speech and affect the formula, the content, replete with emotion, would be recalled months later. Fijians have excellent memories. Once I understood this, I believed that it was better to record a speech after the event

rather than capture the dubious spontaneity of the situation as it happened.

CHAPTER 4

THE FUNERAL

The role of the woman who has facilitated the affinal relationship that is brought into realignment at the funeral is muted. Her maternal role and function are not as stressed as they were in the bisaba. Instead, we see her completing the cycle of affinal relations begun at her cohabitation ritual: the child who established consanguineal ties between her and her spouse's kin has expired, leaving the affinal ties as tenuous as before its birth, and what continues to be salient about her, as before her motherhood, is her worth as a sister. Because she is mataqali sister, her group was concerned about her marital union, and then her fecundity and offspring, and is now interested in properly burying the sacred substance that she created and in which they share.

As at the other rituals, we see at the funeral the strength and importance of groups. The deceased's parents' roles are subsumed into their respective mataqali statuses, which define the deceased's agnatic kin (affinal kin, in the case of a woman) as the "owners of the death" and give the maternal relatives another kind of proprietary relationship to the deceased. As at the cohabitation ritual, the exchange of substance and person between mataqali at the funeral and the compensation that is made for such a transfer is stressed. At the funeral, the child that the

maternal kin gave to their affines is taken by them or given back to them to be interred.

There is the suggestion that those who had the right to release someone to its paternal groups may have the right to take that life and bury its remains. The act of burial is, however, a nurturant one, the final tending and wrapping of a human being. Burial is, therefore, a maternal act that uxoral kin, who share in the mother's qualities and functions, should perform. At the funeral, however, the maternal mataqali must receive a whale's tooth (na kena ula, it's head) for burying the body from the deceased's group as recompense for their labors and substance. The tooth refers to the deceased's head, the body's most respected part[1] and the symbol of its essence, which the maternal relatives allowed to exist when they relinquished their right in the deceased and its mother. The owners of the death's presentation of the na kena ulu tooth to the maternal kin may be a means of resolving any sense of social imbalance signaled by the death, or it may be a way to facilitate the resumption of their relationship.

There is a notion of disequilibrium between these groups because people maintain that if this tooth is not given to the deceased's maternal unit, the wexa, then calamity will befall the deceased's mataqali.[2] The threat of the wexa's power over the deceased's people may be related to the belief that they may be responsible for the

death, because deaths may be caused by supernatural intervention and because the mother's group, particularly her brother, had power over her fecundity and her children's viability. The wexa's power is also shown by its members requiring to be fed and to be sheltered by the deceased's relatives, to determine the funeral's size and format, and to have wexa women attend with it and not with their conjugal units. Yet for all this display of privilege and might, the wexa still portrays the nurturance attributed to maternal relatives, because burying their sister's child is an act that reflects the care giving that marks such relationships.

Echoed in the other women's funeral participation and presentation of food and mats are the deceased's mother's female qualities of sustenance and care giving. As shown in the other two rituals, women's food giving exemplifies sentiments of caring and sustenance, and their mats likewise represent feelings of respect and devotion. In the funeral ritual, mats have a special role as the traditional and most common wrapping for the deceased. Thus, women are again involved in the transfer of substance, as in the cohabitation and bisaba rituals, this time by producing the conveyance in which the deceased is moved to (and which remains in) the grave.

There are other similarities between women's roles in the funeral and the cohabitation ritual: women do not represent groups and their exchanges at either ritual.

While women are again "silent" at the funeral, they provide something essential to the ritual task, their mats, and in this regard their roles are reminiscent of their cohabitation ritual and bisaba functions. The qualities of feminine weakness and malleability and their lesser cultural worth shown in the other rituals are also manifested at the funeral ritual. Women's frailty is displayed at the funeral by their (relatively) unrestrained keening, while the men show that their souls are strong and solid by sitting in quiet repose in the vale ni mate (house of the death). The greater value of masculine things is depicted by the greater investment of interest, resources, and time in men's funerals. But women's more modest funerals also signal, I argue, the fact that their interstitial position, so useful on so many ritual and nonritual occasions, makes mataqali commitments to them weaker than they are for men, who are unequivocally identified with one group. The staunchness of the mataqali's investment in the deceased as its member is translated into the attention given to the funeral.

The funeral, like the cohabitation ritual, lasts four days and is situated in the deceased's household. Unlike in the cohabitation and bisaba rituals, the deceased as the ritual's principal is not ensconced within the sleeping area but is enveloped in mats (occasionally in a coffin) in the middle of the upper end of the house. Also like in the cohabitation ritual, there are visitors, feasts given by

the deceased's kin, and exchanges between mourners and the deceased's mataqali.

As soon as the villagers hear about a death, either by witnessing the grief of the deceased's household members or by hearing about it, mataqali gather to decide when they will go as a unit to the deceased's house and what they will present to the bereaved. Men usually give whales' teeth and sometimes cows. Women typically determine whether they will present used clothing, new cloth or clothing, mats, or masi (mulberry bark cloth, which is obtained from coastal areas). A mataqali may also give tinned crackers, tea, sugar, or money. Gifts are ranked, and thus their presentation reflects the relationships between donors and recipients and are also a means of bolstering the donors' prestige.

While other mataqali are deciding upon their prestations, in the house of the death the family and others who may be committed to assisting in the preparation of the body, e.g., the vassals of chiefs, wash it and clothe it in clean, and sometimes special, garments. After the corpse has been bundled in several large mats, certain categories of persons may sit near it at the upper end of the house when visitations begin: women of the deceased's mataqali, the deceased's widow and her sisters, the paramount chief, and other chiefs who have ties to the deceased's mataqali. Other mourners and household members sit along the walls and in front of the body at the lower end of the house. If

there is room in the house, all adult mataqali members will enter it to pay their respects to the deceased and its kin. Otherwise, men will go to the pavilion erected adjacent to the house of the death, and women, carrying their mats, will enter the house to keen. Men, who in all situations are supposed to be more reserved than women, do not express their sorrow in the stylized, high-pitched wailing.

After their presentations, the deceased's co-villagers may leave the house either to make room for new mourners or to return to their respective household tasks. Mourners from outside the village may stay with the deceased's family or lodge in another village home to which they are related either by kinship or as each other's "doors." If burial does not occur on the funeral's first day, mourners gather in the house of the death to sing Christian songs throughout the night. Every adult villager who possibly can should come for some time to this vigil. During the four days either the deceased's mataqali or another mataqali will provide a cow or cows to feed the mourners. Root crops for these meals are given by the deceased's relatives and in takitaki by other village groups. The fourth-day feast (burua) closes the ritual with a distribution of meat village-wide and to all non-village mourners to carry to their homes.

One group of mourners, the bikabika, resides in the house of death for at least the four days of the funeral ritual. Bikabika in this context refers to the act of

staying with the deceased's closest survivors. Bikabika membership is determined locally, but usually consists of socially mature men and women, i.e., persons who are or were once married but who do not have to provide family meals or child care. Women with dependent children, housewives responsible for households, and male householders may choose to join the bikabika when the deceased is a member of their household, some informants said. The bikabika performs a task, has its work (cakacaka) -- to stay in the house of the death, to talk about the deceased, "to think about the deceased," and thus to comfort the most bereaved. Bikabika members are not allowed to cultivate, fish, collect firewood, or do housework. They take all meals in the house of the death and sleep there as well. The length of the bikabika's vigil is dependent upon their sentiments for the deceased and the deceased's rank and social network. Men and chiefs usually have bikabika that stay together longer than the four-day funeral as a means of signifying the respect given to these categories of persons.

Regardless of the deceased's characteristics, as the ritual unfolds, as at the cohabitation ritual, the person(s) occasioning the event appear to produce the background for it, while intergroup relations take prominence. The significance of groups and their organization into "sides" is demarcated at the funeral by the respective roles of the owners of the death and the wexa.

Funerals are organized by the deceased's mataqali and wexa; their respective roles are influenced by the vicissitudes of each particular funeral. The deceased's mataqali is responsible for feeding mourners, and the wexa has the right to call mourners to the funeral. But if the wexa is not informed of the death because it resides on a distant island or if for some other reason it cannot or will not attend the funeral and fulfill its obligations, the owners of the death will determine to whom the death is announced. Announcing a death to a mataqali or household obligates it to attend the funeral. The deceased's gender, rank, and personal characteristics may influence the number and kinds of groups invited to the funeral; this will be illustrated in the following descriptions. The circumstances surrounding the survivors, e.g., insufficient resources to host many mourners, also affect the number of announcements the bereaved send. The announcements that we have been discussing are of two types. Sending a man whose mataqali has the specific obligation to carry such a message to another village or mataqali is the traditional means of announcing a death. The modern form of announcement is a radio message.

Another group of people who supervise aspects of the funeral proceedings is the gravediggers, the bouta. The bouta is formed on the first day of the funeral. A representative of the deceased's kin may choose the bouta leader, who in turn can select several other men. The

bouta leader is "like a chief" during the four days of the funeral and, as such, can impose fines on those who behave in a manner that is disrespectful to the deceased or the bereaved. Merrymaking or, in the case of a chief's funeral, sitting with one's legs straight out in front are examples of behavior for which a person can be fined and must pay the bouta cigarettes, whales' teeth, or whatever he determines appropriate to the misdemeanor. The bouta can retain the fine or give it to someone else. In his chiefly capacity, the bouta leader also places a tabu on part of a taro garden and a section of a stream. The taro in this plot and the fish in these waters are reserved for the feast culminating the mourning on the 100th day after the death. The bouta is like the bikabika in that it stays in the house of the death for the duration of the funeral. Villagers said that the bouta is "held" in the house of the death for the four days and is "released" (suka) after the feast on the fourth day.

The involvement of the wexa, the size and duration of the bikabika and bouta, the extent of other people's participation, and the qualitative aspects of funerals are influenced by the deceased's characteristics, particularly the culturally assigned traits of gender. I will illustrate this in my comparative descriptions of the funerals of an old woman and an old man. For example, Fijians use the term vibeci (to despise) to express the lack of formal cultural regard given women in comparison with men. A

major descriptive feature of the sexes is that the masculine characteristics of strength and solidity outrank feminine traits of relative weakness and malleability. As their supposed inherent qualities are rated, so too are the sexes: women are not valued as highly as men in Fijian society. It is this general devaluing of women that partially explains the smallness and relative penuriousness of the widow's funeral to be described here.

Masculinity is also honored because men represent groups and Fijian society per se: as such, they are of a different order than women and more worthy of respect. Men's representational roles, I argue, are linked to their unambiguous identity with one group, whereas women's affiliation may be divided between their affinal and natal kin. Women can affiliate with two units because their fluid, weak, malleable natures allow this associational flexibility that is denied men, whose more solid essences militate against their absorption into their wives' groups.

To wit, the old woman's mataqali affiliation was not only shared between her natal and affinal kin -- her tie to her conjugal mataqali was fragile by definition because it depended on the continuation of her marriage. As a widow, her group identification was further blurred by the expectation that a widow may either return to her agnates or remain with her children and affines after her husband's death. A widow's mataqali identity is made more ambiguous when she affiliates with both groups, as she can do serial-

ly at rituals or in daily affairs. Even when she has opted to remain with her affines, however, without her husband's presence her conjugal mataqali membership is tenuous. A widow can be driven from her deceased husband's home -- as happened during the research period -- by her son's angry words, "This is not your home!" A widow's uncertain mataqali membership hinders others from giving her the kind of loyalty and steadfast support that can be rendered to a man, who is securely identified with a group.

The differences in the sexes' respective incorporations into kin groups also result in disparities in the amount of social disruption brought about by their respective deaths, I maintain. Deaths of persons whose mataqali membership is unambiguous will produce larger hiatuses in the social network than those whose group affiliation is indeterminate. To reweave the social reticule rent by such persons' passing, more lavish funerals involving more people are held. The greater emphasis on mataqali's exchanges and mourners' articulation of their structural relations to the deceased help to substantiate this viewpoint. By this same argument, more highly ranked and regarded persons' demises will create more stress to extant relationships than will deaths of persons with the opposite characteristics. Thus, the qualitative differences between these funerals can be explained in terms of the greater prestige accorded men: men's firmer mataqali identification and subsequent support from their co-members, and the

greater disruption caused by their deaths due to these two preceding variables.

I offer as substantiation of my interpretation of the differences between men's and women's funerals these outlines of the mortuary rituals that I will later describe more fully. The widow's burial occurred within twenty-four hours of her death. She was wrapped in mats and carried to her grave by two young chiefs, followed by a small cortege. To avoid feeding members of her wexa, her son told them that they did not have to fulfill their funerary function. The wexa, for its part, did not want to incur expenses in doing so. Her affinal mataqali buried her. The bikabika was small, composed of women who sat for only the four days of the funeral. No woman wore the black mourning dress in her honor, and there were no plans for a memorial grave marker. The na kena ulu whale's tooth was neither given nor even chosen for her wexa during the funeral. The poverty of preparations for and personnel involved in her funeral was due to her commoner female status and her lack of a large and strong social network of village women, which is attributable to her own personality.

Her personal characteristics and recent physical and mental degeneration worked against her having many women supporters, but her social weakness (malumalumu), said female informants, may have been due to the fact that her husband was deceased and thus there was no one to attract men to her bikabika. Her personal belongings were burned

instead of being given to her wexa or other close kin. The burning of her possessions was not discussed by informants but may be associated with their belief that she had a powerful spirit familiar whose connection with her effects the living did not wish to retain. When her daughters spoke sorrowfully of her passing, they reminisced about the widow's generous allocation of time in child care and companionship. The daughter who tended the widow immediately before she died and in whose house the funeral feasts were held compared her father-in-law's unwillingness to ease her burden of child care and other tasks with her mother's aid. The widow's son-in-law also mentioned his mother-in-law's help and thoughtfulness when we discussed her funeral months after the event. The few who grieved over the widow's death and the meagerness of her funeral are contrasted with the numbers involved in and the lavishness of the old man's funeral.

This octogenarian man was leader of commoner mataqali Vutu and was respected for his generosity to village projects and his amiable personality. He and his sons prepared for his funeral by selecting his largest cow and whale's tooth, and his sons purchased a coffin. His large wexa took on its full funerary responsibility and liberally presented valuables to his mataqali. The funeral cortege was headed by the paramount, his bikabika contained men and women and sat for more than a week, and his wife donned black mourning clothes in his memory. People's mourning

was affected by the value they place on men, whose masculinity deserves respect and who are begettors of mataqali members.

The genders' traits that partially explain the disparities in the qualities of funerals for men and women are also related to the sexes' funerary participation. The strong, able men speak for groups at funerals, and because of their representational roles, they are respected. Unlike men, women are "silent" at these rituals -- not in Ardener's (1975) sense of not having access to the culturally dominant speech style, but in terms of not formally speaking on behalf of mataqali. Women's funeral tasks are influenced by their nurturant qualities, and that is why they provide life-sustaining food and present mats. The sexes' traits and funeral roles can be viewed as complementary. Women and men perform their respective ritual functions partly on behalf of each other. Likewise, the genders' valuables are also complementary and signal that various prestations are required to properly celebrate the ritual. Whales' teeth, like men, can represent all the wealth a mataqali is presenting. But a group's formal visitation is not complete without women's mats; indeed, the mats may be more essential at funerals than whales' teeth.

I suggest the importance of mats because I once saw women come into a house of the death before the formal presentations by their men. This happened when the senior

Sulisuli chief died suddenly on a New Year's Eve at 4:00 p.m., when the village was preparing for that evening's celebration. Pandemonium erupted in his house at his death; Sulisuli women threw themselves against his bed, the floor, and walls, and tore their clothes and his bed drapery. Within minutes, news of the death circulated throughout the village. Women came quickly, but quietly, in <u>mataqali</u> groups to the house and laid their mats in an enormous pile on the floor. The importance of the mats and the women was then manifested, as the deceased's vassals and children tenderly took him from his bed, bound him for his grave, placed him on a pile of mats, and swaddled him in others. At the time of death, the first thing that needed to be done was to present the mats for covering the deceased and placing him on a soft bier.

An analogy can be drawn between the ranking of men and women and their respective ritual gifts. The three traditional funeral prestations, in descending order of value, are whales' teeth, animals, and mats; the first two valuables are associated with men and the last one with women. If we placed these items on a scale, measuring their ritual and practical significance, we would find that whales' teeth have only ritual importance, animals and mats have ritual and utilitarian uses, and mats are the most functional. While animals are consumed for food and therefore have a practical value, they are not needed in daily life, unlike mats.

The versatile mats are like women: mat-making does not require that the source of the mat, the pandanus plant, be destroyed; so too a woman's marriage and motherhood does not sever her and her children's ties to her kin. A woman provides services and children to her affines and consanguines, as a mat has ritual and utilitarian uses. Indeed, a mat may be used in ritual in one instance and then be put to everyday use, or vice versa. The only time a mat can be removed from this recycling process is when it is buried with the dead.

Men's and women's complementarity is also symbolically associated with the mat-making process. Women own the pandanus plants that they cultivate, but the land on which the plants grow belongs to their husbands. Relationships between the pandanus, the land, and the genders are analogous to those created by marriage: married women are nourished by the fruits of their conjugal mataqali's land and produce children for those who feed them.

Women's mats reflect the feminine qualities of care giving and tenderheartedness, and the mat redistribution exemplifies women's essential role in regenesis, as expressed in the Matailobau claim that "women hold life in their hands." When a death occurs, the stream of life that is usually taken for granted is diverted and, in its diversion, its feminine source is remembered. The power to give and to withhold life has traditionally been under women's control. Women, however, do not have complete power over

their fecundity -- their brothers can deprive them of children or harm their offspring. A death may reflect upon the power of the deceased's maternal kin because deaths can be caused by supernatural intervention. It is for this reason, I believe, that wexa membership grants a matron the privilege to join her natal group and the freedom not to have to lodge with or represent her affines at a ritual; this is the only time, as far as I know, that a woman can do this. The wexa's power, privilege, and worth is not to be undercut -- or tempted into action -- by having one of its sisters stay with her conjugal mataqali.

The regenerative and destructive abilities of women are symbolized by the wexa, which is represented by the deceased's mother's brothers. The wexa, whom people call the most important part of the funeral, must be fed by the owners of the death, as women are nourished by their conjugal kin; it can determine the funeral format, as women have traditionally had the ability to control their fertility with their agnate's assistance; and the wexa must receive the na kena ulu whale's tooth or else use supernatural means to punish the deceased's people. I want to stress that the wexa should be viewed as an entity that is linked through a sister, whose maternity has created the relationship. The wexa's focus is on the sister as mother and not, as in the bisaba, on the woman and her maternity. That is why we hear about viluveni (mother and child) at the bisaba but about wexa (relatives) at the funeral.

Let us gain a better understanding of the wexa by describing its role at the old man's funeral. Nakoroniu and Navulavula were considered the old man's wexa because at the time his mother was born they constituted one unit. Nakoroniu was recognized as having closer ties to the old man, however, because his mother was born in that group.

The wexa's meeting was held in the house of the eldest man of either mataqali. This octogenarian Nakoroniu man performed few ritual and other social functions because he was deaf; his son managed the household because of this and thus acted for his father in ritual contexts. The son was selected by Nakoroniu's and Navulavula's Sulisuli chief to be the wexa leader. The chief's decision was partly based on the fact that the man's father was the eldest male of the two mataqali but also because the elder's mother was from the deceased's mataqali. The Nakoroniu elder, then, was sister's child to the deceased's group and was obligated to assist it. The wexa leader, however, had an alternative explanation for his selection -- his own ritual knowledge and articulateness prompted the Sulisuli chief to choose him over other wexa members.

The wexa leader called both mataqali to his house to determine their contributions, the timing of their procession to the house of the death, the timing of the burial, and so on. When Nakoroniu and Navulavula men and their wives came to the house, the leader officially transmitted the news of the death to his two sets of mataqali siblings.

He presented a tanoa of yaqona and, in his announcement, mentioned their duties as wexa. To reinforce the significance of the wexa, he listed each man's wexa and added how important they will be at each of their own funerals. The serious demeanor of the gathering signified the collective feeling that their wexa role was bibi (heavy, of great importance).

One household arrived late for this meeting, and the wexa leader castigated them on their tardiness, which he saw as evidence of shunning their wexa responsibilities. He spoke for some time about punctuality and about presenting the wexa as a strong, large, coordinated unit. So intent was he on having this wexa honor its duties with solemnity that he was becoming peevish. After his harangue ended, the discussion continued about the number of cows, whales' teeth, mats, masi and the amount of money, tea, biscuits, and sugar that would be given to mataqali Vutu. When decisions were reached, the wexa's wealth was left in the leader's house while everyone else returned to their respective houses to change into better clothing. The wexa's donning of better clothing signifies the importance of their funerary role, because villagers attend most rituals in their everyday wear. Attending church services and traveling are the two main activities for which people wear their finer garments. There was another clothing requirement that showed the uniqueness of the wexa's parti-

cipation -- men had to wear sulu (one to two meters of cloth tied around the waist) instead of trousers.

Reassembled in their finery at the wexa leader's house were nearly 50 men and women ready to organize their procession to the house of the death. People lined up according to mataqali membership and then, within these units, in order of gender and age, men and seniors first. The wexa leader carried a large bag filled with whales' teeth and sticks representing cows. Several men carried large tins of biscuits, tea, and sugar. At their left-hand sides and perpendicular to their bodies, the women carried their mats. Because they were part of the wexa that had come to bury its child, women could not give a piece of cloth or clothing, as they might at any other funeral. The women's mats indicated respect for themselves as wexa members and for the deceased and his mataqali. The wexa would also obtain prestige by presenting mats and other valuables, and it was their prestige, strength, and size that the members of the wexa wanted to impress on the owners of the death. To further illustrate their ability to amass wealth and people, the wexa brought to mataqali Vutu a bier heavily covered with their most ornate mats. It was in the interest of a grand (levu) and strong (kaukauwa) presentation that the wexa leader had called upon a sibling mataqali from another village to enhance their numbers.

The senior Sulisuli chief led the wexa into the deceased's house. Elderly chiefs of other lineages and

their wives, and men and women of Vutu and Waivou, the deceased's and his wife's mataqali, were already there. The widow sat behind her husband's body with the widow of the deceased's mataqali brother and the Vutu chiefs from this and another village. Before this party the Sulisuli chief knelt and began his address by holding up a whale's tooth, which was taken from the bag brought by the wexa leader, saying that it symbolized all that the wexa was presenting. The chief's grief rendered him unable to speak without tearful pauses, and this ignited the other mourners' emotions. The wailing became very loud and cacophonous after the chief's presentation speech. The acceptance speech by the second-most senior man of the paramount's lineage, Vutu's chiefs in Namatai, and the benediction by the second-most senior Waivou man (who was the deceased's widow's younger brother) could not be heard in this din.

We see that the deceased's wife's mataqali, Waivou, sat in the house when the wexa entered it and that they offered the prayer for the wexa's gifts. Waivou performed other tasks at this funeral, primarily as helpmates to the deceased's children, for whom they are wexa.

Avuncular relations are described as nurturant -- "the mother nurses the child . . . the mother's brother is just like the mother. . . . The mother's brother is like the child's mother . . . because the child is theirs." The uncle cares for the child as its mother does, and because

the mother's brother can represent the mother's mataqali, his nurturance of and responsibilities to the child are extended to it. Thus, the members of the wexa bury their sister's child, whose life, it is maintained, they assured by their generous granting of their sister's fertility. Properly burying the corpse is the final nurturant act of the deceased's mother's people. Likewise, the deceased's children's maternal kin fulfilled their obligation for assistance by taking on the job of redistributing the mats on behalf of the deceased's mataqali when asked to do so by the deceased's children. The children's wexa provided the deceased's children a service by reciprocating mataqali for their gifts. Vutu thus looked to the group that could be expected to help them most -- their mother's brothers. Giving the job of mat redistribution to their wexa also indicated the respect for and superiority of the mother's brothers. This dyad of wexa - sister's children reflects other important paradigms in Fijian life -- senior (chiefly) people make decisions for their junior (commoner) fellows. Thus, Vutu's actions showed their dependence on their supportive maternal kin, whose power over themselves they acknowledged.

The actual delegation/relinquishment of the decision-making process of the mat redistribution went from the deceased's children to Waivou mataqali as an entity to the children's real mother's brother and, ultimately, to the mother's brother's wife, who did the actual sorting. This

process depicts Fijian ideas about serving others and respect. Respect is a salient concept and significant motivation for behavior. Providing services for others indicates one's respect for them. For example, a chief has someone speak, eat, or drink for him on certain occasions as a way of signifying the greater value of his own person. Likewise, a younger person will do something for someone older to show respect for that person. At the funeral, the deceased's children's maternal kin showed their respect for their sister's children by redistributing mats for them. The relationship between the sister's children and mother's brother, however, is marked by reciprocal respect, privilege, and identification, with authority invested in the senior generation. It was the last element that prompted the children's renouncing of their power (kaukauwa) of mat redistribution in favor of their maternal relatives.

Providing service usually is a sign of some kind of social inferiority, but in this case it was more like the assistance that chiefs give to their commoner vassals, for instance, when the Sulisuli chief spoke for the wexa at the deceased's house. The chiefs' help does not diminish their prestige but enhances it because the chiefs are viewed as protective and benevolent. And chiefs' aid is evidence of their greater power. The reallocation of the mat redistribution to the children's wexa involved another aspect of serving others and respect -- the attributes of rank and prestige. The mother's brother's wife apportioned the mats

to the various groups because she was bound to this work by two social principles. Junior people work for senior people, and women work for men. The deceased's children gave the power for the redistribution to the senior Waivou man because he was mataqali leader and, as such, must be shown respect. The Waivou elder handed the task to the children's mother's brother because of the genealogical ties between himself and the younger man and because junior people perform such jobs. The mother's brother delegated his authority to his wife, who, as a woman and wife, works for her husband; to serve a husband by distributing mats or by carrying food or mats is a way to honor him. Therefore, this woman's task was in keeping with her inferior position vis-à-vis her husband and his junior position in the mataqali's age hierarchy.

The aid of uxorally related kin was not limited to those of the deceased and his children at this funeral. The small Nakacadreve lineage -- especially the young chief who kept the book of presentations and who assisted the Sulisuli chiefs in the cow slaughtering -- worked with the wexa because it is the wexa's sister's child. Nakacadreve also performed these tasks because it was Sulisuli's sister's child. Thus, the young chiefs of Nakacadreve and Sulisuli are cross-cousins and, as such, are expected to share with and help each other. The relaxed cross-cousin relationship, with its institutionalized teasing, facilitates the cousins' comradeship and reciprocity. Sulisuli,

in turn, was not only the wexa's chief but was tied to it as sister's child as well -- it was the descendant of a Nakoroniu woman. Nakacadreve and Nakoroniu were both sisters' children to a chiefly mataqali of a northern village, and Nakacadreve and Navulavula were sisters' children to a commoner mataqali of a village located south on the river. Because these groups are sisters' children to the same people (vasuvata), they are seen as equivalents and, as such, should help each other.

Examples of help giving between descendants of sisters can also be found at the old man's funeral -- the deceased's and the wexa elder's mothers were sisters, and thus, as offspring of two same-sex siblings, these men were categorized as brothers. The deceased and the wexa leader were therefore classificatory father and son, and this influenced the choice of the son as wexa head. The other example of the strength of and obligations involved in such ties was the woman whose maternal grandfather and the deceased were children of sisters, thus making her the deceased's grandchild. This woman and her mother worked in the owners of the death's kitchen while her husband, who cultivates the wexa's land because of his uxoral tie to it, "stayed with it" at the funeral.

I have presented several illustrations of help given by various uxorally related kin and have explained these relatives' aid in terms of expectations about such relationships. But I also want to mention how women's quali-

ties imbue these bonds and generate such assistance. Villagers, especially women, attest to these beliefs about women's traits by saying that a woman's parents cannot seem to refuse a married daughter's requests and that maternal grandchildren, nieces, and nephews are indulged. The special treatment of these children was explained by such statements as "It is because of the mother that her children are so welcome in their mother's mataqali's homes." The greater affective bonds between uxorally linked persons is epitomized by the maternal grandmother and grandchildren: "A maternal grandmother suffers more from the loss of a grandchild than a paternal grandmother. It is because of who the child's mother is."

While women's weakness secures them, and those related through them, affection and services, the malleability that emanates from their traits can sometimes result in seemingly punitive treatment. An example of such treatment occurred at the old man's funeral and involved his youngest daughter's perceived obligation to mourn him with her conjugal mataqali and not to come to her natal home as soon as she heard of his passing. This matron's funeral participation depicts the sometimes conflicting loyalties and obligations imposed on women by their dual mataqali affiliation or, phrased otherwise, reflects another aspect of their lives, their interstitial position. Indeed, I have been questioned about and heard comments on whether a woman has come to visit her family when she arrives in the village

with her husband. Depending upon whether they are of the woman's natal or conjugal mataqali, women either say that she should come soon after her homecoming to see her relatives and spend much time visiting them, or that she should confine most of her stay to her spouse's people. Such contradictory standards of behavior were employed by women discussing the old man's daughter's actions and by other women talking about the daughter's critics.

The old man's younger daughter had not visited her father's house when she first heard of his death. Several women commented during the funeral that the daughter was a fool to "wait for the wexa," her husband's group, to go to the funeral because it is "difficult to lose one's father." One woman, recalling emotionally the passing of her own father several years before, said that if she were the old man's daughter she would have gone to see her father regardless of what her husband and his kin said. It is impossible to speculate about the deceased's daughter's feelings in regard to her conduct at her father's death. I can, however, relate several observations that may be useful in gaining some understanding of her actions. The deceased, his wife, and their children were almost fanatical about protocol. They knew their mataqali's duty, their social place, and they abided by it. This daughter was always a quiet, helpful woman who fulfilled the expectations that a wife be firmly integrated into and loyal to her conjugal mataqali. A wife ideally should "forget"

about her natal mataqali. An important point should be made here about the deceased's daughter's funeral comportment and that of the woman who criticized her for not doing as she had done, viz., visiting her deceased father before her conjugal mataqali's formal mourning. The deceased's daughter was a commoner married to another commoner; her critic was a chiefly woman whose spouse was a commoner. The chiefly woman's determination not to be kept from seeing her deceased father was in keeping with her unacceptance of many of the restraints that marriage imposes on women, and this supposedly had deleterious results for her. Some women suggested that this chiefly woman's ailments may have been due to her husband's mataqali's ancestral spirit, which sought to punish her disobedience to her husband and her attempts to support her own acts of insolence by referring to her higher rank. (Ironically, on another occasion I asked this chiefly woman how she felt about her natal mataqali and she quickly retorted, "I have forgotten about that.")

There are times, however, when women want to enforce normative behavior and there are no conflicting standards, e.g., all village matrons condemned the behavior of an old woman who sat in the old man's bikabika. After the close of the bikabika this old woman visited for a month at her conjugal mataqali's "door" and then in the household in which her granddaughter was married. People called her viavia tagane (wants to be like a man) because of the time

she spent playing cards and drinking yaqona with the men, and wacece (cheeky) for having the temerity to do so. Discussions amongst the women and in front of her daughter, who was married to a Namatai man, communicated to her their displeasure about the old woman's comportment. The old woman ceased her visiting, however, only when she became ill -- from too much yaqona and too many late hours, other women commented. The village women's concern about the old woman illustrates Matailobau perceptions of their social involvement in others' lives, which results, as noted before, in communal assistance but which, as in this case, can also be a mechanism of social control.

This old woman exemplifies the kinds of behavior for which women receive sanctions, but she also depicts what they are expected to do at funerals. She joined the bikabika to sit with a woman who was from her natal village. Women are expected to return to their villages to assist at rituals, social functions, fund-raising events, and the like. They are yalewa koro (women of the village), who should continue to provide services in their feminine, care-giving roles. Women, it appeared to me, acted more often on the ideal of community service than did men, perhaps because this is part of their anticipated nurturant behavior. I want to corroborate these general statements with explanations of the bikabika women's and female kitchen helpers' involvement at the old man's funeral (Table 3).

Table 3. Women/girls who were kitchen helpers at the old man's funeral

	Natal *mataqali*	Conjugal *mataqali*
1.	Navulavula	single (deceased's son's wife's sister)
2.	unknown	Waivou
3.	Waivou	unknown
4.	unknown	Waivou
5.	Waivou	single
6.	unknown	Taulevu
7.	unknown	Vutu
8.	Nasau	Taulevu
9.	Nasau	single
10.	Taulevu	unknown
11.	unknown	Vutu
12.	Waivou	single
13.	Vavua	single
14.	Navulavula	single
15.	unknown	Taulevu
16.	unknown	Vutu
17.	unknown	Vutu
18.	unknown	Waivou

All four bikabika women were widows -- the deceased's widow, the deceased's brother's widow, the daughter of the deceased's brother, and a woman from the same natal village as the deceased's brother's wife. Women's reasons for bikabika membership were not always couched in terms of the obligations between mataqali. Some explained their involvement in it as being due to their wish to reciprocate the widow's comforting presence when their own husbands had died. The woman who came to the bikabika to be with her co-villager expressed a common expectation about women supporting their natal village and its members' rituals and other events. The women listed as numbers 8 and 9 in Table 3 also came to work with their co-villagers in the kitchen.

These women exemplify another general feature of Fijian life -- widows return more often than married women to help at their village's events. Widows not only usually have more time to do so as they advance in the developmental cycle, but they do not have to request their husbands' permission to leave their conjugal homes.

The first girl listed in Table 3 explained her help in the kitchen as an example of community service, in this case to those needing assistance during a ritual. She was, however, the younger sister of the deceased's daughter-in-law, and it was this connection that other women gave to explain her help. This girl brought along a girlfriend and mataqali sister to work in the kitchen because women and girlfriends sometimes work at each others' kin functions.

Their aid is founded on the Fijian expectation that people help each other. One woman, as in the case of one of the bikabika women, can be a magnet who draws her peers into service.

The different standards for assistance for girls and women are also shown by the first girl's actions. She belonged to Navulavula, one of the wexa's mataqali, but her assistance in the deceased's kitchen did not counter the practice that no woman of the wexa aids the owners of the death. Although she was 38 years old, she was called goneyalewa (girl) because she was unmarried.

Analysis of the roster of female kitchen helpers illustrates the relationships between mataqali and the important distinctions between the wexa and the owners of the death. The women kitchen helpers were all related to the owners of the death; no women of the honored wexa were among them. Table 3 lists these kitchen helpers' natal and affinal mataqali affiliations. Seventeen of the eighteen female assistants served in the kitchen for four reasons attributable to reciprocal mataqali obligations or membership in the same mataqali as the deceased.

Women do not assist at every village ritual. They usually help those with whom they have some relationship, even though the anticipation of community service may appear to override such ties. Neighbors often do not work at each others' rituals. There is, however, an example of a woman neighbor cooking in the old man's kitchen. The

neighbor and the deceased's daughter-in-law were friends and helpmates. The neighbor was the only woman in her household and relied on women of other households for the kind of help that a mother- or sister-in-law would normally provide. Thus, she reciprocated some of that aid given by women of the deceased's household by helping them at the funeral.

There is a common thread running through a number of these examples of women's/girl's help giving -- the relationships between women, even though these are cast against principles of general commitment to society or mataqali connections. Women said that ties between women sometimes were primarily responsible for their funeral help. In two cases, there were mataqali connections between the helpers and both the deceased and his widow, but women's interpretations of why these females assisted in the kitchen focused on their relationships to the widow. Informants said that the woman listed as number 10 in Table 3 assisted the deceased's kin because her father's mother was a distant, but genealogically verifiable, sibling of the deceased's widow. This woman's siblingship with the deceased's widow could have been extended to the deceased because at the time the ancestress through whom she traced ties to them lived, Vutu (the deceased's mataqali) and Waivou (the deceased's widow's mataqali) formed a single unit. But women stressed that it was the woman's friend-

ship with the widow that was responsible for her help at the funeral.

The other example of how bonds between women influence giving assistance is the case of the Navua girl listed as number 13 in Table 3. Informants said that she was a helper because of her father's sibling tie to the deceased, but this did not explain why she should be in the village without her family, and it was her village residence that created the opportunity for her to assist at the funeral. This girl attended the district school, located in Namatai, and stayed during the school week in the deceased's widow's brother's house. The girl resided in this house because her _mataqali_ and that of the house's owner were considered siblings. Thus, the girl's help was given primarily because of her closer connection to the widow. As with the widow listed as number 10, women did not extend the siblingship between the girl's (and the deceased's widow's) _mataqali_ and the deceased's _mataqali_, even though they could have.

As relationships between women influence their ritual participation, so too does a ritual provide the opportunity for the expression of these relationships. It appeared to me that women addressed grievances and confirmed satisfactory relations at rituals more so than did men; however, my interpretation of this must be measured against the fact that I did not know as much about men's networks as I did about women's. My perception of women's use of ritual

contexts corresponds to Fijian ideas about women's characteristics and behavior as lacking in self-restraint and being prone to pettiness. Nonetheless, I saw interactions at the old woman's funeral that lend credence to the suggestion that relationships between women can be monitored at rituals. I do not mean to say, however, that these women's actions resulted solely or in each instance from a dyadic relationship with another woman. Indeed, what may appear at first to be something only pertaining to women's relations is upon closer inspection an occasion used to state the animosities, misconceptions, or goodwill between men, households, lineages, mataqali, or other units; in these instances, women may again be seen as conveyances, this time for others' sentiments.

I do not know if the fact that it was a woman's funeral allowed the women to express their respective sentiments without men's interest in their behavior or if I saw more of the exchanges and knew the parties better because we were neighbors, and thus perceived their actions' significance more clearly than I might have at the old man's funeral. But I viewed the following Nakoroniu's women's presentations as carrying several messages about their relationships with the deceased and her kin.

Gifts, because they are rated according to their respective worth, can indicate the presenter's relationship to either the ritual's principal or another closely affiliated person. Women's wealth have the following qualities.

Mats indicate dokai (respect) for their intended recipients. Masi cloth, which is not produced locally, is in some sense more valuable than mats. The other items rated in descending order of worth are new cloth/good clothing and old clothing. The women who presented the masi each had special relationships with the deceased; in one case, the giver was from the deceased's natal village, and in the other case, the giver and the widow's daughter were associated through namesake ties. The first woman was the one whose cohabitation ritual was described in the second chapter. This young woman's mate's mother was the woman who sat nearest the deceased's head because she and the deceased were from the same mataqali. This funeral was the first ritual event that the young woman attended as a marama (an espoused woman). The other masi was given by a woman who had asked the widow's daughter to name the daughter's eldest child after her; the daughter did, thereby establishing a namesake relationship between her child and this woman. The relationship between the widow's daughter and this woman was further cemented when the widow's daughter called her youngest daughter after this woman's child. The positive feelings for the deceased and her daughter were thus shown by presenting the valuable masi.

The opposite of such sentiments was displayed by the Nakoroniu woman who gave an old blouse as her gift. For several months this woman had been harboring a grudge

against the widow's daughter, and now she expressed some of the social distance between them by giving a meager offering. Another Nakoroniu wife whose interactions with the widow's daughter were strained gave a mat, but she, like the woman who presented the blouse, did not come to prepare food in the house of the death's kitchen. The woman who was the widow's granddaughter's namesake, on the other hand, sent her two adolescent daughters to prepare and serve the funeral feasts.

Women's ritual and non-ritual behavior is affected by their connections to groups of men -- their brothers and their husbands. Yet they have the ability to act apart, to some degree; e.g., Nakoroniu gave a cow, but some of its women did not present valuable gifts or render their services. Women, like their contributions to the funeral, may seem secondary in importance to men, who act publicly on behalf of mataqali, and likewise to men's contributions. However, women provide several significant substances: the woman who gave birth to the deceased is acknowledged in the powerful and privileged wexa. The feasts' "real food," the tubers, is given by women. They make and present the burial mats. Men act on behalf of women in the wexa as the formal presenters of the mats, and even as owners of the food that women carry to the meals. Yet, as no mataqali flourishes and establishes consanguineal ties with another without wives' and sisters' children, so too men cannot create a funeral ritual without women's assistance. Mats

are women's wealth, and although they can be dedicated by men, women hand them over for presentation. The mataqali food, which is viewed as belonging to their conjugal mataqali and particularly to their husbands, is always carried to the house of the death by women, for as noted in earlier chapters, women are seen as the givers of cooked food. And as food givers, women can either yield or withhold sustenance and their aid. So too at funerals can they employ food presentation as a means to lighten the owners of the death's responsibilities to feed mourners. It should be understood that even as women are perceived of as a source of food, the act of bringing food is defined as a way to show their respect for men.

Women are associated with food at a funeral in another way -- they are the kitchen helpers who prepare, cook, and clean away the remains of the feast. Their ritual service (veiqaravi) does not, however, receive the respect given to men's representational roles. I say this because women have to remain subdued in the vicinity where men are drinking yaqona and making exchanges. No one demures to the ritual labors of the kitchen staff, and in no other contexts do women gather at this ritual. Yet men say that the ritual does not begin "until women bring their mats." Men do respect the mats, the mat-making process, and the women who are their creators.

As each sex's ritual contribution is respected, so too are they culturally valued differently. This is most

clearly evident in the ways that the two old persons were mourned. These funerals, however, tend toward being extreme cases because other women's funerals were more lavish and had more relatives involved in them and other men's kin were less concerned that they honor their deceased brethren well; in their relative polarity, however, I believe that we perceive certain cultural ideas about men and women.

The Funeral of an Old Widow

The widow, approximately sixty-five years old, resided with her son and his wife and children. Although she was capable of household tasks, she had to be closely supervised because she was prone to aimless wanderings about the village, talking to herself and hoarding bits of cloth and thread. Her family and neighbors responded to her occasional forgetfulness, confusion, and senseless smiling with good-natured ribbing. Her daughter-in-law and daughter, who lived next door to the widow, sometimes had to forcibly halt her escapes from her home. The widow's behavior affected her relationship with her voluble daughter-in-law, and there were times when neighbors were clearly aware that they greatly annoyed each other. The senior woman in the house has the right to direct younger females' activities, but in cases such as this one, the daughter-in-law is the household's female head.

Whether there were power conflicts between mother- and daughter-in-law I cannot say. The potential for such disputes must surely have existed, especially since the daughter-in-law outranked the widow. The daughter-in-law was the paramount's child and had been honored by being married in a proper, traditional wedding. The relationship between the daughter- and mother-in-law did not appear to affect the relationships of the daughter-in-law and her husband or sister-in-law. The widow's behavior did not result in any neglect or abuse from her children or her daughter-in-law, but it did not gain her any respect either. At the time of her death, the widow did not command much personal prestige or power, nor did she have any strong friendships with other old women. According to others' reports, she does not even appear to have had these advantages in her prime.

As a young girl the widow was brought to Namatai village by a Sulisuli chief to marry one of his vassals whose wife had recently died, leaving him with small children to raise. She and her husband had eight children, of which a son and two daughters lived in Namatai at the time of her death.

The day before she died the widow had taken ill and stayed in the kitchen her son had recently constructed for her to sleep and entertain visitors in. Her daughter checked on the old woman's condition during the night. Sensing that her mother was near death, she came immediate-

ly before dawn with two of her daughters to be with the widow. When the old woman died, the daughter informed members of her household and her brother's. The widow's son-in-law and son carried her into her son's house, the house of the death.

The village became aware of the widow's death about six o'clock in the morning, when the women and children of other households heard the news as they bathed and drew water at the village water pipes. Soon women's keening was heard throughout the village. The loudest, longest wailing came from houses in which women of the deceased's mataqali, Navua, lived. The intensity of the mourning was the proper display of grief for someone of their own group.

Shortly after the households heard about the widow's death, mataqali heads sent children to their members' houses to tell them to come and discuss their funeral participation. The widow's son-in-law's house was the site of the Nakoroniu mataqali meeting because the son-in-law's father was the group's eldest male. The widow's son-in-law was the household's manager because his father was too frail to continue in this role, and so now the son took his father's place as mataqali leader. Although everyone knew of his mother-in-law's death, he had to announce it properly. He began his speech by saying that he had an i tukutuku vakavanua (a message delivered in the appropriate, customary manner). And thus he told his mataqali -- mainly his agnates, because their wives were at home preparing

breakfast and starting to cook tubers for the luncheon -- that the widow had died and that he would slaughter a cow and present the carcass to the widow's son's mataqali on behalf of Nakoroniu mataqali. It is proper in Fijian society for mataqali to be represented as the ritual actors, and not individuals. During his speech he did not mention his relationship to his mother-in-law. Others also discussed his prestation as being Nakoroniu's gift, as I learned at another mataqali's meeting that day. He did, however, tell me in subsequent conversations that he gave the cow because it was his wife's mother who had died. Other informants said that it is a common practice to present a cow at the funeral of a spouse's sibling, parent, or sibling's child, but in the name of one's mataqali, rather than in one's own name.

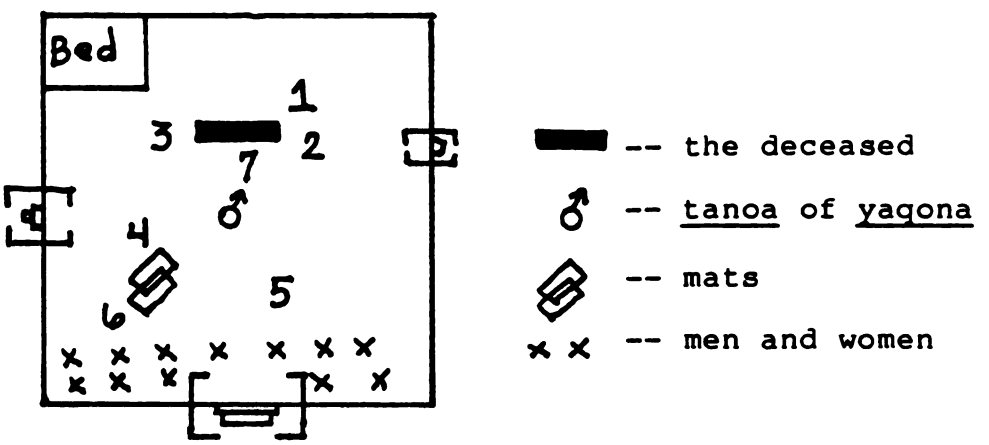
Within two hours of the mataqali discussion, Nakoroniu was prepared to make the first visit to the deceased, and the kitchens of the house of the death and the widow's son-in-law were filled with people preparing for the funeral feast. A pavilion was being erected adjacent to the house of the death, where prestations would be made and men would sit during the funeral. Although not many mourners were expected, it was a very hot period of the summer and the pavilion would provide a better gathering place for mourners than the house.

Preparations for the first-day feast illustrated which mataqali were expected to give food and services to the

deceased's kin. Nakoroniu provided tubers because they were the sibling-mataqali of the widow's son's mataqali, Navulavula. The widow's son was not actually a member of Navulavula; he, like his father, "stayed with" Navulavula, cultivating with them and participating in their economic and ritual activities. The bulk of Nakoroniu's tubers came from the deceased's son-in-law's gardens, showing that although groups are supposed to be emphasized in rituals, and in daily affairs as well, connections between persons and households determine the extent of such participation. The tubers from Nakoroniu and Navulavula were cleaned and cooked by Navulavula women as their contributions to the funeral of a woman who had married into the same mataqali as they had. Young Navulavula men and young Nakacadreve chiefs butchered the cow. Nakacadreve is sister's child to Nakoroniu and, as such, should help at its maternal kin's rituals.

While younger men and adolescents of both sexes worked outside the house of the death, senior men and women began entering the house where their presence was required. Ritual labors are divided between those that are performed outside by younger people and those done inside the house by mature ones. Navulavula mataqali had to be in the house as owners of the death to receive mourners and their prestations; its representative sat at the left-hand side of the house in the position midway between the deceased and the mourners. The paramount chief was in the center of

the upper end of the house, the position reserved for the most important person in the village, between the mourners and the deceased, his daughter's mother-in-law. Women closely related to the widow were stationed near her at the uppermost end of the house. Figure 3 shows who occupied the various positions during the first visitation of the day.



1. woman from deceased's natal village and mataqali and married to Nakoroniu man -- a widow
2. woman natally of Navanualevu mataqali and married to Navulavula man; lived next door to the deceased -- a widow
3. woman born in Navulavula mataqali and married to chief of Nakacadreve lineage -- a widow
4. representative of Navulavula, the mataqali's eldest male member
5. Nakoroniu man who presented Nakoroniu's gifts
6. deceased's Nakoroniu son-in-law
7. paramount chief

x men of Navulavula and Nakoroniu mataqali and their wives and Sulisuli chiefs

Figure 3. Mataqali positions at the old woman's funeral

Not all of Nakoroniu mataqali attended this visitation; those who resided on garden lands across the river did not arrive in time for it. Only two men led the Nakoroniu wives, who carried two pieces of masi, one large mat, an old blouse, and four meters of new cloth to the widow's son-in-law's house where they were joined by the widow's daughter and son-in-law. The Nakoroniu men decided in the son-in-law's house to give two whale's teeth, a stick signifying the cow, and my husband's twenty dollars. Nakoroniu was led to the house of the death by the eldest man in the party, who presented the gifts. Nakoroniu's prestations were accepted by Navulavula's elder, who then gave a whale's tooth on a very ornate pandanus-leaf chain to Nakoroniu. A Sulisuli chief accepted the tooth for Nakoroniu. Sulisuli lineage can represent both Navulavula and Nakoroniu because both are its commoner assistants. The transaction's benediction was said by the deceased's son-in-law, who acted as an autochthonous commoner whose privilege it is to call upon local power's blessings.

After Nakoroniu's presentation, some of the older women and all of the men stayed in the house while the other women returned to their own houses to work. The only Nakoroniu wife who went to help in the kitchen was the widow's daughter. Like women of other mataqali, the remainder of the Nakoroniu wives brought cooked tubers at meal time.

During the day other village mataqali presented their wealth to the deceased's mataqali, very much as did Nakoroniu. All contributions to the owners of the death and subsequent redistributions from them were recorded in a book that is organized into columns headed by a specific gift, e.g., whale's teeth. Records are kept for such major transactions. At this funeral two young chiefs kept the book.

The young chiefs also assisted in the distribution of the beef. The carcass was divided into portions, some to feed those who would stay in the house of the death and others to be distributed village-wide. Portions went to the members of the deceased's mataqali; to the paramount chief, as owner of the village; to Nakoroniu for giving the cow; to Sulisuli lineage because it is Navulavula's and Nakoroniu's chiefs; and to Nakacadreve lineage and Waivou and Vutu because they brought gifts to the owners of the death.

At the distribution place, men apportioned the meat to mataqali or lineage representatives to carry to their respective members. This latter redistribution includes in its calculation whether a particular household was to have funeral guests for the next few days as well as the usual size of each household. Once households received their share, they could give some of their meat as takitaki to those whom they wanted to reciprocate for previous food sharings, to benefit a relative, to acknowledge a bond, or

to assist another household burdened with guests to feed during the funeral. Women usually prepare the meat for cooking and for sharing with other households.

Although meat is eaten infrequently and is highly appreciated, it is not hoarded; it is shared because generosity and sharing are cardinal virtues. Wide distribution of a carcass ensures that no meat is wasted in this humid, hot climate where there is no means for preserving it, and that the principle of reciprocity will provide a return on the present distribution.

After 3:00 p.m. the village chairman beat the village drums in the nonrhythmic, slow pattern for funerals to alert the village that the church service would soon begin. Great wailing and thrashing against the walls were then heard in the house of the death. In the heat waves the heavy odor of something like spoiling sweet flowers came from the house as many mourners watched the unwrapping and rewrapping of the body.[3] The widow was rebound in large, thick mats and suspended from a ten-foot bamboo pole about eight inches in diameter that was carried to the church on the shoulders of two young Sulisuli chiefs. These pallbearers' paternal grandfather had brought her to Namatai to wed a man for whose mataqali he was chief.

The cortege was headed by the village catechist and followed by a Sulisuli chief, the deceased, various women, children, and a few men. Two flower wreaths for the deceased were made and carried by the deceased's daughter

and a little girl of the widow's natal mataqali. Two mats were carried into the church by the wife of the second-oldest man of Navulavula, who acts on behalf of the senior-most wife, who is infirm. These mats (bikabika) were placed beneath the deceased in the church and were given to the minister after the service. On the journey to the cemetery the wreaths were carried by the women who had brought the mats to the church. The brief church service consisted of the catechist reading from the Bible and the paramount's younger cousin delivering a short sermon.

After the church service the procession went through the village on its way to the graveyard. Near the deceased's home, the cortege stopped and her grandchildren walked four times back and forth beneath the body. People said that the purpose of this bau ruku (going under) was to finalize the farewell to her and to prevent her spirit from trying to return to the living. The widow's children and most of the grandchildren did not go to the cemetery; they stayed in the village, the daughters cooking and the son sitting in the house of the death with the men and senior women.

The gravediggers had prepared the grave earlier and were now supervising the process of burying the widow. After the body had been lowered into the grave, the head gravedigger stamped on the earth covering the body before the grave was completely filled.

Members of the wexa are supposed to carry the deceased to the graveyard and direct the burial. In the past, villagers said, the wexa and the gravediggers (bouta) were composed of the same individuals; today they are separate entities. The gravediggers' leader had a matrilateral connection to the widow: her father was sister's child to his mataqali, Nakoroniu. Both the widow's parents were from the mataqali that is Nakoroniu's sibling-mataqali. The leader thus came from the deceased's classificatory mother's brother's mataqali, and he gave this as the reason for his selection as bouta head. Two gravediggers were from the paramount's lineage, i.e., the widow's daughter-in-law's people, and one was from Waivou mataqali. All these men were unmarried and older than sixteen but younger than thirty-five. Gravediggers do not have to be single, but they are usually men between the ages represented in this bouta.

The old woman's bikabika contained six women who were either from her village, had married into her village, had married into her conjugal mataqali, or were her neighbors. During the funeral's second and third days the widow's other children came, as well as mataqali from other villages who were related to the widow's natal mataqali, her husband's mataqali, or mataqali associated with either of them. One group came because it was a "sibling" of a mataqali that was sister's child to Navulavula.

The fourth-day feast was celebrated in the widow's son-in-law's house. Young men, girls, and women butchered a cow and cooked the meat. The women involved in these tasks were those married to Navulavula men or were natally Navulavula, and some were girls and women born in Nakoroniu -- these were the daughters of the woman who was the namesake of the widow's daughter's child. Engaged in other kitchen work were women either born or married into the lineage of Navulavula's chiefs, women born in the deceased's mataqali, or women whose mothers were born in Navulavula. Young male kitchen helpers were from chiefly houses, Navulavula, or Nakoroniu. Kitchen helpers were thus mainly related to the owners of the death.

The first women to give takitaki that day were those of the deceased's mataqali, i.e., those who were married to Navua men, the widow's wexa. Then other village mataqali wives sent takitaki, while most of the Nakoroniu and Navulavula women returned to their homes from the deceased's son-in-law's kitchen in order to get their platters of cooked tubers.

One woman at this funeral illustrated particularly well the phenomenon of matrons representing their husbands and their conjugal kin. Navua formally entered the village through its "door," a Sulisuli household. The Sulisuli chief's wife (appearing on the lower left in Figure 4) accompanied the Navua women carrying their takitaki to the son-in-law's house. She acted as her husband, their

"door," would have by leading them to the house. This woman acted in the same capacity at the cohabitation ritual, where she led the girl's village headman and his family into the house. This woman's relationship with the Navua wives existed prior to her marriage to their Namatai "door" -- her mother's mataqali is Navua. The chief's mother is also natally Navua. All these uxoral ties enhance the relationship between the mataqali.

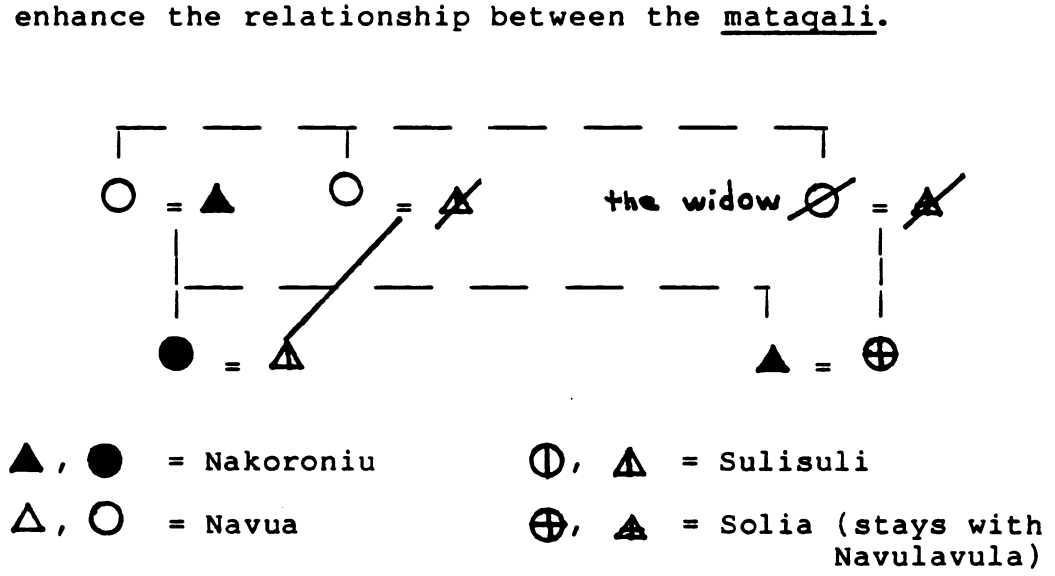


Figure 4. Mataqali Navua's affiliations in Namatai

As the Navua women were filing into the widow's son-in-law's house with their takitaki, yaqona was being dedicated in the pavilion next door. A bucket of yaqona was brought to the house for the women by one of the young chief's who had kept the book of presentations. The yaqona was given to the women to reciprocate their takitaki. It was formally presented by a Nakoroniu lad whose paternal grandmother, also a Navua woman, sat closest to the deceased during the wake. The senior-most Navua woman

present, the mother of the Sulisuli chief, accepted the yaqona.

The Navua women had recently ended their mourning for one of their adult sons and wanted to be away from the assembly of men, the solemn reminder of their own grief. In order to enjoy themselves and to preserve the quiet dignity of the men's activities next door, they took the yaqona to their Sulisuli "door" two houses away.

After the men concluded their speeches, exchanges, and prayers for the deceased, the feast was served at the son-in-law's house by women born in Navulavula, by those whose mothers were born in Navulavula, and by those whose spouses were Navulavula. The only woman who ate during the first serving with the senior-most and highest-ranked men was an older woman, natally Navulavula, who had married into a village an hour and a half's walk away. She sat at the lowest end of the food mat, next to the serving pots.

Over the next few days the last of the mourners left the house of the death. The adult members of the household were visibly fatigued from the demands of hospitality and, for the householder, the effects of sustained yaqona drinking.

The Funeral of an Old Man

For several years before his death, the old man had been in frail health and had not been very active in the men's daily yaqona gatherings or in many public functions.

Until he fell seriously ill six months before his death, he cultivated a small garden near his house. He played cards and visited with a few Navulavula men. About a month before he died there was a minor rally in his strength, and a bisaba was given for him. Soon after, however, he had a relapse and was taken to the local hospital, where it became evident to the attending physician that he was terminally ill. The doctor informed the man's family that no medical treatment would help him and that they should take him home.

The old man lived with his wife and one granddaughter, a child born out of wedlock to one of his daughters. He had seven children. His two daughters were married to village men, one of Waivou mataqali and the other of Nakoroniu. His mataqali had previous ties to these groups; his mother was from Nakoroniu, and his wife was from Waivou. Of his five sons, three lived in Namatai but only one married a Namatai woman -- she was from Navulavula.

When the old man's condition became grave, his family began funeral preparations. Two sons who worked in the city purchased a coffin there. The three sons resident in the village kept company continuously with their father. The daughter who lived two houses away from him visited him often, but the one whose house was located across the river did not visit her father often. Three days before his demise, the old man's sons erected the pavilion next to his house. He told his eldest son living in the village to

reserve his biggest cow for his wexa Nakoroniu and its associate, Navulavula.

Late one Saturday night the old man died. News of his death was spread from house to house in the village and was responded to with brief, perfunctory wailing in many households not closely related to his. He was swaddled in heavy mats and a wake was held for him on Sunday because no one can be buried on the Sabbath in a Fijian village. Holding the body for a Monday burial also ensured that his coffin would arrive from the city in time for the burial.

On Monday the area around the deceased's house was filled with mourners. The wexa came in grand procession to carry the deceased to church and then to the cemetery. Their presentation was accompanied by a dramatic outpouring of grief. When some modicum of calm returned to the gathering, mats were exchanged between the deceased's kin and the wexa. Then the coffin was hoisted atop the bier and the funeral cortege proceeded to the church. The village paramount led the party and was followed by the minister, the bier, various chiefly and commoner men, and then many women and children. The widow and her daughters remained in the house while the sons attended the church service.

The church service was brief and similar to that of the widow. On their way to the cemetery, the cortege halted at the deceased's house, where his grandchildren walked beneath the bier four times. As in the case of the

widow's grandchildren, these youngsters were frightened by this custom -- some cried and had to be forced to perform it. Afterwards the procession headed for the cemetery, located a short distance from the village; again, the sons joined it, but not the widow and daughters.

After the burial the group returned to the deceased's house where the wexa, according to custom, was to eat some food cultivated by the deceased, or at least some sugarcane or other fruit that grew near his house. The purpose of this practice is to compensate the wexa for burying the dead, but it is also the owners of the death's obligation to provide food for the bikabika and the wexa. Thus, the luncheon beef fulfilled the obligations of the owners of the death to the wexa for this day.

The wexa would complain, however, that for the remaining three days of the funeral Vutu did not give it food. The wexa's complaint was only partially justified because the deceased's relatives did send it cooked tubers during these days, but they were not sufficient to feed all wexa members who ate at the wexa leader's house. Vutu's resources were strained because they had to feed the twelve people of the bikabika. Women of the wexa noted that Vutu women had to ask other households for leftovers to provide breakfasts for the bikabika, and they lauded their own abilities to support mourners at their own households' funerals.

Four women and eight men sat in the old man's bikabika. The women's connections to the deceased were as wives or daughters of the deceased's mataqali, in three cases, and in one case as a co-villager of one of these women. The men had the following affiliations to the old man. Three were from his wexa, and one was from his children's wexa. Three men were his chiefs. One chiefly man joined it because he was the deceased's friend. These persons' bikabika membership reflected both the operationalization of the ideals of reciprocal aid between mataqali-designated siblings, veiqalaki, wexa, sister's child, and persons of the same regional origins, plus the influence of personal affections. In terms of the latter reason for bikabika membership, men stressed that the obligations between mataqali were responsible for their involvement. For example, as part of the wexa, Navulavula could be expected to provide bikabika members, but it was the Navulavula men's friendships with the old man that determined why they and not other mataqali members sat in it. Apart from these structural and affective reasons for bikabika participation, a funeral is also an opportunity for senior people to spend time visiting. Villagers seldom spoke of this aspect of the bikabika, except in regard to the woman who extended her stay in the village after the bikabika's ending. Regardless of the differences in the basis for men's and women's bikabika membership, they shared one characteristic -- all were free of household

responsibilities because there were other adults to do the required work.

During the next two days, mourners from other villages continued to come and pay their respects to the deceased's family. On the fourth day, three cows were slaughtered for the burua (fourth-day feast). One animal fed the villagers who ate lunch at the deceased's house. The second carcass was butchered and distributed uncooked to all non-village guests as they departed. The last one was carried on a bamboo pole to the wexa leader's house for the wexa,[4] who then left for the luncheon at the deceased's house. Before the meal, Vutu gave the wexa the na kena ulu whale's tooth.

The significance of this feast was increased by the spectacle of the long lines of women solemnly carrying cooked food to the deceased's house. They came in mataqali groups, walking in the order of their respective seniority. The paramount, who joined the bikabika, had decided that all women would bring food to this meal and had his eldest son announce his decision the day before.

Summary

The funerals of this old man and old woman are structurally the same -- a four-day celebration replete with mourners, exchanges, and feasts. The resources, personnel, and time invested in these respective rituals differed because of the deceased's qualities, position, and gender. In each case the wexa, the mother's relatives, is acknowl-

edged as the significant ritual actor. In the man's funeral, the wexa sought to express its important role by bolstering its numbers and lavishly bestowing gifts; in the woman's funeral, the wexa was asked not take on its full duties, but in so doing was given the respect owed it. The strength of uxoral ties and the nurturant behavior associated with women were more clearly and variously portrayed at the old man's ritual, not only in his wexa's involvement and in his children's wexa's assistance but in the participation of others uxorally related to him.

I stressed the care-giving expectations for women and connected these to woman-woman dyads as a means for bringing some women to the ritual as helpers. Women's solicitousness is also shown in the description of the widow's daughter, who cared for her dying mother. (This is an interesting ascription of terms and meaning, viz., the woman who stayed with her daughter I describe as doing so because she and her action are nurturant, yet the sons who attended their father for several days are not given the same adjectives.) Likewise, I maintain that some of the women's ritual involvement may be attributable to notions of them as being more socially concerned because of their generous natures and care-giving roles. Women's natures and roles appear to allow Fijian culture to expect much from them, that is, to steadfastly support their affinal units, to remain loyal to their consanguines and natal

villages, and to be able to function as bridges between mataqali and locales.

Women are defined as malleable beings whose plasticity allows them to be many things to many people. These ductile women, the various criteria available to judge their behavior, and their ambivalent structural position produce problematic situations for them, as illustrated by the old man's daughter's funeral preparation. Women's occasionally onerous social and cultural position in terms of conflicting expectations, values, and norms, and their lesser cultural worth, have been provided some expression in these rituals -- for instance, when they were used to resolve a dilemma for their husbands in the cohabitation ritual; when their dual mataqali affiliation was delineated by their representations of natal and conjugal groups at the bisaba; and when the less-elaborate funeral for the widow is considered. Women's presumed silliness, volatility, and formlessness, which places them under men's guidance, was partially confirmed in the grievances vented in the kinds of prestations made by some women at the widow's funeral. Whereas women may sometimes blurt out dissatisfaction over exchanges, communal decisions, or relationships, either symbolically or verbally, men strive more often to state their opinions or discontent gracefully. This difference between the genders' characteristics and communicative styles paints women as potential disrupters of social harmony, yet this depiction is culturally

juxtaposed against the view of women as symbols of continuance.

In each of these rituals, women have dealt with substance and actions related to social and biologic regeneration. Even at the funeral, their gift is created from a floral source that is not destroyed in the manufacturing process. They and their kin's funeral roles direct attention to their respective life-giving functions and capacities -- and their potential for withholding them. Women's food sustains the mourners during this crisis and is considered the "real food" necessary to existence, whereas the cow killed by the men is, regardless of its quantity and desirability, only "the relish" (e coi). For example, the old man's fourth-day feast did not begin until all mataqali women deposited their trays of tubers at the house of the death. I perceive something additional in the women's food giving that day: their long queues streamed through the village like ropes, tying their mataqali to that of the deceased. The women, it will be recalled, were directed to bring takitaki by the paramount, but as usual, on behalf of their husbands and conjugal mataqali. Yet the chief's request was specifically for the women, whose function as social pathways cannot, apparently, be assumed.

The deceased's maternal kin, who bury the dead and may determine the funeral's format and to whom the death is announced, play an important funeral role. Within the 100 days of mourning the maternal kin must receive from the

deceased's group a whale's tooth (na kena ulu, its head) or the wexa may cause calamity to befall these people. At the time of death, the mother's mataqali's behavior reflects the woman's power to regenerate or destroy life. I maintain that the dominant female status that the wexa portrays is not that of woman as mother but that of mataqali sister as mother.

Women's funeral roles were focused on giving mats and food, both possible representations of nurturance. Women's care-giving behaviors and qualities were again extended to those related through them, and there were several examples of uxorally related people assisting at the rituals.

Metaphoric analogies were drawn between the sexes and their respective ritual contributions. The relative qualities of funerary expenditures were also associated with the cultural evaluations of men and women and exemplified in the funerals of an old man and an old woman. Additionally, social structural explanations were proferred for the differences between men's and women's funerals.

Notes

1 No one should touch another's head or reach over it, especially an adult's. There are tabu on touching a chief's head and on sitting higher than his head. If a person wants to stand over someone who is sitting or wishes to extend an arm over the other's head, this action must be accompanied by at least the word tulou (excuse me) and, if possible, a few short claps to show respect for the seated person.

2 Villagers talked of a recent case in another village where a number of illnesses and accidents happened to a mataqali who did not present this tooth to the deceased's wexa.

3 I was told not to enter the house, not to stand in a doorway, and not to look into the window when the body was being unwrapped for the burial while I had my toddler daughter with me. There is a fear that a child will be damaged spiritually by the potent forces operating at such a time. When I inquired why and how a child would be harmed, I received vague responses. Their main reason for demanding this behavior of me was that at such a time, and in graveyards, a child whose soul is still yalo wai (a watery soul), i.e., a child under the age of seven, can be harmed by the presence of recently deceased beings. Villagers are concerned that the dead will try to rejoin their living fellows, and I hypothesize that they are afraid that the dead will attempt to take a loved one with them in their new dimension.

4 Carcasses are presented in different ways, depending on the reason for the exchange and the parties involved. For example, at other funeral exchanges the cow's hide is completely stripped. For presentation to the wexa this day, the carcass's lower legs were severed and, except for that on the head, all the hide was removed.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

I have illustrated in these rituals the several topics that I discussed in the introduction -- women's intercalary position, their facilitation of affinal bonds, their culturally defined characteristics, and the significance of cross-sex sibling and cousin ties. I will now look at what these rituals do. I will concentrate my remarks on how they define and affect women, who, I maintain, are malleable but potentially unruly beings and may be what Durkheim called "actual living and animated force" and thus of primary concern in Matailobau life.

"Ritual is, above all,purposive action" (La Fontaine 1982:xxxvi). Matailobau values are stated as these rituals assign basic conceptions, relationships, and tasks to the sexes. And so in these rituals we learn what women are and how they differ from men. Villagers believe that females' weak, fluid natures need more social assistance to take on approved forms and that their fertility must be controlled lest it result in inappropriate, nonnurturant, or revengeful actions. Thus, in the cohabitation ritual the girl is transformed into a woman and a male elder lectures her on appropriate behavior for her new status; the bisaba encourages good parenting; and in the funeral her kin, who share some of her characteristics, receive a whale's tooth, or a promise thereof, to prevent them from supernaturally

harming her affines as revenge for the loss of her child. Women and girls are also ritually guided because they are perceived of as being potentially unruly, or at least unpredictable. This feminine quality is somewhat extended to women's kin and probably springs from a fear of their supposed influence over women's maternity. Women's fecundity is a central concern in this culture, where fertility, continuity, and well-being are core values. In societies like this one,

> A . . . contrast may be found . . . between the "hard" legal line of descent, patrilineal or matrilineal, through which authority, property, and social placement pass, and the "soft," "affectional" side of the family through the parent of so-called "complementary filiation," mother's side in patrilineal systems, father's side in matrilineal systems. This side, as distinct from the legal line, is often attributed with mystical powers over a person's total welfare. Thus in many patrilineal societies, the mother's brother has powers of cursing or blessing his sister's child, but no legal power. In others, the mother's kin may act as a sanctuary against paternal harshness (Turner 1974:235).

These rituals portray women as being directed and represented by men and their relatives as being assuaged and respected, much as in the custom of a couple presenting the supplies for Christmas Day tea to the women's kin as a means of "thanking them for our children." Women, who occupy an interstitial position and have qualities that elicit pity and love, are the perfect messengers of the holiday tea because they preserve their husbands' dignity by bearing the prestation and they engender an affectionate response from their relatives (cf. Strathern 1972).

These same rituals also display the similarities between women and men, i.e., their incorporations into and the significance of their respective kin groups. Mataqali determine daily activities and personal identities and are sustained by cultural values. Villagers say that they do things in groups -- celebrate events, dispose of some types of resources, start enterprises, and so forth; their statements are meant to be empirical and instructive. The Fijian orientation toward group-centered activities is echoed in these three rituals: the marital couple's similarities are based on their mataqali's proprietary interest in them and the salience of their respective units in the cohabitation ritual; the women at the bisaba act on behalf of their groups, the infant's parents' units are addressed in the speeches, and the importance of the father's sister's role reflects her commitment to her natal and conjugal kin; and the relationship between the groups of the deceased determines the ritual's format, the disposal of the corpse, and the potential for supernatural sanctions being employed by one mataqali against the other.

If, however, we look at one aspect of a group's ritual participation, we see something that again separates men from women even in terms of their common mataqali membership: men represent groups at rites of passage and women do not. Indeed, some of the values communicated in these rituals concern the qualitative differences between the genders that allow men to speak for groups at rituals

involving intergroup relations and that limit women's representational roles to the domestic ritual, the bisaba, where no structuring of mataqali associations occurs. These differences in the genders' representational roles illuminate a basic distinction and problem involving them, viz., the conditions and qualities of their respective mataqali memberships.

The argument could be made, as I did in analyzing the differences in expenditures and interests between the old man's and the old woman's funerals, that men's mataqali affiliation is viewed as being unequivocal whereas women's is indeterminate because of their ability to join with their own and their husbands' units. But why does a woman not speak for her natal mataqali when her membership is unquestioned? This question also requires one to explain the avunculate and the strength and longevity of uxoral ties, if Fijians do not see women as having the same kind of mataqali membership as their brothers. But perhaps these are separate issues: women's kin group affiliation is of a qualitatively different kind than that of their brothers but does not affect the permanence and obligations, sentiments, and privileges emanating from their siblingship.

If siblingship is separable from the siblings' respective mataqali memberships, this would be reason for the tenacity of the siblings' bond and of the avuncular relations upon which it is dependent. It would also be a way

of retaining sisters (and their children) and of regulating them to secondary political rights in and on behalf of the corporations. The distinction between cross-sex siblings could also be argued on the basis of the sexes' respective qualities, which represent the males as governors and the sisters as being in need of governance. Sisters as women, then, can be cared for and supervised, respected because they transmit sacred blood, but prevented from political functions by virtue of their feminine characteristics. Sisters, like women in general, are kept in the domestic domain, as is clearly indicated by the devotion to domestic issues in the bisaba, where they are celebrated and where they officiate. I will return to this point a bit later.

Women's mataqali affiliation may be based on their identification with their fathers and brothers, who act on behalf of the unit. As wives, women are also identified with their husbands, who speak for the mataqali at all rituals affecting intergroup relations. That women are linked to men, who appear to enjoy a different kind of group membership (or at least an authoritative position vis-à-vis their groups), is neither unusual nor without purpose. Women's attachment to statuses through men allows them flexibility in affiliation and eases them into an interstitial position that may have social value and function. "An ambiguity or looseness in the position of females 'deliberately' built into the social system" resolves somewhat the problem of concentrating "political

roles within one sex" while having to place "members of this second sex vis-à-vis the political organization" (Callan 1975:101). Women are not only politically but otherwise socially and culturally kept in positions secondary to men's; this is confirmed and substantiated in these rituals. Yet, as ritual depicts them as being subordinate to men, women are also the "completers" of ritual and, in this respect, become men's equals.

These rituals indicate that female cooperation is needed for satisfactory group participation. The elements that mark ritual completeness are tendered by women: "real food" and mats. The "real food," as represented by taro, is the hallmark of the bisaba. Weddings and funerals are only clearly underway when women have given their mats, which are placed under the bridal couple and under and around the deceased. Likewise, the extravagant mataqali prestation utilizes the impressive sight of women throwing down many large mats. As noted in the description of the widow's funeral, the mataqali's generosity can be diminished by women's gifts of cloth. Men encourage a liberal donation of mats, which are women's wealth, but they suggest more often than demand that women give them.

Women's potential for noncooperation obtains alongside their recognition that men are culturally and otherwise superordinate (vakaturaga, chiefly), and their leaders. Yet women say that along another dimension "men are to women as lesser chiefs are to the paramount." This other

dimension has to do with women's acumen and power regarding the continuous flow of life, which is facilitated by their industry, social concern, and regenerative potentials. Regeneration appears to be associated with women in a sense that it is not with men. It is a series of ideas that interdigitate nurturance/food and social continuance/expansion with women. As noted before, maternal kin are credited with a mystical hold on fecundity, as women, whose qualities are somewhat shared by these relatives, can cooperate or not in daily activities and in reproduction. All of this is variously noted in these rituals, particularly in regard to women's roles in intergroup relations and the cross-sex sibling bond to which it is essentially tied.

In each of these rituals, affinity and intergroup relationships are central elements, partly because in each ritual a valuable substance is passing from one side to the other. The girl leaves her kin to reside with and become integrated into her spouse's mataqali, and as she does, so does she presume to yield her kin's sacred substance to her affines. In the bisaba the promise of her fertility has been realized, and yet she and her consanguines must be blessed and encouraged to continue the life that she has borne. As in the cohabitation ritual, at the funeral the transaction of a precious gift between the affines is distinctly marked, but this time the transfer of a sacred substance has moved completely through the developmental

cycle -- a person promised, delivered, and now expired -- of affinal relations. The funeral depicts a fracturing of mataqali relations, a cleft that generates a question about whether the death was due to jealousy and revenge on the part of the wexa, and whether the affines will retain their amity or become enemies. The dubiousness of affinal relations contrasts with the constancy of mataqali membership, which is also portrayed in each of these rituals.

Affinal ties and mataqali affiliation are opposites in this sense, but they are also elements in a process dedicated to reproducing each other. The recycling process may be said to rest on the tenacity of the brother-sister dyad, which, as Weiner notes for the Trobriands, is neither "conceptually [nor] structurally split apart at marriage" (1979:331). But the unity of cross-sex siblings is subsequently maintained by the avunculate and the preference for cross-cousin marriage. In these two institutions, men have control over the fecundity of their sister's daughters, thus assuring to some degree their mataqali's continuity.

Power over a woman's fertility is not sufficient to ensure a group's existence if there is little guarantee of claiming her in the first place. The claim to a woman is more definite when groups agree to give each other spouses. A way of establishing such an agreement can be for a brother and sister to vow to provide the other's children with his or her own offspring as spouses. This promise reaffirms the sibling bond by producing new members for the

two groups. But additionally, when cross-cousins marry, they return to a sibling set a marital partner in exchange for the one given in their parental generation. The cross-sex sibling set has not been sundered by the sister's marriage and production of children for her husband's group, because these children marry and give offspring to her and her brother in the next generation.

As in the Trobriands, marriage is a requirement for kin group existence in Matailobau. In both cases, an exchange of members is needed to continue each exogamous group. This need is a cultural construction, because a group may be maintained by children born out of wedlock, but there is the notion that its existence will not be confirmed if spouses are not brought in. For the Matailobau, this orientation is dependent upon agnatic transmission for appropriate membership; jural rights are transferred in this line, and men are viewed as the mataqali core.

An apparent oddity exists here. A group relies on its in-marrying women's blood and their brother's avuncular powers to sustain itself. Reliance on their affines for their existence is a feature of some unilineal descent systems, for partners given in marriage in one generation are replaced by members of the receiving group in another generation. This replacement happens in the next generation for the cross-cousins of the patrilineal Matailobau and in two generations for the patrilineal second-cross-

cousins of the matrilineal Trobrianders.

Matailobau funerary ritual marks the significance of the deceased's mother's brother and its cross-cousins as the categories of persons responsible for the life of the individual and his or her group. They are similar to what Weiner describes for the Trobriand mortuary rituals. The strength of what has been labeled "ties through women" persist, it is suggested, in much the same way in Matailobau, and for the same purpose as Weiner describes for the patrilateral ties in the Trobriands, whose

> kind of marriage represents an expansive, reproductive system in which networks of relationships are produced by the reproductive efforts of women and men that may be regenerated through patrilateral lines for generations. The tama [father] - tabu [father's sister] sibling set, furthest removed genealogically from ego, crosses dala [matrilineage] boundaries and establishes the closest and most important keyawa [relatives of ego's children's spouses, who contribute mortuary wealth for ego] relationships for ego as it establishes marriage partners for ego's children (Weiner 1979:345).

For the Trobriands, the

> process linking [matrilineages] with "others" result in the reproduction and regeneration of extensive networks of intergeneration relationships basically held together through the material transactions of yams and women's wealth (Weiner 1979:333).

Matailobau linkages are maintained through avuncular relationships, prescriptive cross-cousin marriages, cross-cousin participation at mortuary exchanges, the gifts presented to maternal kin when "entering" their village/house for the first time after the birth of a child, and the funerary exchange of na kena ulu. The matrilineal

Trobriand symbolize their transactions of persons and substance with women's wealth, whereas the patrilineal Matailobau utilize the tabua, men's wealth, to express them. In each society the gender-specified valuables reflect their respective kin groups' gender line or core.

In unilineal systems, the parent who does not affiliate a child to its group often has a special nurturant quality or role with which it sustains the child. For the Matailobau, the mother's nurturance has been referred to throughout in the descriptions of the rituals. Now I want to restate that the mother's people have a proprietary relationship to a person because they have nurtured him or her. In Namatai, people spoke of the avuncular uncle as being like the mother, who gave the child life by giving it her breast milk. The mother's brother was likened to the mother as one who also cared for the child. It was the mother's and her brother's respective nurturing of the child that made it theirs.

As I reported earlier, women and their kin's sustenance makes them the "affectional" kin for a person and thus places their activities within the domestic domain. Also, as I mentioned before, women are retained in this sphere by being precluded from representing mataqali at public functions, such as the rites of passage, because of their intrinsic qualities and the apparently qualitatively different mataqali membership imposed on them. Women's ritual roles lucidly confirmed their confinement in the

domestic sphere and reiterated that their nonritual tasks involve them in it. Cultural values are used to keep women within this domain. Women state that they are important when they perform their culturally defined jobs in domestic service and are respected for their domestic responsibilities. Additionally, as mothers traditionally taught their daughters, to be "feminine" is to show respect to, to defer to, and to serve men, even younger brothers (Griffen 1975). What the Matailobau say about themselves supports Hoch-Smith and Spring's cross-cultural generalization about women's position in ritual.

> Women draw sacred attention primarily in connection with their reproductive statuses. . . . Society sees their "reproductive potential" as both highly positive and highly negative and in need of much control. . . . Women who spend their sexually active years in childbearing channel their reproductive potential into positive cultural ends and their ritual roles are domestic rather than public (Hoch-Smith and Spring 1978:1).

The bisaba rallies support for women's nurturance, and the other rituals also repeat that women do things related to the nonpublic aspects of social life. Women's culturally defined traits are used to legitimize why they occupy these roles: they are not fit for political roles because they tend toward intemperance, frivolity, and a lack of self-restraint. They are fit for the myriad, time-consuming domestic tasks required to continue social life because they are gumutua (industrious).

Although Matailobau women are associated with the domestic sphere, as are women in many other societies, I

maintain that one explanation often advanced for this situation does not necessarily apply to the Hill Tribes. For example, Rosaldo (1974) has said that retaining women in the domestic domain is owing to their reproductive biology, which involves them in nursing and caring for children and of necessity keeps them out of the public domain. Although it might be argued that the bisaba confirms Rosaldo's explanation about the basis of women's domesticity, Matailobau define the sexes' natures as sets of biologic traits that do not include reproductive sexuality. Women's nurturance is ascribed to their motherhood, which is an achieved status and not ascribed to and anticipated by them, as Van Baal (1975) assumes. Thus, I view Fijian women's domestic status as imposed upon them by virtue of characteristics attributable to them, which in turn are not acceptable to public, representational positions.

The domestic sphere in which women are culturally and socially placed, like their interstitial position vis-à-vis mataqali, can be seen as being separate from the social structure founded on the relationships among statuses and roles and mataqali. The domestic domain is a time and place in which the usual status and roles can be temporarily forfeited; for instance, at a bisaba in his home a chief can deliver a speech that a commoner usually presents in his public, political role. The domestic sphere allows such a minimal leveling of rank and status differences, for

instance, so that men assist other men as kinsmen and not as vassals, because it is somewhat separate from the usual structure forming interactions. Persons and situations relatively independent of this structure facilitate the emergence of a kind of communitas, as Turner (1976) says, that minimizes social differences and stresses communality. Women can enjoy a kind of communitas because they are of a lower status than men and because they are in one sense liminal -- they occupy an interstitial position (cf. Strathern 1972); persons of low status are often associated with communitas and liminality.

> Communitas is, existentially speaking and in its origins, purely spontaneous and self-generating. . . . It is often believed that the lowest castes and classes in stratified societies exhibit the greatest immediacy and involuntariness of behavior (Turner 1976:234).

Matailobau women are associated with conviviality, and with being less controlled than men, and can generate liveliness or communitas. A social energy emerges from communitas, a revitalization that can assist structures to maintain themselves or that can spark revolution. Women fuel the social system, but there is probably the worry that someday something may go awry and they will change the extant order. Women's ties to such social regeneration means that they may not be amenable to the dictates of the social structure, and for that reason a way to confine their energy has to exist. Ritual may provide a means of containment of female vitality. Thus, their conjugal and

maternal behavior, associated with the domestic sphere, where they do salubrious things for society and where their energy flows most freely, is the cohabitation ritual and bisaba's focus.

Nonritual means must also be found to temper women's unruly natures and weak souls in the domestic domain, where they may harm society and, particularly, their affinal mataqali. Some of the problems women may promote stem from their identification with their natal groups. When they marry, women's group loyalties are expected to shift to their conjugal groups. In practical terms, this affinal group integration and identification can be aided by many interpersonal factors and by the birth of children, who cement the women's commitments to their affines.

One of the reasons women give for not feeling truly part of their conjugal unit concerns their mothers-in-law. Women complain that their mothers-in-law do not like their children as much as they like their own daughters' children. The mothers-in-law's favoring of their daughters' children can be attributed to the daughters' feminine natures, which elicit their mothers' love, and to the established bond between mothers and daughters. This parent-child dyad that links generations and mataqali can have unpleasant repercussions in a society with virilocal residence. Therefore, one of the means for adjusting married women's loyalties and affections is the ideal of conjugal mataqali identification, which discourages their

natal mataqali ties and builds a common bond between in-marrying women. This tactic for forging reciprocal support amongst the women is more successful when a woman's kin lives some distance from her affines. Otherwise, young matrons often visit their natal homes, even though they are sometimes characterized as "bad" by other women, who say that they should stay in their husbands' homes and with their mothers-in-law.

The ideology concerning a household's women's commitments to their common conjugal mataqali and to each other, however, is bolstered by the bisaba ritual. The bisaba stresses that women help the newborn's mother; these are in-marrying women who are village or household co-residents. The frequency of bisaba in Matailobau, as I suggested, is derived from their colonial experiences, but I hasten to add that it also possibly emanates from the characteristics of the Hill Tribe women. These women appear to be relatively bold, assertive persons who, while burdened by cultivation tasks, nevertheless are not limited to their households and thus, figuratively speaking, escape from the domestic sphere's spatial dimension. The women's garden work signals men's dependence on their labor and perhaps on their spiritual regenerative qualities, which benefit at least their main crop, taro. Matailobau women's cultivation skills are respected by men, and it may be that this respect makes the purported weakness of women suspect. Also, women's gardening prowess may undermine men's ability

to keep women within the domestic domain and to keep them from challenging men's political hegemony.

It is this recognition of women's ability to be in two domains, the village and the veikau (nonvillage area, forest) that may trigger men to think of women as being capable of entering the public sphere. To prevent women's entrance into the public domain, ritual can be used to state the cultural verities that women and men are distinct beings who occupy different and separately valued spheres. Thus, we see in the rituals women serving men by bringing food in takitaki, remaining silent while men represent groups, supervising the bisaba (the domestic ritual), and at funerals, showing that their sexuality is controlled by men, who bury their children, thus indicating that groups headed by men act upon such important matters.

While focusing attention on women in ritual, I presented information about the genders and the construction of social life -- how Matailobau life should be lived, what the divisions of labor are and why they are this way, the nature of the relationships of the genders, the place of matagali, what siblingship entails, and what roles affinity plays in society. We learn from these rituals who does what to maintain life. Women are involved with life-sustaining activities, but they must go about these silently. Men speak for society, but they do not create society. Indeed, food may be the symbol of sustenance, the substance that is tendered by women, and which "speaks" for

them. Men, who do not give such a physical token of their social contribution, must "say" that they participate in the social process. And thus the genders are complementary in one sense, but each is ascendant in another way -- men represent society, women provide sustenance.

Coming to this conclusion about the genders' respective parts in the construction of social life may be where current anthropological discussion about women and genders is heading. Pursuing the complexities of gender relations has moved research and analysis from previous questions of why women are subordinate to men and how this subordination is maintained to how women have power and prestige in their own right, and perhaps now into what each gender contributes to social life.

As this dissertation portrays the complexity of gender relations, so too does it provide information that sustains some theoretical propositions, while it also questions other accepted assumptions and suggests different theoretical considerations. For instance, many anthropologists have associated women with "self-interest," e.g., Llewelyn-Davies(1982) discussing the Maasai and Marilyn Strathern (1982) describing the Mt. Hageners of New Guinea. The Matailobau say exactly the opposite: women are credited with having more communal interests than men, and this, women in particular claim, is why they give so many bisaba. Matailobau women's gemeinschaft produces their "communal value," which prevents them from occupying the difficult

"in between" position of Mt. Hagen women, who do not have such value.

Matailobau also do not maintain the cultural opposition of men being to culture as women are to nature, a paradigm found in the social science literature from at least the writings of Talcott Parsons. Instead, the Matailobau say that it is the nature of women that needs cultivating.

Another theoretical observation made in this study is that although Matailobau men can be seen as the ones who, as Radcliffe-Brown said, "really constitute the corporate kin group" and that men and women have different memberships in corporated groups, as I. M. Lewis notes, little attention has been given to how women are tied to these kin units and how avuncular relations can be maintained. I suggest that the solution to this enigma is that siblingship is viewed as isolable from kin group membership that entails differential membership for men and women and that assigns representational roles to men. Making siblingship isolable from corporate group membership is taking one theoretical step further the perception of Nayacakalou (1971) that siblingship is not a monolithic phenomenon because there are kinds of siblingship, i.e., parallel and cross siblingship (cf. Marshall 1983). Nayacakalou's insights are doubly useful to this dissertation and perhaps twice as applicable because he was a Fijian anthropologist who was influenced by his own culture and siblingship.

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APPENDIX

CRITERIA DEFINING WOMEN AS GIRL'S PEOPLE

There were six ways to categorize women with the girl's side at the cohabitation ritual. Table 1 lists these women and their natal and conjugal mataqali, and the following outline describes the six groupings (numbers in parentheses refer to women/girls listed as having attended the couple at the river).

I. Women born in girl's mataqali, Nasau (1, 9, and 14)
II. Women born in mataqali that were sibling-mataqali to the girl's group (2, 4, and 7)
III. Women married into girl's sibling-mataqali (3, 9, 10, and 12)
IV. Women married into youth's mataqali, Nakoroniu (5)
V. Women married into youth's sibling-mataqali (6 and 11)
VI. Other relationships: born in same mataqali as youth's mother and from same village (8), mother born in same mataqali as youth's mother and from same village (13)

Women in Group I attended the girl because mataqali members are obliged to assist each other. Likewise, women in Group II joined the girl because they were sibling-mataqali and thus equivalent to her mataqali.

A woman's identification should be with her husband's mataqali; therefore, Group III women were the girl's people also. According to the principles underlying the kinship system and reflected in the terms, however, cross-cousin marriage should be the norm. Thus, Group IV women are the girl's sisters because they, like she, married men of the same mataqali.

Table 1. Women who participated in the *vakamamaca* at the river and in the village

At the River

	Natal *mataqali*	Conjugal *mataqali*
1.	Nasau*	Sika
2.	Navulavula**	Sika
3.	Waivou	Navulavula**
4.	Nabena	Sika
5.	Vutu	Nakoroniu***
6.	Nadovunisili	Mate
7.	Navulavula**	Sika
8.	Navua	Sika
9.	Nasau*	Navulavula**
10.	Navanualevu**	Navulavula**
11.	Mate	Nadovunisili
12.	Sika	Navanualevu**
13.	Sika	Waivou
14.	Nasau*	Sika

In the Village

	Natal *mataqali*	Conjugal *mataqali*
1.	Nakoroniu***	Naceicolo
2.	Waimaro (This is the schoolteacher, who "stays with" Navulavula. Her husband's "sister" is married to the youth's brother's son. She therefore calls the youth "father.")	"Navulavula"**
3.	Nakoroniu***	Navulavula**
4.	Nakoroniu***	Sika

* girl's *mataqali*
** girl's vassals
*** youth's *mataqali*

Because their mataqali are siblings of the youth's, Group V women are also the girl's sisters since the couple's groups are considered siblings. From another perspective, the mataqali represented by Group V women are sibling-mataqali of Nakoroniu, because Navulavula and Nakoroniu are sibling-mataqali; this association was not salient on this occasion. The principles of equivalence and substitution are also displayed in this group by the woman listed as number 12, whose chiefly husband "stays with" Navulavula.

Group VI women exemplify that, when the tie between their spouses' mataqali and the principles are not close or structurally significant, they can act upon other connections. Both of these women had two reasons for escorting the girl to the river. One was that women are expected to return to their natal villages in order to assist at rituals. A woman's identity with her natal village is designated in the term yalewa koro (woman of the village). Thus, one woman (8) attended as a "woman of the girl's village" and also honored her shared natal mataqali membership with the youth's mother. And, too, there were matrilateral ties that obliged the two women in this group to participate.

The other woman (13) is sister's child to the youth's mother's mataqali. In this capacity, this woman and the youth might have been considered cross-cousins. If this was the case, this woman and the girl belonged to the same

group at this ritual. On the other hand, if the youth and this woman (13) were directly related through two sisters, they would have been "siblings." This woman (13) acknowledged her matrilateral tie to this mataqali in the way that such statements are made, by helping at their events. Because the two women in Group VI (8 and 13) were associated with the youth's mother, they would be in the position normally represented by the girl's people if the system of cross-cousin marriage were operating perfectly. Within this marriage system, the custom is that the youth's mother's mataqali sisters (and wives) take the girl, who is ideally of the youth's mother's mataqali, for the fourth day's bathing and fishing.

Matrilateral ties of a more distant connection were also responsible for some of the women's involvement in this ritual. The natal mataqali of one woman (4) is veiwekani (related through a cross-sex sibling link) with the girl's group. It was to this distant tie that people referred when explaining the matron's participation.

Typically, villagers explain their own (and others') ritual involvement in terms of the earliest connection between themselves and the ritual's principals. For example, this was the case with the schoolteacher's assistance. Like all long-term visitors in the village, she had to be affiliated with a mataqali. Thus, she "stayed with" Navulavula. Given her connection to Navulavula, one might have expected her to attend the girl at the river, but she

was the youth's "child" through the series of relationships depicted in Figure 1.

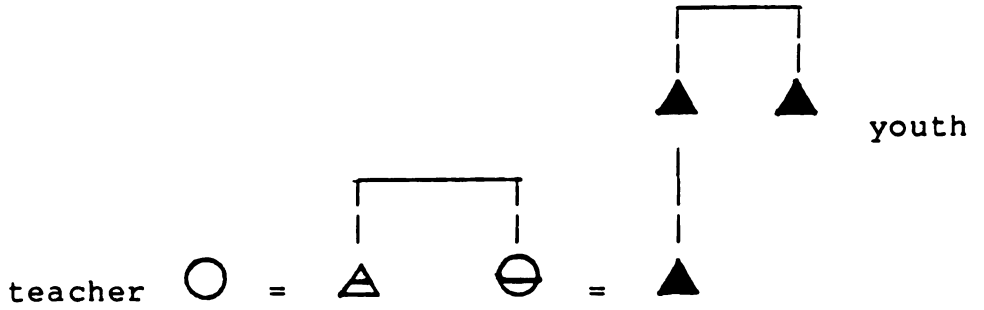

Figure 1. "Navulavula" teacher related as youth's "child"

The schoolteacher's husband's "sister" was her cross-cousin. This cousin's spouse was her "sibling." The sibling's father was the youth because brothers are equated; therefore, the teacher was the youth's "child" and, as such, should minister to the girl along with his other mataqali women.

Later connections between persons and groups may make their relationships more effectively secure, more utilized in daily activities, but it is to the original ties that people refer when telling outsiders why they did things and why they associate as they do. Yet individual bonds and more recent ties exert special influences. Such was the case with the woman (13) who spent more time helping at the wedding than any other matron in the same structural position. Daily, she brought several portions of cooked food to the dining hall because her mother, who came to the village for the ritual, was staying there. Her mother attended the ritual because she and the youth's mother were

namesakes. A namesake is an important person because names are highly significant to Fijians and, second, because there are notions about the continuance of names and connections between namesakes through time. Third, the namesake relationship is deemed to be full of caring, assistance, and sentimental attachment. Sharing an appellation bonds individuals and produces a kind of equivalence between them. Namesakes are referred to as yacadrau (those two with the same name).

Another example of the influence of more recent connections, and indeed multiple ties, is also found in the case of the same woman (13), one of the vakavuru performers (Figure 2). When this woman entertained, people said she did so because she is the youth's brother's wife. Her natal mataqali's relationship to the youth's group was not used as a rationale for her vakavuru role. Members of the woman's mataqali had married twice into the youth's group. Her daughter was married to a Navulavula man, whose mother belonged to this performer's natal unit.

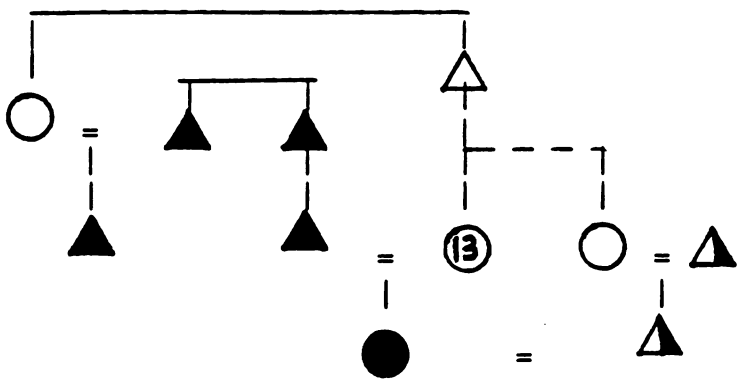

Figure 2. One woman's (13) connections to Nakoroniu mataqali

Sometimes, however, several reasons are given for someone's involvement in a ritual; such a situation often arises when veiqalaki ties between chiefs and commoners exist. Such was the case for the woman who presented the yaqona to the girl's sisters. Her participation was understood by different people according to either her kinship or her political ties, and sometimes through both routes.