

INVESTIGATIONS OF VATANITAWAKE: A CEREMONIAL MOUND ON THE ISLAND OF BAU, FIJI

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A report is presented of archaeological observations made in 1970 when Vatanitawake, the major temple platform on the Fijian island of Bau, was being excavated for the rebuilding of a council house by construction workers. A number of burials were found in the mound, some possibly of Tongans killed at the Battle of Kaba in 1855. Traditional and early historical accounts relevant to the settlement of Bau, the development of the chiefly political order there and the functions of Vatanitawake and other Fijian temple platforms are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The island of Bau lies about 1 km off the southeast coast of Viti Levu, the largest of the Fiji islands. It has an area of about 8 hectares. The northern part of Bau is flat land, much of which represents reclamation in protohistoric times. To the south, a hill of soapstone rises to a height of nearly 20 m. The island is separated from the mainland of Viti Levu by mud-covered coral flats exposed only at low tide.

On the flat part of the island are three villages (currently named Bau, Lasakau and Soso) surrounding the *rara*, or central grassy area, used today primarily for ceremonial purposes and for sport. At the south end of the *rara* is the Methodist church, and at the north end is the stone-faced, double-terraced rectangular earthen mound known as Vatanitawake (or Navatanitawake). For some years this mound has been the site for a council house or meeting place.

On the hill are the Methodist Mission Compound, the school and, until recently, the two chiefly burial-grounds of Delainakoro and Uluinaceva. These latter have now been levelled, and the bodies reinterred in a chiefly mausoleum nearby. On the lowest part of the north-western slope of the hill is a second stone-faced, double-terraced rectangular earthen mound known as Navico. For some years this mound was the site of the Tailevu Provincial Office.

A stone wall faced at irregular intervals with upright stone slabs surrounds part of the island, as a protective measure against erosion. The line of the wall has been broken by a number of inlets, the sides of which have been protected by large slabs of stone. These

inlets served as canoe-docks in protohistoric times. By the late 1960s the sea wall, the 26 canoe docks and the council house of Vatanitawake were in a state of disrepair.

The history of Bau, which is the home of the Vunivalu or paramount chief of the Fijian political confederacy of Bau, has been outlined in a paper addressed to the Fiji Society by the Governor of Fiji, Sir Ronald Garvey (1957). Because of the historical importance of Bau in the political development of Fiji, the Fiji Legislative Council in 1968 resolved to vote funds to enable some worthwhile conservation projects to be carried out on the island. One project was the rebuilding of the Council House on Vatanitawake, as a permanent structure. This involved digging deep into the mound to remove existing wooden houseposts and to replace them with new ones on concrete bases, as well as to lay the foundations for the concrete walls which would form the permanent core for walls of traditional materials.

During the first part of 1970, the Fiji Government Public Works Department successfully carried out the project, working with traditional carpenters from the Lauan island of Namuka and with the people of Bau. In the course of the work, the foundation trenches for the walls and 18 holes for houseposts were dug to a depth of over two metres. Reports were received by the Fiji Museum that human bones had been found in the mound. So, with the permission of the then Vunivalu, Ratu George Cakobau, I organised a group through the Museum to visit the site from time to time as work progressed, to record information about the discoveries and to carry out such excavation as might be possible without interrupting work on the project. By the time we arrived for the first visit the foundation trenches had already been filled in, but 14 of the 18 holes which had been dug around the edge of the mound were still open, except that concrete bases had already been laid in them for the houseposts. In the centre of the top of the mound lay a pile of earth which had been dug from the holes.

In the event, only very limited excavation was possible and then only during weekends. Fortunately a trustee of the Fiji Museum, Ratu Tevita Naulivou, and a man of rank on the island with a developed interest in its history, Pita Balekiwai, were living on Bau during these weekends. They were able to assist the Museum group, not least of whose problems was that of appeasing the spirits of those buried in the mound and of reassuring the fears of the villagers about the disturbances to the graves. The Museum party, which varied in number from weekend to weekend, was fortunate to have the services of a Government Surgeon (Mr W. Bullock), two Government Dentists (Mr M. Maberly and Mr Titus) and a Government Surveyor (Mr L. Thompson) who gave willingly of their time to visit the site when requested.

VATANITAWAKE - THE STRUCTURE OF THE MOUND

At the time of the investigations by the Museum group, the earthen mound was terraced and stone-faced, with two stone-faced earthen staircases leading from ground-level to the top. Immediately beside these staircases were upright basalt columns (Figure 1).

The terracing was effected by two rectangular platforms, a smaller one being built on top of the larger lower one. The lower platform was built directly on the level of the surrounding flat ground.

The earth beside the mound was dark and littered with shells and potsherds. There was no sign of the flagstones which appear in Calvert's illustration (Calvert 1860: opposite p.291; Figure 2 herein) and are referred to in his text (p.313). As far as can be determined, this lower platform was constructed of earth, although it was not possible to excavate down to the old surface line. Oriented along its long sides in an approximately SW/NE direction, the lower platform measured 18 by 13.7 m. The height of the platform varied from 1.5 m at the NE end to 1.8 m at the NW long side. It was faced at both ends and long sides with slabs of gritty beach sandstone irregular in shape, uneven and un-dressed. The two biggest stones were 2.7 m high along the front surface, 1.75 m across and 203 mm thick; and 2.34 m high, 1.5 m across and 101 mm thick respectively. Gaps between the slabs were filled with small horizontal slabs and parts of slabs of the same stone, and with coral stone (referred to as *vatu vuso*).

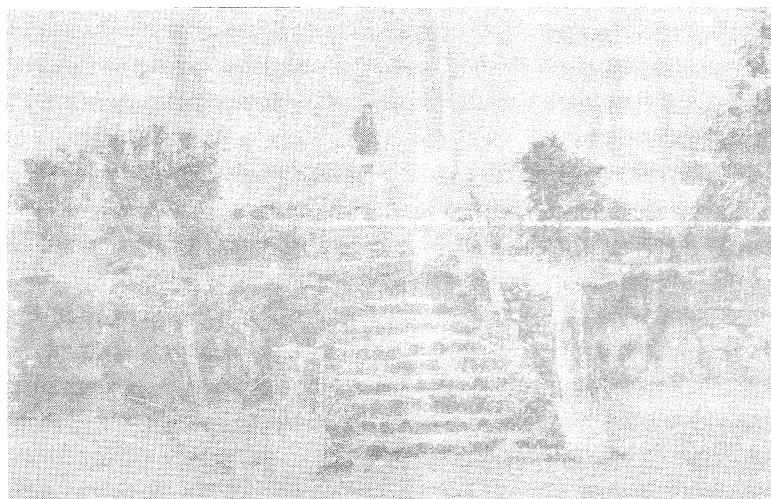


FIGURE 1: VATANITAWAKE, FROM THE SOUTHWEST SIDE PHOTOGRAPHED IN 1969, BEFORE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESENT COUNCIL HOUSE (SEE FIGURE 3)

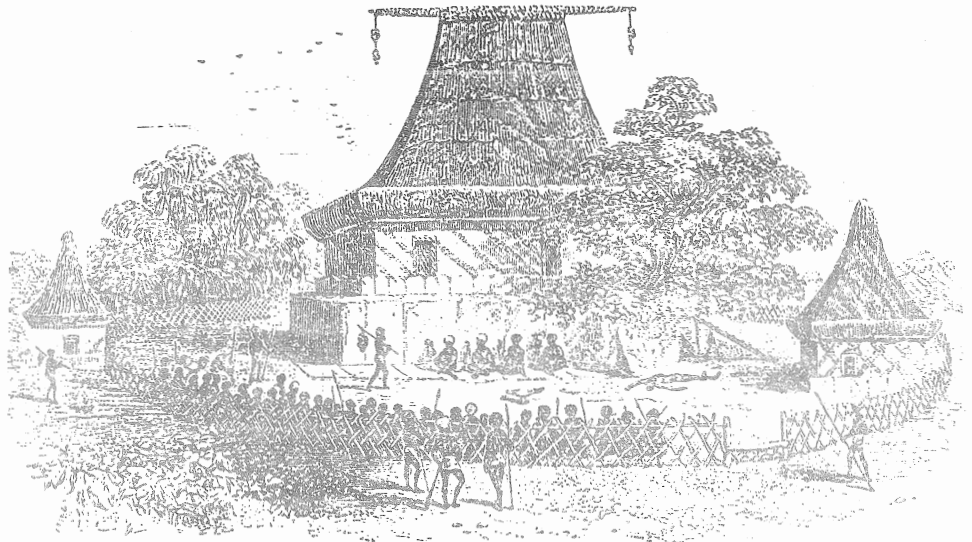
Note the two-tiered platform, the two basalt columns at the foot of the staircase and the anchor to left. The house posts on top of the mound are from the old Council House. Photo: Peter Bellwood.

The upper platform was shown by excavation to have been entirely of earth. Oriented along the same axis as the lower platform, it measured 14.2 m by 10.6 m. The height was irregular, varying from 0.9 m at the NE end to 1 m at the western corner of the SW end. The platform was faced all round with small irregular slabs of beach sandstone and with *vatu vuso*.

The step between the two platforms was earth-covered and there was no trace of paving or pebbles. The width of the step varied between 254 mm at the west corner of the south-west end and 1.4 m at the opposite corner.

The main staircase at the time of the investigation was at the middle of the south-west end of the mound (Figure 1). It had been constructed after the platforms, and consisted of a straight set of 18 steps of earth paved and faced with blocks of *vatu vuso* stone. There were 10 steps up to the top of the lower platform, the eleventh step was formed by the top of a paving slab of beach stone, then there were six more steps up to the top of the upper platform and the eighteenth step was formed by the top of the upper platform. Each step was about 1.67 m broad and 457 mm wide.

At each corner of the bottom of the staircase, there was an upright basalt column set into the ground. The southern one was pentagonal and measured 1.67 m high above ground level. The upper part of the column had been rounded in section and the upper end had been carved with a groove across the top suitable to receive a house timber. The northern column was heptagonal, and measured 2.34 m high above ground level. There was no trace of rounding or carving on the upper part, and the end seems to have been fractured naturally.



NA VATA-NI-TAWAKE, MBAU.

FIGURE 2: VATANITAWAKE, AFTER CALVERT 1860

This drawing shows the *bure kalou* in the early 1850s, evidently from the west side. Note the flagstones around the base of the lower platform, the *valu ni bokola* ("braining stone"), a wooden staircase at the southwest end, and the regularity (presumably artistic licence) of the stone facings.

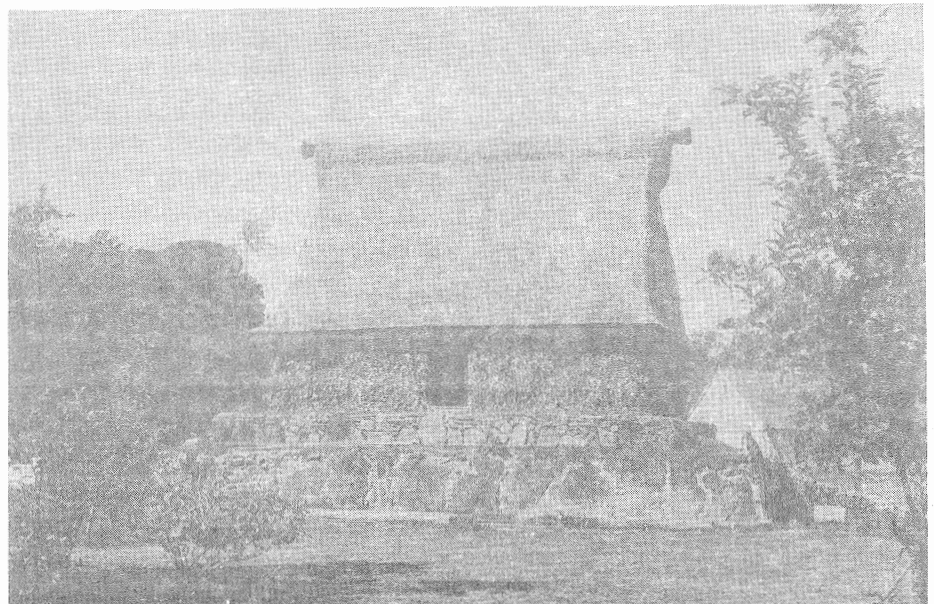


FIGURE 3: VATANITAWAKE PHOTOGRAPHED IN 1971 AFTER RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESENT COUNCIL HOUSE
Fiji Museum photograph.

- (a) An almost complete articulated skeleton was still *in situ* near the southwest corner of the southwest side of the mound. It lay facing west, with the skull towards the centre of the mound. The long bones showed characteristics of an adult male. All epiphyses of the long bones were united. The length of the long bones fell within the male range. The sutures of the skull had not yet fused. There were huge frontal sinuses, and very marked buccinator ridges. There was no evidence of ante-mortem trauma or disease.
- (b) The lower half of an articulated skeleton was still *in situ* towards the southeast corner of the southeast side of the mound. It lay facing west, with the feet towards the centre of the mound. The bones generally showed characteristics of an adult male. Epiphyses of the long bones were united. The length of the femora fell within the female range but the pelvis had male characteristics. The femoral heads were small and the necks of the femora were very short. The posterior rims of the acetabula showed some signs of arthritis. There were osteophytes on the ischio-pubic ramus. The vertebrae, especially the lower thoracic, showed gross osteophytic lipping. There were considerable wedging deformities in the shape of the bones of the vertebrae. The skull, identified by the P.W.D. as having been found in this grave, had thin bone. The sutures were fused. There was no evidence of ante-mortem trauma.

The articulated skeletons in the irregular pit towards the centre of mound had only their upper parts fully excavated. The lower parts were left undisturbed by the Museum group because of lack of time to complete the excavation. Both showed the characteristics of adult males:

- (a) The epiphyses of the long bones were united. The length of the right humerus (recovered complete) which was strongly ridged, fell within the male range. The ridges of the skull, which was small, were well marked, and the sections were fused. The bones of the skull were fairly thin. There was more lipping of the vertebrae than normal. There was an annular ring of ossification at the site of the annulus fibrosus. Apart from this evidence of incipient osteo-arthritis, there was no evidence of ante-mortem trauma or disease.
- (b) The epiphyses of the long bones were united. The length of the left humerus (recovered complete) fell within the male range. The bone showed quite strong markings. The insertion of the deltoid extended below the middle of the shaft. The supra-orbital ridge of the skull was well-formed. The skull had very thin bones, and was very small. There was a small accessory nutrient foramen on the left half of the mandible, which is an unusual feature. There was considerable osteo-arthritic lipping on the anterior aspects of the cervical vertebrae. There was no evidence of antemortem trauma or disease, other than osteo-arthritis which had not yet developed to the stage of debility.

The unarticulated skeletal remains buried in the wooden box have generally the characteristics of mature but not old females. The epiphyses of the long bones were all united, and their lengths fell within the female range. The one complete skull had heavy bones and unfused sutures.

In summary, all the bones found in the mound were those of adults. The female bones in the wooden box tended not to have "rocker" characteristics, whereas those from the articulated skeletons, mostly male, lying in graves in the mound tend to have "rocker" jaws. There was no evidence of ante-mortem trauma. There was evidence of osteo-arthritis but no bone showed that the sufferer would have been physically incapacitated.

TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS RELATING TO BAU

According to the manuscript of Toganivalu (n.d.), the earliest recorded settlers on the island now known as Bau were fishermen or sailors forming two groups referred to as the Kai Levuka and the Kai Butoni. The former lived on the hill and were then known as the Kai Delaikorolevu (inhabitants of the hill of Korolevu). Korolevu may have been the name of the island at that time. The Kai Butoni lived on part of the flat land referred to as Naulunivuaka (the pig's head) and were then known as the Kai Naulunivuaka.

On the mainland of Viti Levu across from Bau there were three groups, now known as the Vusaratu, the Tui Kaba and the Vunivalu. All three groups claim that their ancestors came originally from the Nakauvadra range in the present province of Ra in north-eastern Viti Levu. One of those ancestors was Vueti, the son of Vaula. Subsequently Vaula lived at Bureta, Ovalau. Vueti went to live on the nearby island of Moturiki until he came of age, and then he crossed the sea to Verata on the east coast of Viti Levu. He later quarrelled with his brother, Kubunavanua, over the position of leadership, and went to an area of land which became known as Kubuna. Here he established one of the earliest Fijian settlements. He later heard that a war was raging in the Nakauvadra range, and set off with an army for the field of battle. He was victorious and hostilities ceased. Because of his success, the Nakauvadra people presented him with baskets of earth as symbols of their acknowledgement of his victory. A mound was made of this earth, and it was called "Bau", signifying that Vueti was supreme and that all things came under his authority. Vueti was given the titles of Roko Tui Bau and Koro Ratu Mai Bulu. Ratu Mai Bulu was the ancient god of the people of Nakauvadra and was worshipped by them in the form of a snake. After these honours had been conferred upon him, Vueti with his warriors commenced the return journey to Kubuna. They followed the Wainibuka river, the headwaters of which are on the south slopes of the Nakauvadra range, and halted for a while at Drekeniwai. Here they were given a site called Nayavuturaga where, in due course, they divided. Some returned to the province of Ra and settled at Nakorotubu, on the northeast coast of Viti Levu. Some remained at Nayavuturaga, and it is from these people that the present inhabitants of the village of Nayavu are thought by some to be descended. Vueti moved on to Kubuna, where he became the leader of a prosperous community. When he died, he was deified and became the ancestral god of the people of Kubuna. His shrine was called Rukuruku, and is at Taikobau. Here he was worshipped in the form of a snake. His direct descendants formed the group which became known as the Vusaratu.

The Tui Kaba also came from Verata where they split up, some going to Totoya, an island in the present province of Lau, some to Tonga and some to Viria. Those at Viria went to Kaba where their leader held the title of Tui Kaba. They finally settled at Oveya opposite to Bau where they were joined by a group from Nakauvadra whose leader held the title of Vunivalu. These two groups agreed to appoint one person as their joint leader, and after separate installation ceremonies by each group, the overall leader was installed and given the joint title of Vunivalu Tui Kaba. This account of the wanderings of the Tui Kaba is only one of three recorded by the Native Lands Commission, and there may well be more. Suffice it to say that it is probably impossible at this stage to determine which account, if any, is historically correct.

The fisherfolk on Bau, the Kai Levuka and the Kai Butoni, were subservient to the Vusaratu and were the fishermen for those at Kubuna. According to Toganivalu (n.d., part 1, chapter 1, p.1), these two groups came from Kubuna. On one occasion, having been derelict in their tributary responsibilities, they were told to leave the island. The Vusaratu, the Tui Kaba and the Vunivalu groups then moved together to settle on the island, which was named Bau after Vueti's victory mound. Here they formed a united group known as Kubuna and had two chiefs - a sacred chief with the title of Roko Tui Bau and a secular chief with the title of Vunivalu (in full, Vunivalu Tui Kaba).

The Roko Tui Bau derived his sacred power or *mana* by virtue of his descent from Vueti, the *kalou vu* or deified original ancestor of the Vusaratu group who had first settled at Kubuna. The Vunivalu Tui Kaba was closely associated with the war-god, Cagawalu.

Later still, groups now known as the Kai Lasakau and the Kai Soso from Beqa and Kadavu, two islands to the south of Viti Levu, came to Bau as fishermen and craftsmen. The Lasakau were later responsible for raiding for human victims when required for purposes of ceremonies or hospitality. The Soso tended the fish traps along the coast and made pottery.

The Kubuna, with the assistance of the Lasakau and the Soso, started to develop the island. They reclaimed the coral flats and established the three villages of Bau, Lasakau and Soso. They constructed sea walls, canoe docks and temple mounds, including Vatanitawake for the god Ratu Mai Bulu and Navico for Butakoivalu, deified ancestor of the Lasakau. Banuve, the Vunivalu at the end of the 18th century, started these developments which were continued by successive Vunivalu.

In course of time, internal quarrels on the island of Bau resulted in a transfer of paramount leadership from the sacred chief, the Roko Tui Bau, to the secular chief, the Vunivalu. During these quarrels, Bau was burnt by the Lasakau, traditionally in 1837.

Then Bau and her federated polities became increasingly involved in warfare with neighbouring Rewa and her polities, although both Bau and Rewa were closely related. The Vunivalu of Bau was Ratu Seru (later known as Ratu Cakobau), who had earlier shown his ambitions for paramountcy in the leading part he played with the burning of Bau. Now he wished to overcome his powerful neighbour, and in due course Rewa was burnt and the paramount chief, the Roko Tui Dreketi, was killed.

However, Bau was still rife with internal quarrels and rebels established themselves on a stronghold on the nearby peninsular of Kaba. Cakobau had great difficulties in maintaining his leadership, especially when wavering allies saw how strong was the opposition based on Kaba. Eventually, King George 1 of Tonga came to his help, after Cakobau had agreed to accept Christianity. At the battle of Kaba in 1855 those Fijians still loyal to Cakobau and the Tongans defeated the Bauan rebels. A number of Tongans were killed or died of wounds. According to tradition, their bodies were buried in Vatanitawake.

Vatanitawake - Traditional History

At the time the Kubuna people were first living together on Bau, they built a large *bure kalou* or temple where they could worship their *kalou vu* or deified ancestor, Ratu Mai Bulu. The temple was called Vatanitawake (meaning "shelf for flags").

After Vueti's victory in Nakauvadra he had been granted the special privilege of flying his *tawake* (flag) from the upper yard-arm of his canoe. Vatanitawake was the mound where successive Roko Tui Bau (the descendants of Vueti who continued this privilege) spread their *tawake* to dry after a sailing expedition. Vueti was also known as Ko Mai Vatanitawake.

Toganivalu (n.d., part 3, chapter 4, p.1) stated that, when arrangements were ready for the building of the *great temple* on Bau, the Lasakau fishermen went off to look for a stranger to kill and bring to Bau "*me qai coba na duru ni bure kalou*", that is to provide a body as part of the ceremony in connection with the digging of the posts of the temple. They repeated the procedure when the large flat stones were placed round the site. The large, flat stones that face the temple (and the temple of Navico and the Bau shoreline and canoe docks) were shipped from Sawakasa in large canoes, a distance of some 32 kilometres from Bau. When the temple was completed, the people gathered together valuable articles (*i yau*) and put them inside it. Then they prepared a great feast which they presented to the Roko Tui Bau, as their paramount chief and head of their temple.

During the fire of 1837, the god Ratu Mai Bulu's temple of Vatanitawake was destroyed. In 1840, a new temple was erected on Vatanitawake by the Vunivalu, Tanoa, and his son Seru (later known as Cakobau). This was to be the temple not only of Ratu Mai Bulu but especially of Cagawalu, the great war-god of Bau. It was at this time that the secular chief, the Vunivalu, had become paramount chief of Bau after the sacred chief, the Roko Tui Bau, had been forcefully displaced.

The Rev. Cargill (1841:306) stated that while the temple (which Waterhouse [1866:368] interpolated as that of Cagawalu and hence as the one on Vatanitawake) was

in the course of erection, many human beings were slaughtered and eaten. He explained that when the posts of a Fijian temple were erected, three, four, ten or as many human beings as could be obtained at the time were killed, roasted and eaten. When the white shells were adjusted on the black sticks which adorned the ends of the ridge pole on the outside of the house, as many more met a similar fate. When the posts of the place for the fire at which the priests and their associates warm themselves were arranged, several others were massacred for another feast.

Waterhouse stated (1866:21) that "a new god may have been thought necessary in order to proclaim and accomplish a new dynasty". He also said (1866:365) that at that time food was taken and presented to the god Ratu Mai Bulu on his site on the mainland and that the area was carefully weeded.

On 14th August, 1849, Captain Erskine was taken by missionaries Lyth and Calvert (1860:291) to the big temple and was shown "the stone, all bloody with recent use, where the heads of multitudes of victims had been dashed, then presented to the god". Erskine recorded in his diary as follows (1853:185):

The principal feature of the town is the great *bure* or temple which stands in an irregular square, on a basement a few feet above the level of the ground, its roof being two or three times higher than the walls, beautifully thatched and ornamented with cocoa-nut plait, and the long external ridge-pole decorated, with white cowrie-shells. The temple itself contained few objects of interest. A cloth screen covered the sanctuary, and on the ground lay a few neck pillows, and an elephant's tusk, which had been presented many years ago to Tanoa by the supercargo of a trader, and by him dedicated to the god. The building stood on a raised platform, and was surrounded by a few trees of graceful foliage, under one of which lay the large wooden *lali* or sacred drum, beaten as festivals and sacrifices; and overshadowed by another was the place where the bodies of victims are dedicated to the *kalou* or evil spirit, previous to their being handed over to those who are to cook them for the banquet. The lower branches of this tree had evidently been lately cut away to the height of eight or ten feet from the ground; and we were told that this had been done after the reduction of Rewa, a few months before, when a mound of no fewer than eighty corpses slain in battle, was heaped upon the spot.

The reference to the foundation mound of the temple being but "a few feet above the level of the ground" suggests that at this stage the mound consisted of a single platform and that the double platform which rises to about 2.4 m in height was a later feature. Indeed Erskine referred to "platform", not to "platforms".

Calvert's illustration of Vatanitawake (Figure 3) shows the temple in the early 1850's on two platforms faced with stone. The facing has been subjected to some artistic licence because the stone slabs in reality are not so regular in outline. Other interesting features of the illustration are the notched plank¹ rather than the present staircase, the upright stone slab² beside the corpse, the flagstones³ on which the priests are sitting, and the

surrounding palisade⁴. It is also noteworthy that no upright stone pillar has been drawn next to the steps.

There was one article in the temple of which no mention was made by Captain Erskine, presumably because it was behind the sanctuary covering to which he refers. As described by Williams in his general account of temples and confirmed by present tradition as told to me on Bau, a long piece of white *masi* or bark-cloth was fixed to the top of the roof and carried down the angle of the roof so as to hang before the corner-post and lie on the floor. This is said to have formed the path down which the god passed to enter the priest and marked the holy place which but few dared to enter.

There were fires in Bau in 1853 and 1854. The temple on Vatanitawake was destroyed in 1853 and was duly rebuilt. Cakobau was installed as Vunivalu on 26 July 1853, and it is reasonable to suggest that the elaborate reconstruction of the temple to which Waterhouse refers, and what he described (1866:204) as "the best piece of construction in Fiji", should have coincided with the installation of Cakobau. It may have been destroyed again in 1854 and then rebuilt.

It was at any rate in existence on 22 March 1854 because Waterhouse (1866:236) recorded that

...the Bauan Mars was formally consulted with the usual state. The high-priest seated himself at the front of the temple.

The Vunivalu, Cakobau, was at this time in the midst of war and his fortunes were sinking lower and lower because of internal dissent and external threat. However, according to current tradition, later in the year the Vunivalu adopted Christianity and all the temples on Bau were destroyed and their mounds razed to the ground, except Vatanitawake and Navico which remained. This was confirmed by Seeman who visited Bau in 1860 and noted that "of the heathen temples...only the foundations remain" (Seeman 1862:77).

The next mention of Vatanitawake came after the occasion of the Battle of Kaba in April 1855, when the King of Tonga sent an army of Tongans to help Cakobau to defeat the rebels of Bau who had harried him for so long. In the battle, the Tongans lost fourteen killed and thirty wounded, of whom about six died afterwards, according to Waterhouse (1860:293). Calvert (1860:194) gave the losses as fourteen killed and about the same number wounded. Toganivalu is silent on this point, but said (n.d., part 1, chapter 6, p.3) that the Tongans who died in the battle were taken to Bau and buried in the old temple, Vatanitawake. He went on to say that later their friends returned to Fiji and exhumed the bodies and took them back to Tonga for burial there. The current tradition on Bau is that the Tongan chiefs who were killed in the battle or who died later as a result of their wounds were buried at Vatanitawake, where their bodies remained.

In due course Vatanitawake was used as the foundation mound of the Bau Council House, which had been built by 1879 when Sir Arthur Gordon, Governor of the Crown Colony of Fiji, opened the first Council of Chiefs meeting to be held on Bau, following Cession in 1874.

The Functions of Vatanitawake

The term *bure kalou* has been translated as "temple", defined as a "building devoted to worship, or treated as a dwelling-place of god or gods" by The Oxford Dictionary of Common English (1985). Referring generally to Fijian "temples", Williams (1860:222) stated that the temple

...is a very useful place. It is the council-chamber, and town-hall; small parties of strangers are often entertained in it, and the head persons in the village even use it as a sleeping place. Though built expressly for the purposes of religion, it is less devoted to them than any others.... *Bures* are often unoccupied for months, and allowed to fall into ruins, until the Chief wants to make some request to the god, when the necessary repairs are first carried out.

Also writing generally about the use of temples, Waterhouse said (1866:p.404) that

The temple-worship of the gods consists of the *lovi*, an act of propitiation; the *musukau*, an act of covenant or solemn vow; the *soro*, an act of atonement; and the *madrali*, an act of thank-offering.. All the offerings refer to the present life. The Fijians propitiate the gods for success in war, offspring, deliverance from danger and sickness, fruitful seasons, fine weather, rain and favourable winds...Chanting (*meke*) in the temple is practised as a mode of modifying the gods.

Referring specifically to Vatanitawake, Toganivalu said (n.d., part 3, chapter 4, p.1) that the Roko Tui Bau was usually installed there. He wrote about ceremonies which were conducted at Vatanitawake, including a ceremony forming part of the installation, as follows:

During this ceremony, the chiefly *yaqona* was drunk not out of a coconut cup but out of a banana leaf cup called a *ikavilo*.

In discussing ceremonies associated with installation of the Roko Tui Bau, Toganivalu made no reference to a stone which stands beside the canoe dock, Ucuinabou. Hornell (1926:26) stated that this stone was used when Ratu Cakobau was proclaimed chief of Bau by the Lasakau people. Acting on the information of Ratu Popi, then Vunivalu, Hornell describes the stone as a *vatu ni veibuli* or installation stone. However, he was told that the stone was originally a *vatu ni bokola*, or stone against which the head of a human victim was dashed prior to being cooked and eaten.

Hornell also explained that when preparations were being made for war, the various social groups (*mataqali*) first made feasts for their own gods (*yakana kalou*, or feasting the gods) in their own temples. Then they gathered together to present a big feast at Vatanitawake, before worshipping (*so kalou*) there. When the chiefs had assembled in the temple, *yaqona* was prepared for the *so kalou* so that the priest should drink and the god would enter him and tell the assembled chiefs about what would happen during the coming fight. After a prayer (*masu*) had been offered to Ratu Mai Bulu, the priest would

drink and the god would enter him and tell the chiefs what would happen to them and how many enemies they would kill. They would then feast together and proceed to the fight. After victory, the corpses of the enemy dead would be dragged to the temple where their heads would be dashed against the stone kept for the purpose. The Roko Tui Bau would decide which bodies were to be eaten and which buried. The spoils of war, such as the clubs and spears taken by the victorious warriors, would be taken to the temple as an offering (*a isigani*) to the great god. When, in 1834, the Viwans captured the French brig *L'Aimable Josephine* and massacred the captain and some of the crew, they took the anchor of the boat to Vatanitawake as an offering to the god. The anchor is still there (Figure 1) and is presumably the one in Calvert's illustration, leaning against the steps.

There are two eye-witness accounts of the use of Vatanitawake for the two purposes recorded by Toganivalu, that is as a place for consultation with the god and as a place where the paramount chief was installed. Both are by Calvert. In 1851, Cakobau invited him to witness ceremonies which took place before an attack on Nakelo, the stronghold of the enemies of Rewa. Firstly Cakobau and Calvert went to Cakobau's small family temple to call upon the god there for protection and success. Then they went to the main temple. The ceremony started with an old chief advancing, bearing on his shoulder a root of green *yaqona*. He appealed to the gods to help them destroy their enemies and avenge grievances.

In a few minutes the high priest (who had many folds of *masi* wrapped around him) was seized with trembling, which increased in violence, until he seemed convulsed, and in danger of suffocation. Then the god through the lips of the priest, proclaimed his advent, and every head-dress was doffed, and all ornaments stripped from the persons of the spectators. (Calvert 1860:313)

The god then spoke and said "I have conquered many places and I shall be victorious, being the god of war." The ceremony then closed and the expedition started.

It may have been to this occasion that Waterhouse (1866:204) referred when he stated that

The king had made an immense offering of riches to his Mars, which filled the temple... The greater portion of this was the property of the high priest.

It was presumably the high priest's portion which remained in the temple and which was later mostly destroyed by fire, the remainder being stolen by the fishermen during the confusion. Vatanitawake was therefore used not only as a place where the Vunivalu could consult Cagawalu through the medium of the *bete* or priest, but also as a storehouse for the goods presented as an offering to enlist the help of the war god.

Waterhouse also said that Cakobau was formally installed as Vunivalu on 26 July 1853. The bodies of eighteen persons had been secured as a feast for the occasion. This time Calvert did not come as an invited guest, but rather to try to save the lives of some of the proposed victims. Calvert wrote (1860:327) in his modest style of using the third person when referring to himself

As the Missionary approached the great temple - Vata-ni Tawake - a dead stillness rested upon Mbau, which was suddenly broken by a great shout proclaiming that Thakobau had just drunk the *yaqona* of the Vunivalu, during the preparation of which none were allowed to move about. Another shout from the Lasakau quarters made known that the bodies were being dragged; and soon the horrible procession came up, - the dead and the dying dragged along by their hands, naked with their heads rattling and grating over the rough ground. As each approached the temple, the head was violently dashed against a great stone, which became stained with blood.

It is entirely probable that the war god of the Vunivalu, Cagawalu, should have replaced, once the Vunivalu had achieved paramountcy over the Roko Tui Bau, the deified original ancestor of the latter, Ratu Mai Bulu, as the main god to be worshipped in the chief temple of Bau, Vatanitawake. However, it is not clear when Cagawalu was first worshipped at Vatanitawake, even as a god of lesser importance than Ratu Mai Bulu. This does not mean that Ratu Mai Bulu was later ignored at Vatanitawake and I was told that there continues to be some communication with this deity there up to the present time. The alternative, descriptive title of the god who was worshipped at Vatanitawake was Ko Mai Vatanitawake (He from Vatanitawake), which could be applied to either Ratu Mai Bulu or to Cagawalu. Such ambiguity could avoid giving offence to either god.

The use of the temple mound of Ratu Mai Bulu as the mound for the temple of Cagawalu would give some expression of credibility to the new god. The erection of the new temple on the old mound would be an outward and visible symbol of the validation of the supremacy of the secular power (*kaukaua*) of the Vunivalu over the sacred power (*mana*) of the Roko Tui Bau.

It is not at all clear whether Vatanitawake, when first used primarily as a *bure kalou* for Cagawalu, was a single platform or whether it was terraced. Tradition is silent but evidence as to what the *bure kalou* and its mound looked like is forthcoming from contemporary accounts by visitors and missionaries.

The Basalt Columns - Vatanitawake and Elsewhere

The five basalt columns at present standing beside the two stone-faced stairways of Vatanitawake are evidently not an original feature of the mound even in its two-platformed stage. Calvert's illustration dating from the early 1850s shows the north end of the mound where there are at least two columns today, but no column was included in his illustration (nor was the stone-faced stairway). Bruce Palmer, former Director of the Fiji Museum, searched the Museum collection of photographs and advised me that a photo of the mound dating from the 1870's showed no column. There is no indication that there was any basalt column beside Vatanitawake until Miss Gordon Cumming saw one "opposite a mound" in 1875. In fact it is probable that the columns were not placed in their present position until the stone stairways were built. This was almost certainly not before the turn of the century.

Apart from the five columns, there is at present on Bau no other basalt column of which I am aware. However, in the Fiji Museum there is a basalt column which, according to its label, was brought from Bau. It formed part of the base of a house built over the grave of Tanoa, Vunivalu of Bau, who died in December 1852. Tanoa was buried in Delainakoro, one of the chiefly burial grounds on the hill overlooking the island. This column, like three of those beside Vatanitawake, had been shaped so that its upper part was round in section and the end of the column had a carved groove across it. Tanoa's grave must at some time have been disturbed because the Museum also has a whale's tooth necklace which was found in the grave.

It is suggested that the house built on Tanoa's grave had as its posts a series of basalt columns, that the grave some time was disturbed, and five of the columns were placed beside Vatanitawake and one column ended up eventually in the Fiji Museum.

Whatever their immediate provenance, the five Vatanitawake columns were at some time brought from Rewa which had close kinship connections with Bau. In the chiefly Rewa village of Lomanikoro there are a number of basalt columns. Nine such columns stand at present beside the mound which was made for the church. Each column is said to have been set 1.8 m into the ground. Three of the columns (2.43 m high and hexagonal, 2.13 m high and pentagonal, and 1.5 m high and pentagonal respectively) have been shaped so that the present upper part is round in section, and each has a shallow groove carved across the end. The groove is of sufficient width to hold a house timber. The other six columns are not so impressive and vary in height from 0.9 m to 1.6 m. Of the six shaped columns, three are hexagonal, two are pentagonal and one is heptagonal. All these columns had been taken from Wairua, a chiefly burial mound for the two leading chiefs of Rewa, the Roko Tui Dreketi (being the sacred chief) and the Vunivalu (being the secular chief). At the time they were taken from Wairua, the columns were laid beside the mound in order to prevent erosion. The original use is not clear.

There is also a number of basalt columns at present lying beside or set upright around the base of Muanidele, a chiefly burial mound for the Roko Tui Dreketi and the Vunivalu situated in an area of land known as Narusa. Narusa is also the name of the main *yavu* of the Roko Tui Dreketi. That of the Vunivalu of Rewa is Nukunitabua. The columns at Muanidele show no sign of having been carved or shaped. The pieces are generally shorter than those from Wairua. The highest of those set upright in the ground is 0.8 m above ground, and the longest of those lying on their side is 1.05 m. Some of the columns show signs of weathering.

Miss Gordon Cumming (1901:110) stated that Rewa is a

...large village...with an unusually fine thatched church, round which have been set up a series of rude stone pillars, some pentagonal - which are supposed to have been brought from the basaltic cliffs of Khandavu...I noted a similar pillar around the ruins of the heathen temple at Bau; and here at Rewa, Mr Webb has happily replaced several which formerly surrounded a large barrow where three chiefs are buried and which some ruthless hand had overthrown.

I discussed these columns with Ro Rejieli who was the daughter of the Vunivalu of Rewa, Ro Etuate Namocce Mataitini. During his lifetime he took a great interest in the traditions and history of Rewa and used to tell his daughter about the basalt columns. He told her that the columns had been brought by canoe from Soso, Kadavu, by Banuve, the Roko Tui Dreketi who died in 1846.

If the basalt columns in Rewa had been brought from Kadavu before the death of Banuve in 1846, it is reasonable that some of these valuable articles should have been passed on by the Rewa chiefs to their Bau kinsmen to be erected over the grave of Tanoa who died in 1852. Then, I have suggested, just as some of the columns from the chiefly burial mound at Rewa were moved to the church mound towards the end of the 19th century when Miss Gordon Cumming saw them there. Similarly some of the columns from the chiefly burial ground at Delainakoro, Bau, were moved to the Council House mound, Vatanitawake, at about the same period.

Basalt columns, some of them carefully grooved so that they could be used as houseposts, seem to have been of special value since they are found in places which are venerated not only in Rewa and Bau, but also beside the house mound of the Tui Naviti at Soso on the island of Naviti, Yasawas. More recently I have found some basalt columns set into the long walls of prehistoric Fijian ceremonial sites at Wasavulu and Tebe on the island of Vanua Levu (Parke 1971:265; 1972:62). There are doubtless many others.

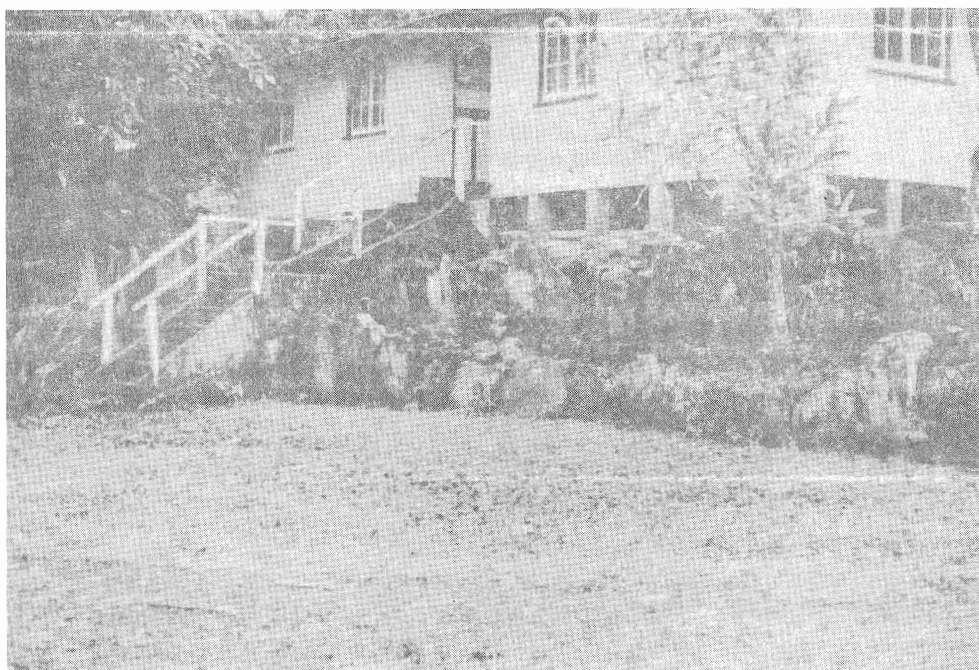


FIGURE 4: NAVICO, PHOTOGRAPHED IN 1969

The *bure kalou* mound supports the old Tailevu Provincial office. The staircase is modern.

Photo: Peter Bellwood.

NAVICO - THE STRUCTURE OF THE MOUND

At the time of the investigations, Navico was an earthen mound, terraced and stone-faced, with a set of concrete steps leading from ground level to a wooden building built on top of the mound and used as the Tailevu Provincial Office (Figure 4). Earlier, steps made of coral blocks had been seen by Hornell (1926:31). There was no basalt column near the mound. The state of preservation of Navico was not as good as that of Vatanitawake.

The terracing of Navico was, like the terracing of Vatanitawake, achieved by two rectangular platforms built on top of each other. The lower platform was larger than the upper platform. The lower platform was built directly onto the slope of the hillside rising above the mound. The highest part of the mound was built on to the level ground below the hillside. As far as could be determined, this lower platform was constructed of earth. Since the site was not in any danger, no excavation was carried out on Navico.

Oriented along its long axis in a north-south direction, the lower platform measures about 24.3 m long, by 12.19 m wide at the south end and 12.9 m wide at the north end. The height of the platform above the ground varied from zero where it abutted the hillside on the eastern side, to about 1.2 m along the long west side. The ends of the mound and the long west side away from the hillside were faced at irregular intervals with slabs of beach sandstone.

The upper platform was also built directly on to the slope of the hillside. It too was constructed of earth, and was oriented north-south along its long axis. It measured 21 m long, by 10.6 m wide at the north end and by 9.7 m wide at the south end. The long east side was built directly on to the

hillside. The height of the west side of the upper platform varied from 1.29 m to 0.76 m above the level of the lower platform.

The step between the two platforms varied in width from 2.13 m towards the north and south ends, to 1.27 m in the middle of the long west side. The upper platform was faced with slabs of beach sandstone, the biggest being 1.57 m high and 0.96 m wide. The stones with one exception were generally irregular in shape. However, on the north side a stone 1.5 m high had been shaped with a rounded top. No artefacts were found by me on the mound.

Navico - Traditional Accounts

Hornell, who investigated the canoe-docks and seawalls of Bau, recorded (1926:31) that Navico belonged to the Lasakau people. Ratu Tevita Naulivou, a man of chiefly status on Bau with a developed interest in the history of the island who served as a trustee for the Fiji Museum, confirmed Hornell's observation and told me that Navico was the *yavu* or mound for the *bure kalou* or temple of Butakoivalu, *kalou vu* or deified ancestor of the Lasakau people.

Williams did not refer to Butakoivalu when writing about religion, but Waterhouse (1866:386) stated that Butakoivalu assumed human form during war and would visit the towns of the enemy with fish for sale. After selling his fish, he would return to Bau, to tell his followers what he had done. They would then go to meet the enemy, knowing that they would kill the same number of victims as the god had found buyers for his fish.

VATANITAWAKE AND NAVICO - TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CORRELATES

Both Vatanitawake and Navico were the *yavu* or mounds of *bure kalou* or temples, at least during the 18th and 19th centuries. Seeman, who was in Fiji in 1860/61 (Seeman 1862), generalised that "all Fijian temples - at least those about the coast - have a pyramidal form and are often erected on terraced mounds". Illustrations of the temples of Na Ututu (Lakeba) and Natavasara (Taveuni) show that both temple mounds were round in plan, one having two platforms and one having at least 12 (Williams 1860:215, 222). However, Hocart (1929:188) stated that Williams' drawing of Nautuutu (sic) was certainly wrong, and that modern remains show it to have been square. The *yavu* of the *bure kalou* which I have seen are either round or rectangular. The two temple mounds on Bau are the only ones of which I am aware that are rectangular, terraced and faced with slabs of stone.

Protohistoric traditional accounts associate the use of these two *yavu* with the *bure kalou*. However, neither the traditional accounts nor excavation indicate the original uses of the mounds, even though the tentative identification of an old surface line at the depth of 1.2 m in Vatanitawake would indicate that the present *yavu* was the development of an earlier one. Further excavation which might have confirmed the old surface line or which might have indicated the construction or use of the original mound was not possible.

That Vatanitawake in its final state of development was used for burial purposes was alluded to in tradition and confirmed by excavation. Tradition associated these burials with Tongan victims of the Battle of Kaba. Skeletal evidence indicated that the majority of skeletons were probably male. No skeleton was positively identified as female. Jaws were all of rocker type, which is a predominantly Polynesian characteristic. Except for the one male skeleton with evidence of vertebral osteoarthritis, the bones could well have been those of Tongan warriors. The finding of two iron bars (suitable as clubs for warfare) in one grave is certainly supportive of the traditional account.

That Vatanitawake at an earlier stage of development may have been used for burial is suggested by the discovery of a box of human bones, presumably skeletons or parts of skeletons, discovered when the final stage of the mound was being prepared and reinterred before the final stage was completed. Jaws were identified as not of rocker type and may have been those of Bauans with non-Polynesian characteristics.

The question of whether the earliest mound had been used for burial cannot be answered. Indeed it is generally problematic in Fiji whether any particular *yavu* was originally used for burial, for a *bure kalou* or for a dwelling-house, whatever its later use. Tradition records Vatanitawake as having been used as the *yavu* for a *bure kalou* for Ratu Mai Bulu, and later for a *bure kalou* for Cagawalu. Excavation revealed the old surface line for an earlier (if not the earliest) *yavu*. It remains problematic whether the new *bure kalou* was built on a second platform placed simply on top of an earlier platform, or whether that earlier platform was widened to allow for the construction of the later platform. Whatever the construction details, excavation does support the traditional account that there was a change of temple with the change of god from Ratu Mai Bulu to Cagawalu.

As the powers of the Vunivalu and of Bau increased, so the splendour of the *bure kalou* of Cagawalu and its *yavu* Vatanitawake increased. The mound Vatanitawake as investigated represents the zenith of *yavu* development in Fiji. The size of the double-terraced mound, the discovery of very fine pottery and the well-constructed graves with scatters of green pebbles, give the overall impression of a *yavu* of great significance, probably without parallel. These archaeological features correlate with the traditional accounts of the mound.

The size of the mound has parallels with the sizes of some of the chiefly *fuag ri* (house mounds) and *tamura* (burial mounds) which I have seen on the island of Rotuma. As with the term *yavu*, the term *fuag ri* is ambiguous. It is used to refer to the mounds of present and abandoned houses, and also to mounds associated with 'atua or ancestral spirits. Rotuma in turn has traditional connections with Tonga where mounds of considerable size have been reported in association with burials. The most impressive are the royal *langi* or burial mounds at Mu'a faced with closely fitting stone slabs. So Vatanitawake shares some of the structural features of Tongan *langi* and of Rotuman *fuag ri* and *tamura*. It shares with the *langi* and the *tamura* the use of the mound as a burial place; and it shares with the *langi* the use of stone slabs for facing. Apart from the association of some *fuag ri* with 'atua, I have no information about the identification of a Rotuman mound like Vatanitawake (or Navico) being used as the foundation for a temple.

Traditional accounts refer to two other features of Vatanitawake for which there are archaeological correlates. Firstly, accounts say that the priest had fires inside the *bure kalou* for the sake of warmth rather than for cooking. The three fires found are all of modest size and do not suggest cooking hearths. The curious arrangement of stones and potsherds in the hearth at the traditionally sacred (north) end of the mound is too small for the support of cooking pots. Rather, it may represent some ritual feature for which some explanations may be forthcoming when more *bure kalou yavu* (temple mounds) are

investigated. Secondly, the chunks of *vesi* charcoal (probably from houseposts) could be relics of one of the fires known by tradition to have destroyed the *bure kalou*. What is surprising is that more traces of such fires did not appear. Perhaps they were all cleared away before the *bure kalou* was rebuilt.

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NOTES

1. A Fiji Museum photo dated 1908 shows a wooden staircase.
2. Calvert, describing his visit to the temple in 1853, referred (1860:327) to this stone against which the heads of victims were dashed.
3. Calvert (1860:313) described his visit to the temple in 1851, and said that "Early in the morning several priests assembled in the area at the foot of the Na Vata-ni Tawake, the chief temple, seating themselves in order on the flags".
4. This may give a hint of the date of the illustration, because there was evidently not a palisade round the temple in 1851, when Cakobau ordered one should be erected "round the great temple", according to Waterhouse.
5. Marshall Sahlins tells me that the *bure kalou* in the old village of Suva (associated politically with Bau) was also known as Vatanitawake and was associated with Cagawalu, the war-god of Bau. I have also just (August 1993) been shown a large *yavu* on the north slopes of Navatu, Rakiraki, in the present province of Ra. This is known as Vatanitawake, to record a traditional association with Bau.

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