

Preliminary Observations of Terrestrial Gastropods of the Nakauvadra Range, Ra Province, Fiji

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Chapter 10

Cultural Survey of the Nakauvadra Range, Ra Province, Fiji

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SUMMARY

During the course of the survey, an annotated field map of significant cultural sites was constructed to identify and map sites of historical and cultural significance in the Nakauvadra Range. Our resulting maps generally depicted that resting spots or stop-over spots were found high up in the forest and close to mountain peaks. Fortified settlements in the form of ring-ditches and stone walls were evident further up into the forest and closer to water sources.

Also observed were mound features used as native land boundaries showing land holding units amongst the different yavusa or clans during *Rt. Sukuna's* presence in the *Veitarogi Vanua* around the early 1950s.

INTRODUCTION

The Nakauvadra Range in the province of Ra is renowned locally as a significant cultural site with many links to legendary tales of Fiji's colorful past. Having being dubbed the "highway" for many of Fiji's ancestors across Viti Levu in the days when modern forms of transportation were unheard of, the Nakauvadra Range is rich in evidence of settlements and historical events that have been reinforced by oral traditions passed down by elders and scripted accounts from the *Vola Vivigi* or "blue book" containing descriptions of historical events that took place along the range.

Although very rugged and difficult to access, the inhabitants of the Nakauvadra forest probably chose to construct their settlements on high altitude to better protect them from raging enemies. Our primary aim was to identify and map sites of cultural significance in the Nakauvadra Range. Below is an account of the different sites of cultural significance found in order of visit during the survey.

METHODS

The Fiji Museum-Archaeology Department assessed most of the archaeological/historical sites during the first week of the survey (Map 10 for site locations). The second week was spent mainly focusing on the collection of oral histories and general knowledge about the Nakauvadra Range from the people of Vunisea village.

RESULTS

Vunirautoba Rock Shelter

This site was approximately 412 m a.s.l. (GARMIN GPSmap 76CSx) and was assumed to only have been used as a place of rest due to its small size and constricted space (Plate 23). There was also no evidence of cooking as pottery shards and shell middens were not found.

Oso-nai-vua Rock Shelter (Plates 24,25)

This site was approximately 505 m southwest of the Vunirautoba rock shelter. The meaning behind the name of the rock shelter is related from the shape of the rock arch where directly translated- *oso* means stuck and *vua* is burden. Myth claims that anyone who is heavily burdened will not be able to enter the arched feature of the rear rock face of the site.

The front face of the rock approximately 10 m in height providing exceptional shelter for resting. The side of the rock reveals evidence of a fire place. This site has been carefully selected as it is located close to water source.

Binibini (Putuputu) qele/vatu (Plate 26)

Binibini qele/vatu are earth or stone mounds made for physical markers showing divisions of traditional land owning units of blocks of land according to *yavusa* or clan.

The demarcation of land was carried out by the late *Rt. Sukuna* and the landowners in the 1940's when he was the Chief Native Lands Commissioner. Information regarding the rightful owners of blocks of land on either sides of the marker can be obtained from the Native Lands Commission in Suva.

Nasovu rock shelter (Plate 27)

Situated approximately 386 m south of *Vunirautoba*, the *Nasovu* rock shelter is at an elevation of 416 m. The massive site has significant evidence of habitation in the form of scattered pottery shards and shell middens (Plate 52). The pottery pieces had designs on them and according to the pottery sequence of Fiji is in the fourth stage which is the *Vuda* phase circa 700-500 BP (refer to the appendices for pottery images).

Asenauluna rock shelter (Plate 28)

Asenauluna site is located south-southeast downstream on *Nabiya* Creek from Camp 1. At an

elevation of 337 m, the huge rock provides shelter to those that use the forest to hunt, gather wild crops and a resting place for those en-route to neighboring villages towards *Vatukacevaceva*.

In the 1940s the rock shelter provided refuge for a nursing mother and her daughter. The baby was born and spent more than four nights at the rock shelter nursing with her mother until she was healthy enough to journey back to *Vunisea* village about 7.5 km downstream where traditional ceremonies celebrating the arrival of the new born and also marking her four nights (*vakabogiva*) took place.

We retrieved pottery shards, shell middens and a bottle (believed to be quite old) from the site (Plate 48). The shards fall in the *Vuda* phase (700-500 BP) of the Fiji pottery sequence.

Wainibelo rock shelter (Plate 29)

This rock shelter is an ideal resting spot with quite a large spatial area compared to other sites. Located just a few metres away from *Asenauluna* site, its elevation is 302 m with the *Nabiya* Creek running behind it. Findings from the site include decorated pottery shards of around the same year range as the other sites, the fourth phase of the Fiji pottery sequence, the *Vuda* phase (Plate 51).

Marika's site (Plate 30)

This site was discovered by *Marika* Tuiwawa and his group during their botanical surveys. Human influence was obvious at this flattened platform where the side of a hill has been dug out and packed down. It was in the shape of a semi circle approximately 25 m long and 20 m wide. The site could have been inhabited as there is evidence of a rock formation- possibly remains of a house mound.

Hilda's site (Plate 31)

This site was discovered by the entomology group and is named after the group leader, *Hilda* Waqa-Sakiti. Situated about 5 min west of Camp 1, *Hilda's* site has the remains of a house mound with stone surroundings raised about 60 cm from ground level. The mound was about 15 m long and 10 m wide with stones partially displaced. Walking upstream, *Hilda's* site is located on the left bank of the *Nabiya* Creek. Typical of a settlement is the planting of food trees such as breadfruit.

Belo's rock shelter (Plate 32)

Similarly, this small rock shelter was discovered by one of the guides named Belo. Rising to about 4 m Belo's rock shelter contained evidence of scattered decorated pottery shards from the *Vuda* phase, shell middens and a fire place. The rock shelter was situated right beside Hilda's house mound.

Motoriki Hill fortification (Plates 33, 34)

This hill fort was one of the best remains of cultural features sighted during the trip. Evidence of a deep ring ditch more than 1 m in height enveloped the settlement. Running parallel to the inner edge of the ditch was an intact stone wall. Guard points made especially for watchmen on duty were also visible. Inside the settlement are remains of house mounds, some are still intact (refer to the settlement map).

Vunivauvau old village site (Plate 35)

According to the guides, Vunivauvau was the former village site before the present Vunisea village was occupied. It is located about 500 m away from the Vunisea village. The site is exceptionally big and some mounds were not mapped due to thick vegetation cover.

Matarau rock shelter (Plate 36)

This rock shelter was located northwest of Vunisea village. Found at the site was cultural evidence similar to other sites - scattered pottery shards and shells (Plate 47). Like other sites, the shards date back to the *Vuda* phase. The site was at an altitude of 179 m with a small creek running beside it.

Bua old village (Plates 37, 38)

Approximately 800 m northward from Matarau rock shelter was Bua old village also known as Namasaga. House mounds with huge stone foundations were neatly aligned in this big settlement and were highly raised off the ground. The site was scattered with food trees such as breadfruit and Tahitian chestnut (*Inocarpus fagiferus*).

Located 180 m away from the lower village was the fortified settlement (upper Bua) on a peak of about 334 m. The settlement had two sets of stone walls both measuring to a height of close to 2 m. At the entrance were two pillar stones and further in were house mounds with stone foundations raised to about 60-70 cm. With the exception of the entrance side of the site, all sides were rocky and steep making

access difficult. Numerous pottery shards were found at each site (Plates 49, 50).

Uluda historical sites

The following sites are related to legends of Lutunasobasoba and Degei's migration. The sites can be found from the ridge or the Tualeita to the side of the range that faces the village of Vatukaceveva.

Plate 39 shows the historical *Rogorogovuda* at the point *Uluda*. According to legends the *Rogorogovuda*, is a lali beaten to call all the gods from all over Fiji to attend a meeting.

Tobu ni sili nodrau na ciri (Plate 40)

This was the bathing spot for the two brothers, *Cirinakaumoli* and *Kalusabaria*. Legend depicts that the grandsons of *Lutunasobasoba* were responsible for the killing of *Turukawa*, a famous rooster (cock) that was coveted and taken by the snake god Degei. As a result, war broke out as the brothers killed most of *Degei's* men and were later banished by their father. The brothers had their houses built close to their bathing spot. One of their house foundations had more than 10 standing stones (Plate 41).

Conua (Plate 42)

Located about 500 m northwest from the brothers' home in a place called *Conua* is a rain tree that is said to be where the rooster sat and crowed each morning to wake *Degei*.

Vatukaceveva old village site (Plate 43)

On the far end of the range from Uluda peak, about 548 m a.s.l., is the site of the *Vatukaceveva* old village. The site was fortified with a cliff face and stone walls and contained evidence of scattered pottery shards and shells (Plate 53).

Navolau sites II (Plate 44)

The *Navoka* rock shelter was about 721 m from the village of *Navolau II*. The massive site rises to over 10 m in height and has evidence of pottery shards from around the *Vuda* phase and shells strewn across the shelter.

Delaisuvani Peak (Plate 45)

On the peak were the remains of what is believed to be either a lookout point or a sacred worshipping ground fortified with a ring ditch. Currently, the Fiji Sugar Corporation has one of its radio transmitters

erected right on top of the only house mound on the site. Beside the house mound was a pile of stones in a conical structure about 2-3 m in height. The diameter of the base is around 11 m while the top is about 4 m wide. According to Gifford (1951), in his article “Fijian Mythology, Legends, and Archaeology” an informant said that Degei and Lebanacagi had ten children and their fourth son was Rasuwaki. Degei, realizing that he had a lot of male offspring, decided to send them to different parts of Viti Levu, so they would not quarrel. Rasuwaki was sent to Suvani, a village near Navolau, Ra Province.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sites visited during this initial expedition were in well preserved conditions barely modified by human interaction. The department wishes to recommend:

- That proper documentation of the survey and oral history be undertaken to avoid the loss of traditional knowledge about these sites.
- The old village site belonging to the people of Vunisea displaying a formation of fortification wall that is rather unique, and which the Fiji Museum Archaeology Department has never come across before, be cleaned and maintained by the local villagers (Plate 38).
- The Fiji Museum Archaeology Department be included in any future surveys of the area to allow for the completion of the survey in the overlooked areas within the Biodiversity survey region and to revisit Navolau II and record its oral histories.

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