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STYLISTIC CHANGE IN FIJIAN POTTERY

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IN FIJI THERE HAS BEEN continuous pottery-making activity for the past three thousand years. The archaeological record reflected so prolifically in pottery establishes that change occurred throughout Fijian prehistory. I shall try here to deal with the last period of ceramic activity in Fiji, raising the general question of how Fijian pottery has changed in its distinctive stylistic features since the postcontact period and whether these changes are a direct outcome of postcontact influence or just a reinvigoration of a trend since the dawn of Fiji's occupation.

Having already attempted elsewhere to analyze the relation between developments in the external socioeconomic context and those in the realm of' pottery (Rossitto 1992), I do not tackle this problem in detail here. My chief interest, instead, will be the internal dynamics of stylistic change: the procedures followed by potters striving to innovate, their level of consciousness in the manipulation of the traditional "vocabulary" and set of rules, the tolerance they show towards innovation. In a word, I shall stress the subtle interplay of tradition and creativity as it influences the potters' daily activity. Given the popular image among art historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists of non-Western arts and crafts practitioners being the unthinking and undifferentiated tools of their traditions, as people who are essentially denied the privilege of technical or conceptual creativity, the related question is whether it is possible to speak about creative originality and conscious innovation in a community that focuses extensively on collective action.

However, before studying stylistic change in Fijian postcontact pottery, I set myself a preliminary task, that of recording the exact pottery production in each present-day center, impelled by the fact that Fijian pottery has been inadequately investigated at the ethnographic level.

Historical Context

In the early 1800s, when exploration and colonization by Westerners started, pottery production was widespread throughout Fiji, practiced by women belonging to the piscatorial/nautical communities known as the ***kai wai,*** "people of the sea." With the exception of the Sigatoka Valley, inhabited essentially by farmers, pottery making was the prerogative of these ***kai wai.*** The women made vessels by slab-building in the lower and upper Sigatoka Valley, Yawe, and Levuka; by ring-building in Ra and Tailevu Provinces; and by slab- and ring-building in Vanua Levu, Yanuya, and Nasilai. All over the island group, potters used the paddle-and-anvil technique to knock components into shape and fired their products in an open fire, glazing the still-hot water containers with ***makadre--dakua*** tree ***(Agathis vitienisis)*** gum--to seal and color the outside, and waterproofing cooking pots with vegetable substances because ***makadre*** melted on the fire.

Pottery was made for personal use and household exchange and consumption, as well as for communitywide trade transactions. During ***solevu (so,*** gathering; ***levu,*** large), pots were bartered along with fish for barkcloth, mats, vegetables, and other goods produced by the agricultural communities. Pots were also ***iyau,*** "valuables," and consequently could be offered to chiefs as tribute and presents and could be exchanged for other valuables during ceremonies on the occasion of births, marriages, and deaths. In both trade transactions and ceremonial gift exchanges, pots were important not only in supplying necessary goods, but also in maintaining social relationships, including kinship and political alliances.

With changed economic and social conditions since arrival of the ***vulagi*** (foreigners, whites) and the growing influence of money, pots nowadays are no longer made to meet any real internal demand but primarily for the tourist market. Pottery making is essentially supported by the possibility for monetary income that it allows. Tourism seems to be the only factor that will determine the future of the pottery centers, Tourism affects the numbers of potters employed and, consequently, the degree of vitality of the centers, and also the types and quality of products.

The impact of tourism is but the most recent development in a restless pottery-making tradition. Through the excavations of Gifford at Navatu and Vuda (1951, 1955) and the Birkses at Sigatoka (1966, 1967, 1973), archaeologists have already established a sequence of three very different ceramic traditions. These traditions vary in characteristic forms and decoration, providing a framework for reconstructing the island group's prehistoric period into four broad phases (Green 1963; Shaw 1967).

The Sigatoka Phase is defined by the Lapita tradition, which has been

considered the hallmark of the Proto-Polynesians: closely related, small groups of largely hunter-gatherer and fishing peoples whose eastward voyages more than thirty-five hundred years ago led to Fiji as the outpost for Polynesian colonization, Lapita is a low-fired, sand-textured pottery whose surface is sometimes burnished or slipped with reddish clay. It is represented by a wide range of vessels decorated with elaborate geometric patterns achieved through different techniques, in particular by the use of comblike toothed stamps pressed into the clay before firing, the resultant impressions probably filled with lime or other white substances. In Fiji, however, the Lapita pottery is relatively less sophisticated. There it shows some twenty-five hundred years ago a much more limited range of vessel forms and a degeneration in decoration that led to a coarsely functional plain ware that points to isolation and a lack of contact between the local Lapita people and those in other western island groups. A little more than five hundred years later new forms appeared, predominantly embellished by the imprint of the potters finishing paddle with patterns of diamond, square, or rectangular cross-reliefs; parallel ribs; zigzag lines; and wavy and spot reliefs carved into the paddle's working face. Archaeologists have subsumed this pottery under the Impressed tradition, which distinguishes the Navatu Phase, whose time span has been fixed from about 100 **B.C.** to **A.D.** 1100. From about **A.D.** 1100 to **A.D.** 1600, the archaeological record displays a reduced frequency of impressed motifs, very high frequency of plain ware, and limited quantities of new incised decoration; this stylistic tradition marks the Vuda Phase. The Ra Phase **(A.D.** 1600-1800) is based on a second, significant increase in the use of incising as a decorative technique along with comb and gash incising, shell and tool impressions, applique elements, and combinations of these. Pottery showing such stylistic characteristics has been considered to belong to the Incised tradition.

The four phases and three ceramic traditions still stand as a rough ceramic chronology. However, debate over whether they may denote such events as migrations and cultural discontinuity-- the cultural affiliation of the Impressed tradition has been left undetermined, while the Incised tradition has been associated with Melanesian culture (Birks and Birks 1973; Bellwood 1978; Frost 1974, 1979)-- or gradual change by internal development (Hunt 1980, 1988; Best 1984; Crosby 1988) has recently resulted in a redefinition of the sequence in nonphasal terms.[i]

Research Methodology and the Ethnographic Record

Articles by Roth (1935), Thompson (1938), Palmer and Shaw (1968a, 1968b), and Hunt (1979) provide records of the ceramic technologies in use

in historic times in Ra and Bua, Levuka and Kabara, the lower and upper Sigatoka Valley, and Yawe. These descriptions are more accurate and complete than those left by nineteenth-century Europeans who visited Fiji: their observations were always fortuitous and excited more by the strangeness of what they were seeing than by genuine analytic interest. From the ethnographic literature one can draw data on the ceramic production of the different areas but, with the exception of Palmer's and Shaw's work, these data are mostly fragmentary or incomplete and often concern only a few types of vessels for which the function and a rough description are given.

The first attempts to describe and classify Fijian pottery were made by MacLachlan (1940) and Surridge (1944). Their works, however, are too generic and appear inadequate in the light of Palmers and Shaw's surveys in the Sigatoka Valley. Confirming the results of the archaeological record, their ethnographic work pointed out that vessel form and decoration vary from village to village within the same ceramic area, and that decoration changes both in the decorative units used and in their combination according to the type of vessel and the portion of decorated surface. In consequence, it becomes evident that Fijian pottery can no longer be approached as if it was a homogeneous stylistic tradition. But notwithstanding the achieved awareness of the existence of local traditions and, therefore, of the need to record them in detail, only Palmer (1962) has tried to summarize vessel forms and decoration in each pottery center of historic times. Palmer relied exclusively on vessels belonging to the Fiji Museum collection, though, so it would be illusory to think that the production of each pottery center is represented in all its variety. As Palmer himself expressed, it is necessary to go beyond his first attempt, examining also vessels belonging to other collections and carrying out further fieldwork in the still-active pottery centers.

Clearly then, this field of inquiry must be subjected to two main lines of investigation. The study of typologies is the first, obvious, and necessary one. On one hand, such study may throw more light on the prehistory of the island group, assisting and supplementing any comparative analysis drawn from the archaeological material. On the other hand, it is the preliminary step for the second line of investigation, the study of stylistic change. I have thus first determined the types of vessels traditionally manufactured in each of the still-active pottery centers, namely Nasilai in Rewa Province; Lawai, Nakabuta, Yavulo, and Nayawa in the lower Sigatoka Valley; and Yanuya island in the Mamanuca group. Each group of vessels has then been treated independently as a starting point for my analysis of stylistic change, which has been carried out in two stages both for methodological reasons and facility in reporting the data. In the first stage I analyze how vessel form has changed during the chosen period; in the second, I consider the changes in

decoration. Besides form and decoration, vessel size, glaze, and color as well as possible words incised on surfaces and lightness / heaviness have been considered as distinctive features of style.

The form of a vessel has been considered to be made up of elements that are always, or nearly always, present and that constitute its body: the stand, base, shoulders, neck, rim, and lip, to which have to be added collateral elements such as handles and spouts. According to their characteristics and combination, these elements determine a particular type of vessel, analyzed both independently and in relation to others. Variation over the years has been considered to be indicative of the formal change undergone by each type of vessel.

Following the long tradition of formal analysis--established by Boas (1927) and expanded more recently by Shepard (1956), Mead (1973), Washburn (1978, 1983) and others, mainly under the influence of its success in linguistics and semiotics--decoration has been considered to be a cognitive system or body of organized knowledge that underlies a particular style. This cognitive system has been conceived in terms of four components shared by all decorative art styles: (1) a definition of the decorative problem, (2) the basic units of decoration, (3) a set of techniques through which the basic units acquire a visual reality, and (4) a set of rules governing the use of basic units in solving the decorative problem.

The starting point for this study was the easily accessible Fiji Museum collection. A small percentage of these vessels date back to the last three decades of the nineteenth century, with the remainder manufactured from 1930 onward. This iconographic material has been enriched and supplemented with pictures of specimens belonging to the collections of Sir Arthur Gordon, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, and Captain John Magrunder and with Miss Constance Gordon-Cumming's and Baron von Hugel's drawings.[1] These collections consist of datable, localized, and particularly representative specimens. They were assembled in a crucial moment of Fiji's history--Wilkes's and Magrunder's collections were made when the first European settlements and missions were installed, the other three when the colonial state power was established--by people deeply interested in local artifacts and competing to have the very best of them.

My own drawings and pictures of vessels manufactured a short time before and during my 1986-1987 stay in the present-day pottery centers complete the documentation. The analysis of the decorative system is also based upon field-note records of decoration while it was being carried out and descriptions from several potters themselves. In consequence, the analysis does not depend only upon formal comparison of representative products; it has also benefited from the complementary joining of my observa-

tions with potters' verbal information. Observation of the ordered steps followed in decorating vessels provided information about structural relations among the various components of decoration. Potters' own statements have provided important clues on how the basic decorative problem is defined and solved.

Typologies and Changes in Form

The main vessel types produced in Fiji in historic times include cooking pots ***(kuro)*** for cooking taro, yams, and so forth ***(kakana dina,*** "true food") and the smaller ***i vakariri*** for cooking meat and vegetables ***(i coi,*** the relish). The second large group is of water and drinking vessels ***(saqa),*** kava bowls, and dishes. The form of each type exhibits a certain degree of standardization and, in general, is consistent with the vessel's practical function. Cooking pots are invariably oval-shaped and wide-mouthed. Two to six of them usually rested on hollow earthenware stands ***(sue)*** used in groups of three, placed in a shallow, rectangular, hardwood-bounded hearth dug in a corner of a dwelling. Water was poured into a pot set with its axis at an angle to the horizontal, food was added, and when the pot began to "sing," its mouth was plugged with a wad of leaves and the food steamed within. Drinking vessels, usually with one or more spouts, vary in form from the symmetrical round or oval shape to bizarre imitations of bunches of fruit, sperm whale's teeth, canoe hulls, turtles, or even combinations of these. Regardless of form, drinking vessels were held high at arm's length and tilted until water streamed down the spout into the drinkers mouth, a practice dictated by a reluctance of Fijians to touch a vessel with their mouths, with the exception of the chiefs, whose drinking vessels were taboo (see Wilkes 1985:349). Vessels used for water carrying and storage were larger and lacked the spouts.

Fijian potters use the general term ***i bulibuli*** (form) in referring to a certain formal configuration, but they also use a particular term for each type of vessel. A description of these vessel types accompanied by the related local term and remarks on changes that have occurred is given below for each pottery center.

Nasilai

Nasilai is a small fishing village near the mouth of the Rewa River, southeast Viti Levu. Thriving until a few years ago, pottery making is now in decline. Although there are nineteen potters and six girls who are learning how to shape small vessels, only four of them continue to work sporadically to fill orders from acquaintances or the Government Handicraft Centre of Suva.

Moreover, certain traditional vessels are no longer made and only a few potters know their names and shapes.

Kuro (Fig. 1, a). It has an oval-shaped body with a concave rim and a rounded lip.

Vakariri (Fig. 1, b-c). Its body can be spherical (Fig. 1, b) or carinated (Fig. 1, c), with or without a pouring spout ***(gaga)*** and a very out-turned rim ***(gusu cevaka).***

Drua vakariri (Fig. 1, d-e). Made up of two equal bowls ***(drua,*** twins),

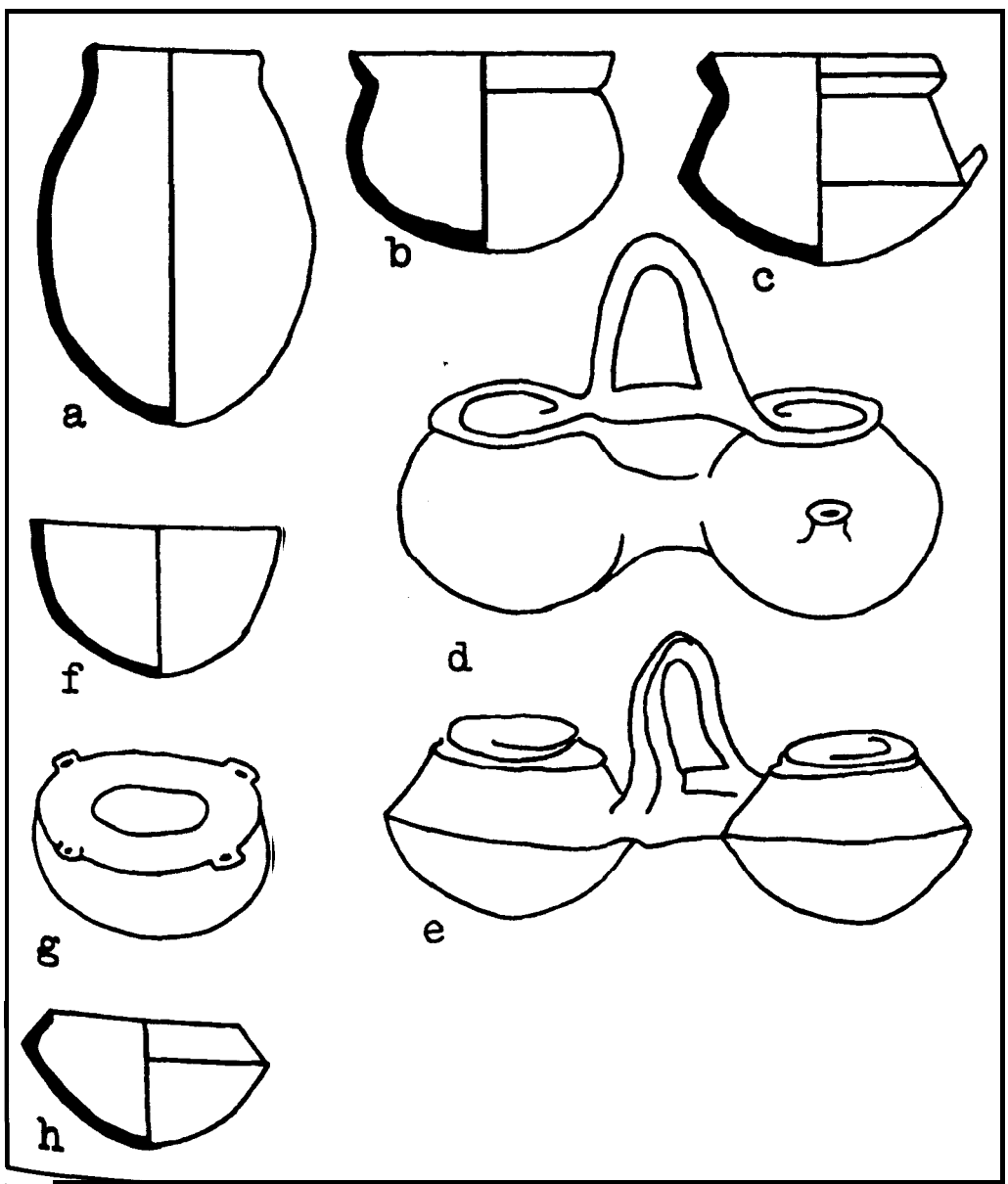

FIGURE 1. Vessels no longer made in Nasilai: *a-e,* cooking pots; *f, yaqona* cup; *g,* bowl; *h,* finger bowl.

these can be spherical (Fig. 1, d) or carinated (Fig. 1, e). The bowls are joined by a single or double central element and a handle attached to the rims or to the element of junction. A pouring spout can be found halfway up the bowls; the rims are usually very out-turned or straight with flanges on the exterior surface.

Takitaki ni wai. A ***drua vakariri*** similar to Figure 1d was recognized by some potters to be a ***takitaki ni wai,*** while Figure 1e was termed a ***drua vakariri.*** The cause of this differentiation in terminology seems to by the presence of the spout, which determines the different function of the vessel: the ***takitaki ni wai*** was used to carry water from river to house and then to pour it into suitable drinking containers. Maybe pots like that in Figure 1d were also used to cook fish, whose broth could easily be drunk from the spouts.

Saqa sokisoki. A water container in the shape of a ballfish ***(soki),*** the form of the vessel was spherical.

Kituqele (Fig. 1, f). A cup in the shape of a half shell of ripe, husked coconut, it was used to drink ***yaqona,***[2] an infusion from the pounded dried roots of the shrub ***Piper methysticum.***

Mamaroi ni bulagi (Fig. 1, g). A bowl, the upper part of which is turned in almost horizontally. Along the carination are small projections with holes to which were tied strings of hibiscus coir to hang the bowl from the house poles for keeping leftover food.

Vuluvulu (Fig. 1, h). In form, the bowl in Figure 1g is a variant of ***vuluvulu,*** a carinated covered bowl with a central aperture and a lesser, inward-sloping rim showing a flat, vertical lip. Once ***vuluvulu*** were filled with water to wash fingers after meals; today they are no longer used, but miniature variants with flat bases are manufactured as ashtrays for the tourist market.

Saqa dina (Fig. 2). When still used as water containers, these were manufactured in two different forms prescribed by the observance of rank distinctions. ***Saqa dina*** manufactured for common people had an oval-shaped body (Fig. 2, a), while those for chiefs were carinated (Fig. 2, b). The rims can be concave with a rounded or flat, oblique to the exterior or interior lip ***(gusu tareba),*** straight with a flat, horizontal lip ***(gusu dodonu),*** or straight with ridges on the exterior surface. No particular relationship seems to bind one type of rim to one type of ***saqa dina.*** The shoulders of the vessel in Figure 2c get narrower in a straight line, losing the softness and slenderness of the shoulder profile of the older specimen drawn by Baron von Hugel (Fig. 2, b). Replicas of the vessel in Figure 2c, smaller in size and with a flat base, are very common today. Vessels contemporary with the one in Figure 2a show a more spherical body. Both the spherical and oval forms are peculiar to ***saqa dina*** dating back to the mid-1800s and to the first three decades

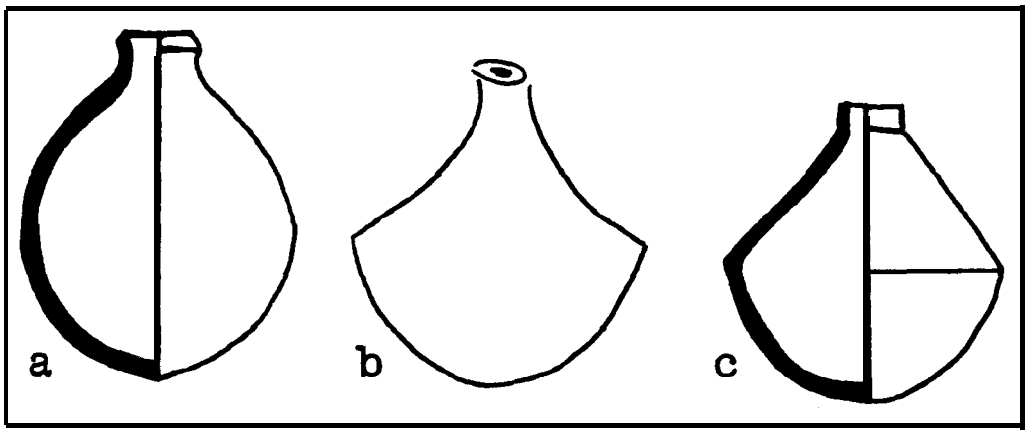

FIGURE 2. ***Saqa dina*** **(water containers), Nasilai.**

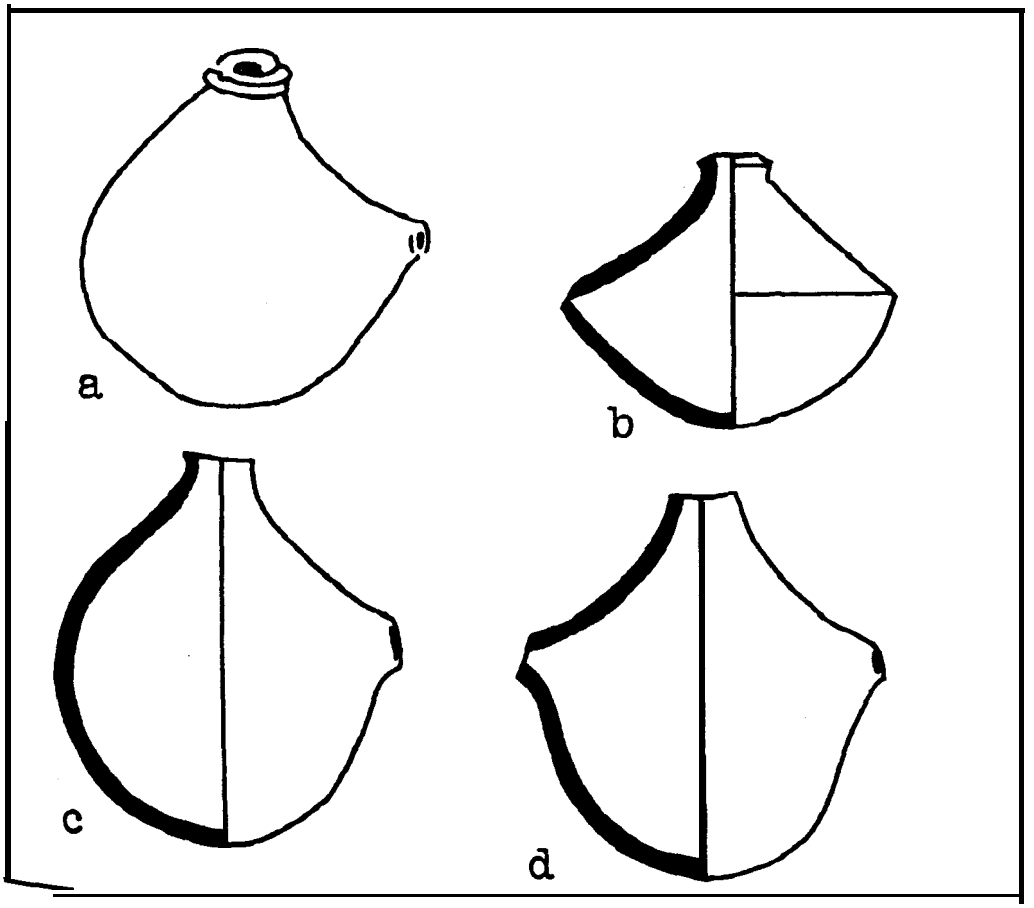

FIGURE 3. ***Gusu i rua, gusu i tolu*** **(many-mouthed drinking-water vessels), Nasilai.**

of the present century, but it seems that the spherical form is older, for the oval form becomes more and more recurrent in vessels manufactured recently. Vessels showing a very elongated form and a flat base, and small-scale replicas of such, are common today.

Gusu i rua-tolu-lima (Fig. 3). One or more pouring spouts can be found halfway up the body of some specimens of drinking-water vessels similar in form to ***saqa dina*** (Fig. 3, a). According to the number of spouts, these vessels are called ***gusu i rua (gusu,*** mouth; ***rua,*** two) or ***gusu i tolu (tolu,*** three). Nasilai potters use the same terms for the vessels in Figures 3c and 3d, which show an oval body and side rims replacing the side spouts, and state that they are a traditional type of vessel; overlooking the formal differences, the potters assimilate them to the type in Figure 3a. This type was already manufactured in 1840, it has been documented, and over the years the form must have slightly changed (Fig. 3, b). In contrast, specimens of types in Figures 3c and 3d are not traceable in museum collections. In spite of other potters' denial, potter Salote must be right in stating that Veniana Tosoqo-soqo started their manufacture about ten years ago. It is said that vessels with five apertures ***(gusu i lima),*** one at the top and four at the side, can be shaped but vessels with a central aperture and three at the side cannot. Multiple side apertures are always placed symmetrically to achieve a visual balancing, which is impossible with three apertures.

Gunugunu (Fig. 4). Drinking-water vessels of this type dating back to the last decades of the nineteenth century show the following features (Fig. 4, a): (1) although the form of the body is roundish, it is not perfectly spherical; the shoulder line is marked and the upper section of the body slopes slightly inward, creating a triangular figure whose apex is a little handle; (2) the handle is invariably made up of one or more arms with a large knob or hole at the top; (3) the filling hole at the base of the handle is small and is not encircled by a rim; and (4) the size is small. The vessel in Figure 4b exhibits all these features except one: the handle has been replaced with a small, roundish knob. Figure 4c shows a more spherical body and a stand imitating European items. In the opinion of the potter who shaped it, the ***gunugunu*** in Figure 4d respects the traditional style, but in effect it is the one departing most from it. The body is perfectly spherical; a straight rim with a flat, horizontal lip replaces the traditional pouring spout; the handle is no longer made up of two or more flattened arms to which applied knobs give the appearance of a starfish but of a long and thick cord of clay; and the hole at the base of the handle is encircled with a short, straight rim with a wide, flat, horizontal lip.

Kitu (Figure 5). Used on canoes during sea voyages, this vessel has a very

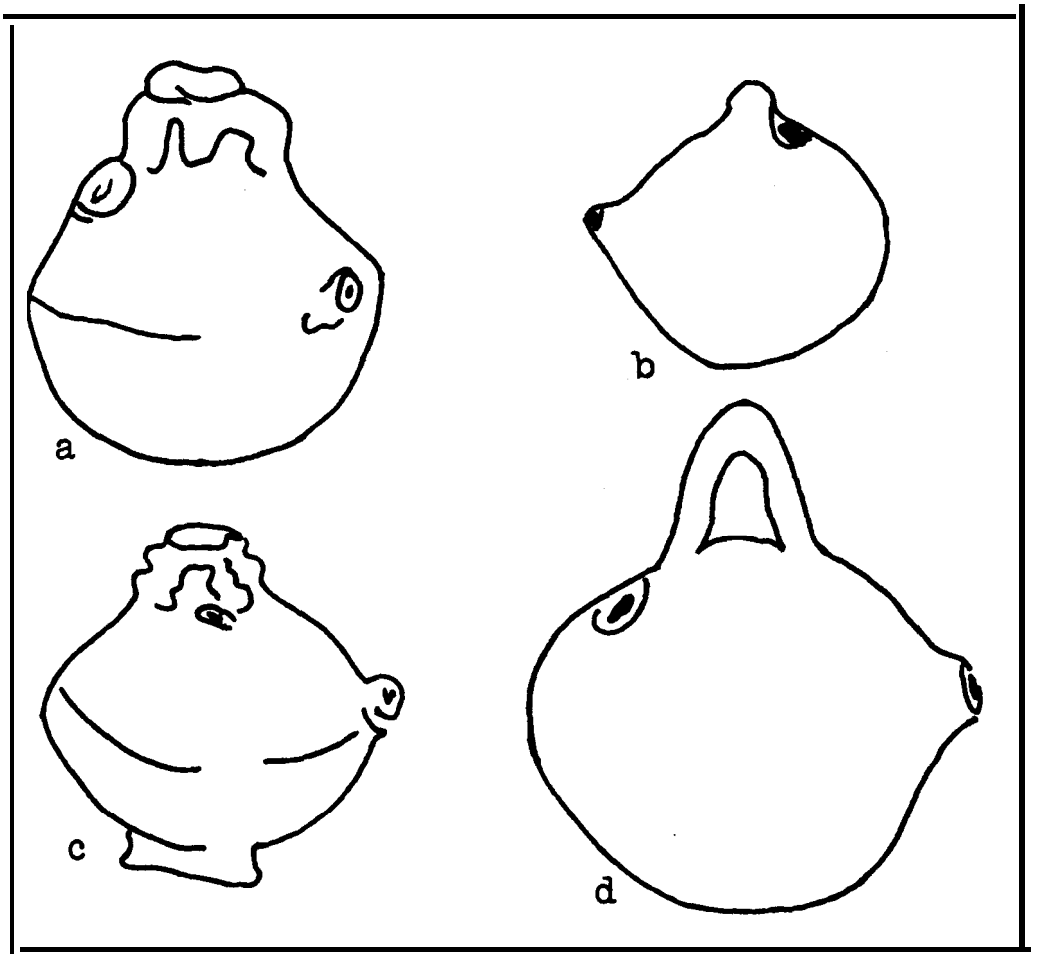

FIGURE 4. ***Gunugunu*** **(drinking-water vessels), Nasilai.**

bellied oval or spherical body a rim surrounded with a multiarmed handle at the top, and one or more pouring spouts halfway up the body (Fig. 5, a). Hung by the handle ***kitu*** had the dual function of containing water and, being slightly sloped, allowing it to pour through one of the spouts into a drinker's mouth. Dating back to the first three decades of this century, another vessel differs from older ones in having a stand (Fig. 5, b), while ***kitu*** manufactured in 1986 (Fig. 5, c-d) differ in the oval form of their bodies and the unusual shape and size of their handles.

Saqa ikabula (Fig. 6). A turtle-shaped vessel ***(ikabula,*** turtle), these have a filling hole at the base of the "head" while the "tail" end acts as a pouring spout (Fig. 6 a). This type of vessel can be single or double. If double, the two units are joined side by side with a connecting pipe and a handle arches across them (Fig. 6, b). One of the two units is usually shaped in the form of a sperm whale's tooth ***(tabua).***

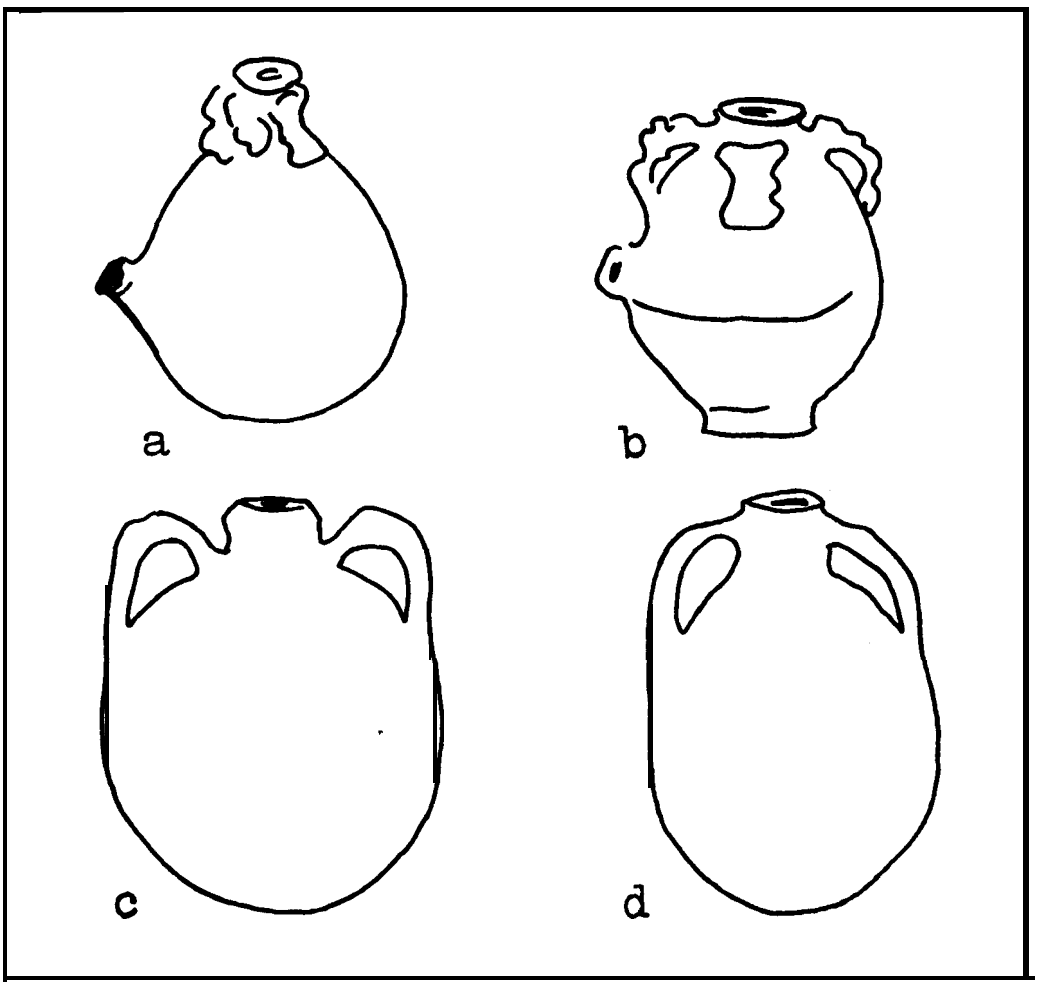

FIGURE 5. *Kitu* (drinking-water vessels), Nasilai.

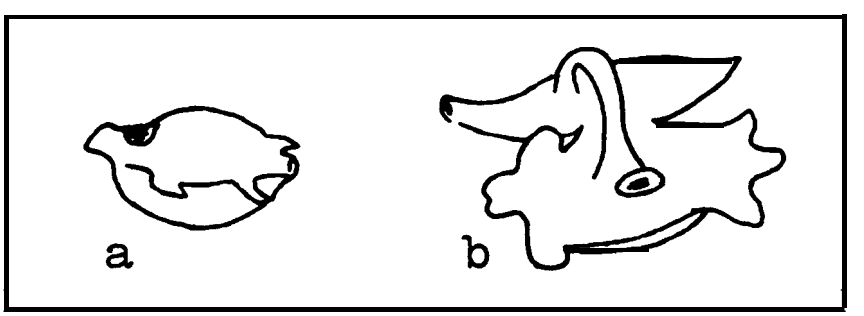

FIGURE 6. *Saqa ikabula* (drinking-water vessels), Nasilai.

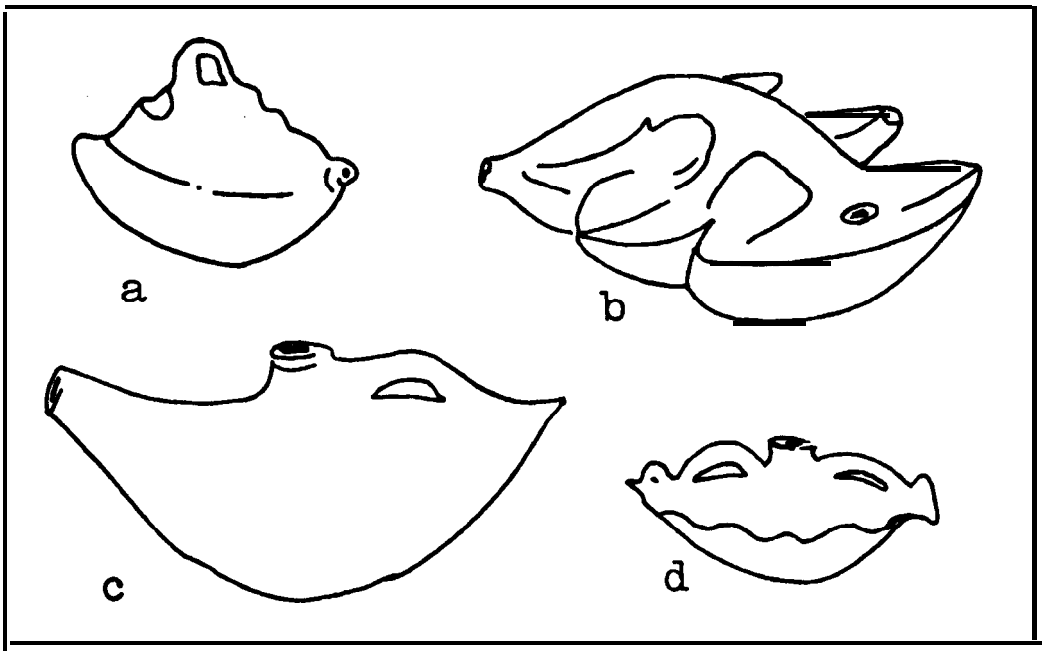

FIGURE 7. ***Saqa tabua*** **(drinking-water vessels), Nasilai.**

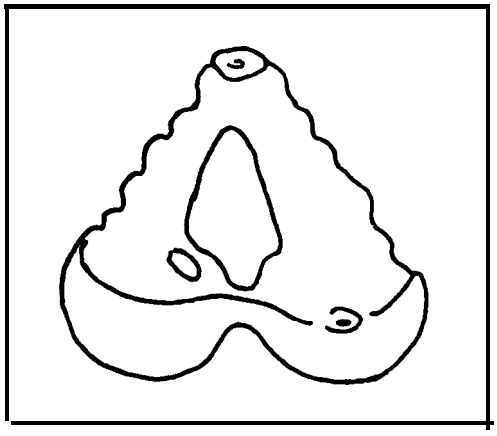

FIGURE 8. ***Saqa moli*** **(drinking-water vessel), Nasilai.**

Saqa tabua (Fig. 7). A drinking-water vessel (Fig. 7, a) that can, as stated above, be joined to a ***saqa ikabula*** or to one or more intercommunicating units of the same type (Fig. 7, b). Figure 7c shows a ***saqa tabua*** with a central aperture and a side one; the former is never found in older specimens while the latter replaces the small pouring spout. A handle has been attached to the side of the central aperture The vessel in Figure 7d is even more different from the traditional type: handles have been placed on both sides of a central spout and a bird's head has replaced the side spout while a tail has been modeled at the opposite extremity.

Saqa moli (Fig. 8). A drinking-water vessel in the shape of a bunch of

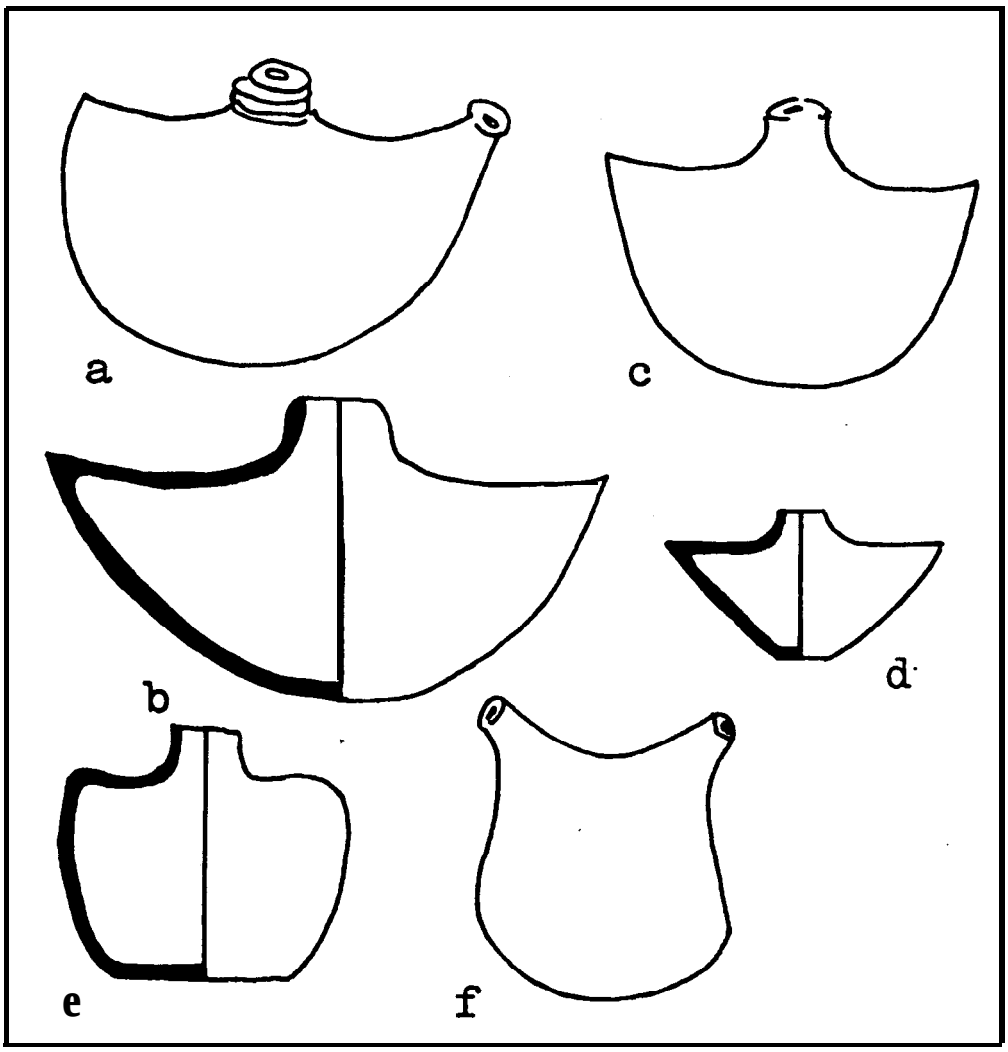

FIGURE 9. ***Mua i rua*** **(drinking-water vessels), Nasilai.**

citrus-type fruit, it consists of two or more spherical, intercommunicating units. A handle, attached at the top of each unit, arches to an apical joint, the top of which is perforated by a round hole or can bear an applied cylindrical knob. A hole is made at the base of the handle while a spout is applied halfway up the body of one or more units.

Mua i rua (Fig. 9). This drinking-water vessel is shaped in the form of the half moon ***(mua,*** tip) (Fig. 9, a). Compared with the traditional design, the most evident change seems to be the loss of the side spout (Fig. 9, b-c). The vessel in Figure 9d is much smaller; moreover, its base is flat and the shoulder line is horizontal. The form of the vessel in Figure 9b is more flattened and elongated than that of older specimens; the shape seems more exactly like a half moon. In contrast, this relationship relaxes (Fig. 9, e) and vanishes

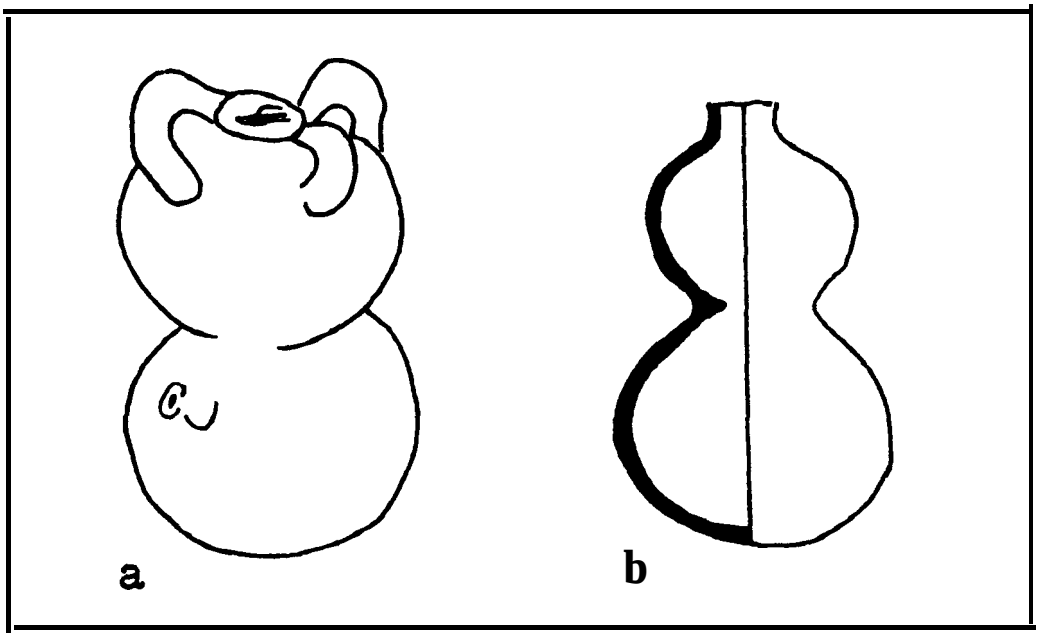

FIGURE 10. ***Tagua rua*** **(drinking-water vessels), Nasilai.**

(Fig. 9, f). The vessel in Figure 9e is square-bodied instead of hemispherical, its base is flat, and its walls rise almost vertically. Another vessel shows an elongated form with its upper section transformed into two side rims (Fig. 9, f).

Tagau rua (Fig. 10). This vessel is made up of two spherical, communicating units placed one upon the other. There is an apical aperture, a pouring spout halfway up the lower unit, and multiple handles attached between the aperture and the upper section of the body (Fig. 10, a). A version of this rare type of vessel, modeled in 1986 by Seru Tosoqosoqo, lacks handle or spout (Fig. 10, b); moreover, the two units differ in size.

Tagau rua as well as carinated ***saqa dina, saqa tubua, saqa moli,*** and ***saqa ikabula*** were chiefly vessels. During the 1800s, ***saqa ikabula*** and ***saqa moli*** in particular were popular in chiefly households in Rewa and Bau, the latter being supplied with earthenware by the former. Gordon-Cumming recorded the favor they found and left us the first drawing of a fruit bunch-shaped vessel (1881:246), while a drawing from the U.S. Exploring Expedition shows single and double ***saqa tabua*** (Wilkes 1985:138). My informants say that turtle- and ***tabua***-shaped vessels were intended for chiefs--turtles and ***tabua*** are in effect male valuables--while fruit bunch-shaped ones were made for women of high rank.

Ramarama (Fig. 11). Once used as an oil lamp, this vessel is a covered-over bowl with a well-marked shoulder angle; its central, narrow aperture

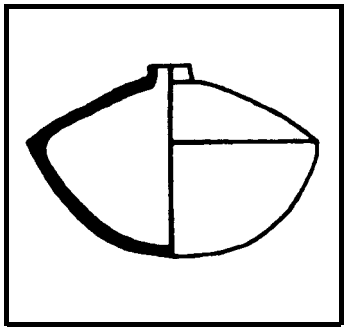

FIGURE 11. ***Ramarama* (oil lamp), Nasilai**

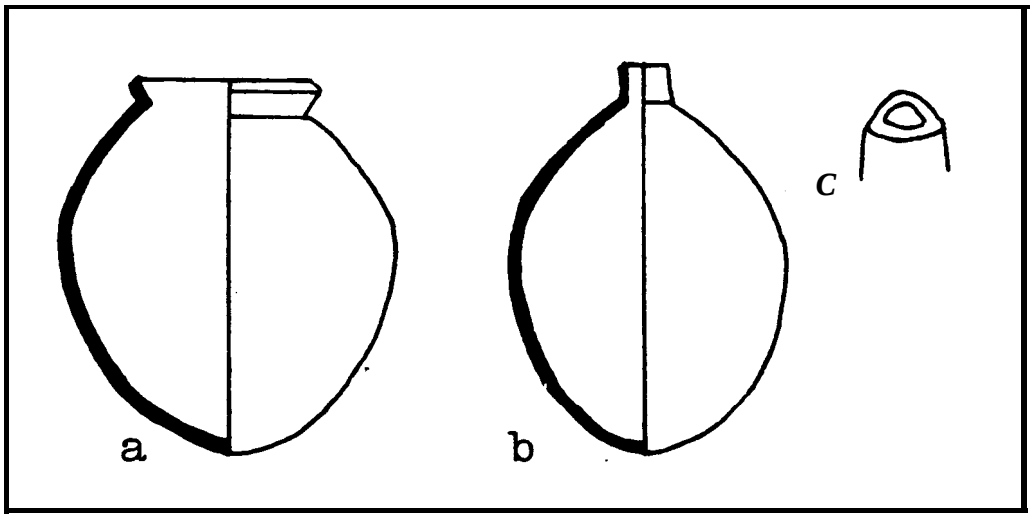

FIGURE 12. ***Kuro* (cooking pots), lower Sigatoka Valley.**

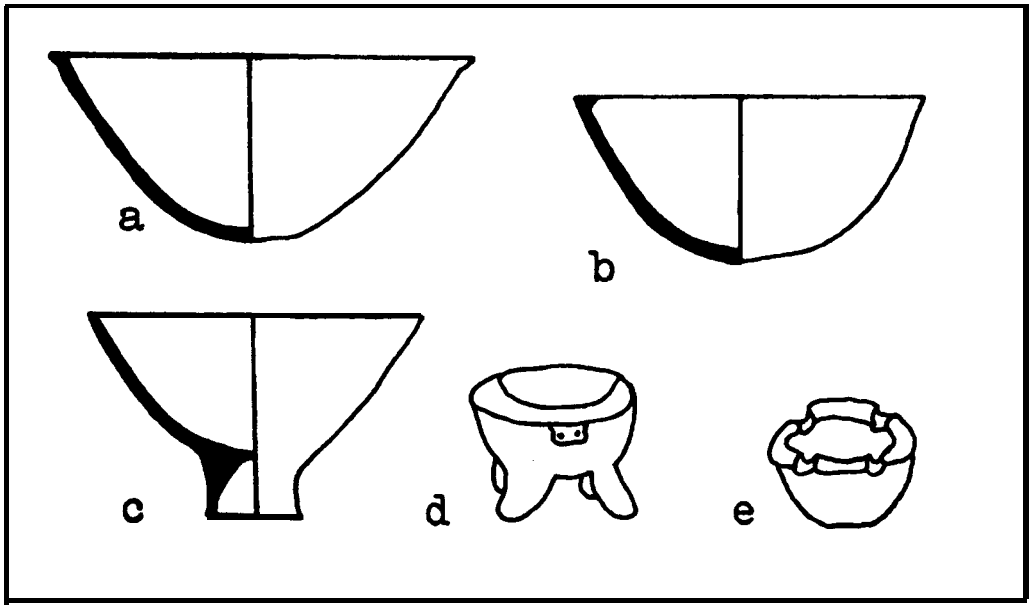

FIGURE 13. ***Dari (yaqona* bowls), lower Sigatoka Valley.**

shows a straight rim with a flat, horizontal lip. The potters maintain that this oil lamp is a Nasilai traditional vessel; according to them, after a very long period of interruption, its manufacture was resumed about 1984 by Veniana Tosoqosoqo, at that time working at the Cultural Centre of Deuba, Pacific Harbour, Suva. Having seen drawings of this type of oil lamp in a publication and having gone vainly to Gau island in search of it, the manager of the center asked Tosoqosoqo to reproduce it, and on returning to Nasilai she did so. The publication was undoubtedly ***Domodomo*** (1983, no. 1); three oil lamps, one from Gau, are drawn on page 160. They are much smaller in size than those manufactured in Nasilai now but are similar in form.

Modern. Production of a completely new type of pottery has been added to the traditional forms and variants. The new pottery consists of vessels that imitate Western items or elements of the local environment. Characteristics of all of the new forms are small size and a linearity of the resting planes achieved by flat bases, stands, and slab supports.

Lower Sigatoka Valley

Eight pottery centers are located along the lower reaches of the Sigatoka River, southwest Viti Levu. Two of them, Laselase and Vunavutu, are inactive now. A similar fate is imminent for Nasama and Nasigatoka, where only a few old potters remain: three in the former, four in the latter. In contrast, a revival of pottery activity has been taking place over the last few years in Yavulo, Nayawa, Nakabuta, and Lawai. Nayawa and Laselase, on the eastern bank of the river, specialized in the manufacture of finger bowls ***(vuluvulu)*** and large ***yaqona*** bowls ***(dari),*** while Yavulo and Nasigatoka, on the opposite bank, manufactured cooking pots ***(kuro).*** Through marriages the manufacture of cooking pots spread to Nakabuta and Lawai, and the manufacture of bowls to Vunavutu, Nakabuta, and Lawai in about 1950. In accordance with this pattern of diffusion, the pottery production of the area shows a certain degree of formal homogeneity.

Kuro (Fig. 12). The body is oval shaped and the rim is concave with a flat, oblique to the exterior lip (Fig. 12, a). Compared with the traditional form, the pot in Figure 12b has a different oval body, which goes with the narrowing of the aperture and the unusual verticality and height of the rim. Figure 12c shows a rim of another pot having the same form as that of the Figure 12b pot; this rim has the atypical features of that one and in addition a triangular mouth. Replicas of the pot in Figure 12b, made on a smaller scale with a flat base and a pouting lip, are common today

Dari (Fig. 13). This is an open bowl with a wide, flat, horizontal lip whose edges protrude both inward and outward (Fig. 13, a). A bowl manufactured

in Nasama (Fig. 13, b) differs from the traditional type by a slight flattening of its base and in the outer edge of the lip, which does not protrude outward. The bowl in Figure 13c is supplied with a high stand that is nothing more than a smaller, upside-down bowl. Another bowl imitates a ***tanoa*** (Fig. 13, d), the huge wooden ***yaqona*** bowl introduced from Tonga and Samoa in the 1700s and in widespread use in eastern Fiji. The bowl in Figure 13e has nothing in common with a ***dari,*** although the ***dari*** has been the Sigatoka potters' starting point for its creation. The base has become flat and the lip has lost the edges protruding inward and outward. The lips of some specimens have been notched at four equidistant points, as for cigarette rests, while two holes have been made below the lip of others to hang them as flower vases.

Vuluvulu (see Fig. 1, h). Bowls with flat bases and scalloped or notched lips are very common today.

Nontraditional (Fig. 14). A remarkable proliferation of pottery forms whose origin cannot be absolutely traced back to the traditional typology has been recorded in Lawai, Nakabuta, and, to a lesser degree, in Yavulo and Nayawa. Like the nontraditional objects of Nasilai, this pottery is of poor artistic quality but deserves attention since it constitutes the bulk of pottery manufactured today. Very common are small objects in the shape of animals, whose manufacture has been inspired by illustrations of the turtle-shaped vessels of the Ra, Tailevu, and Rewa areas. Worth noting is the difference in some element of form among objects of this group, resulting in many variants of the duck, pig, and turtle shapes (Fig. 14, a-c). In these villages as well as in Nasilai, the traditional Fijian house ***(bure)*** has also supplied a model for the potters, but ceramic Sigatoka ***bure*** (Fig. 14, d) cannot be considered a faithful copy of the real model. Masks, shaped in imitation of the carved wooden ones sold at the Sigatoka town market,[3] are constructed of slightly curved slabs (Fig. 14, e). They assume a variety of shapes ranging from oval to the roundish, rectangular, or square. The pierced eyes and the applied eyebrows, noses, and mouths differ considerably in shape as well. Some water containers are copies of the fruit bunch-shaped vessels of Nasilai; they have been derived from illustrations and differ from their models. The bases of the bowls are flat, the spouts have been replaced with wide holes made at the base of the handle and encircled with a high lip, the handles are flat and wide, and the connecting pipe between the two units is disproportionately long and wide (Fig. 14, f). Vessels with two or three rims, manufactured by Loma Mate of Nasilai for the Cultural Centre of Deuba, are a starting point for vessels with multiple rims manufactured by Leone Matalou of Lawai. The formal differences between copies and model are again greater than the similarities. The base of Lawai vessels is flat, the

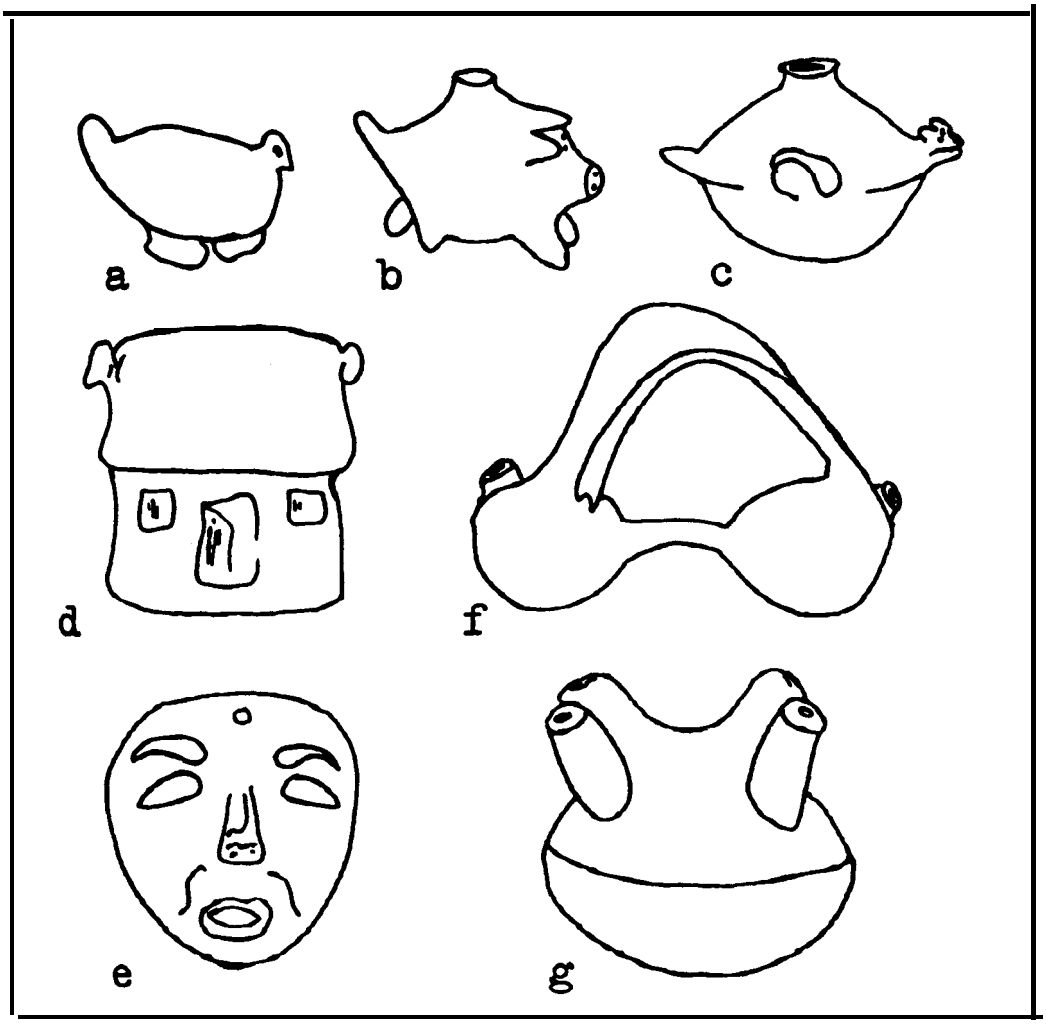

FIGURE 14. **Nontraditional pottery, lower Sigatoka Valley: *a-c,* zoomorphic objects; *d,* Fijian traditional house *(bure); e,* mask; *f-g,* drinking-water vessels.**

shoulder angle is marked and the upper section of the body shows very long, straight rims. Vessels with four apertures, which are not made in Nasilai because they violate the traditional rule of symmetry, are made in Lawai by pairing the four apertures and eliminating the central one (Fig. 14, g).

Yanuya

On this isolated island in the Mamanuca group, off the northwest coast of Viti Levu, only four old potters remain. They undertake work rather seldom, when they receive an order or some tourist arrives on the island to observe the Processes of making pottery. Six types of vessels are made.

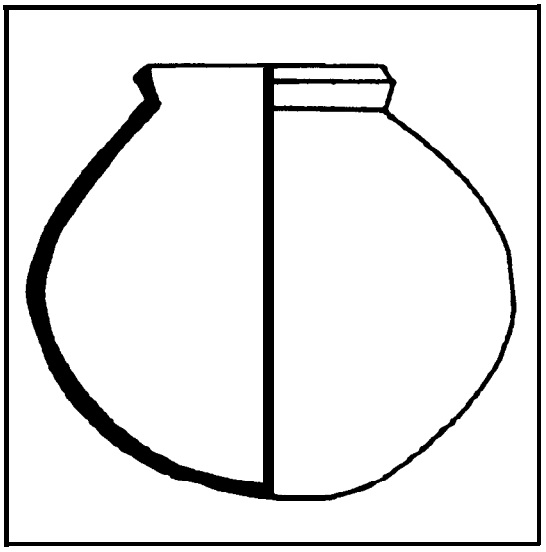

FIGURE 15. *Kuro* (cooking pot). Yanuya.

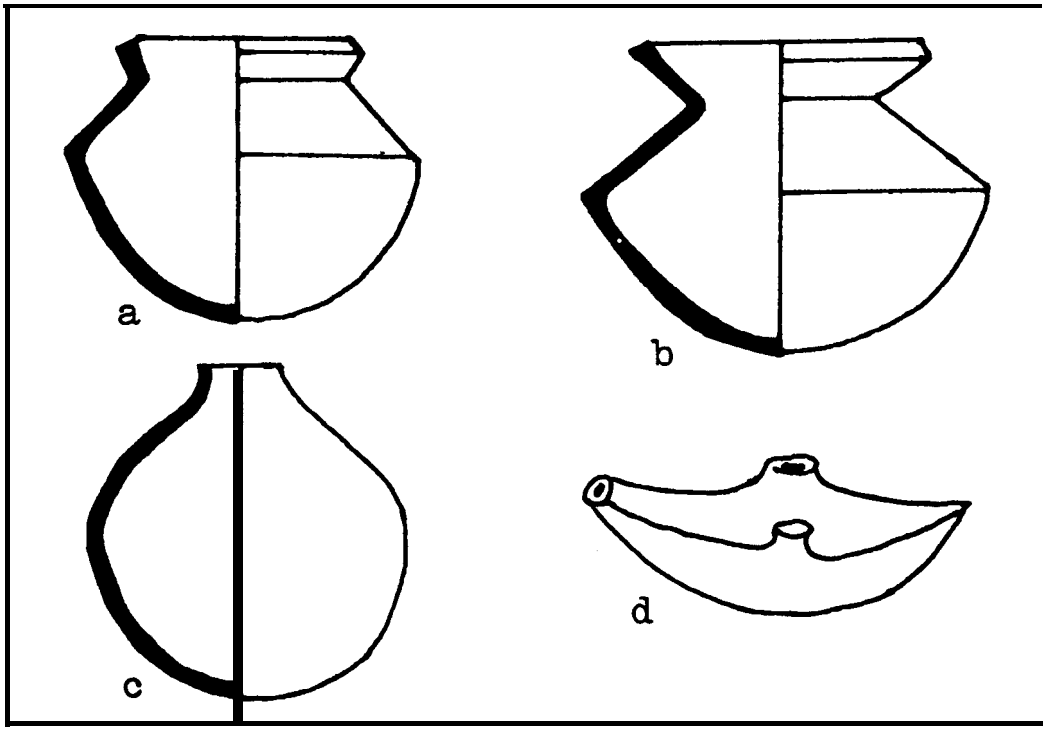

FIGURE 16. Other pottery forms, Yanuya: *a-b, sira* (cooking pots); *c, cubu* (water container); *d, saqa tabua* (drinking-water vessel).

Kuro (Fig. 15). The traditional type has a perfectly spherical body, a concave rim, and a flat, oblique to the exterior lip. More recent pots have a flat base or a more oval body; some show a pouring lip.

Sira, sira deledele (Fig. 16, a-b). This carinated cooking pot for fish and vegetables has a concave rim and a flat, oblique to the exterior lip. The rim

can have two different inclinations, which determine the name of the pot: when the rim has a lesser inclination, the pot is called ***sira deledele.*** Present-day specimens are smaller than traditional vessels.

Cubu (Fig. 16, c). This is a water container with a spherical body; the rim is concave with a flat, horizontal lip. Again, present-day specimens are smaller than older ones.

Saqa tabua (Fig. 16, d). This is a drinking-water vessel in the shape of a sperm whale's tooth. It has a small straight rim, a flat horizontal lip, and a side spout. It differs from the ***saqa tabua*** manufactured in the Ra, Rewa, and Tailevu areas in the marked shoulder angle: the upper section of the body is almost normal to the base axis. Moreover, neither the central rim nor the two cylindrical knobs placed along the carination on both sides of the vessel are typical of ***saqa tabua*** of other areas.

Dari ni vuluvulu (see Fig. 1, h). The rim of many contemporary specimens is scalloped.

The Decorative System and Changes in Decoration

The forms of traditional Fijian vessels are limited in number, and prescriptions dictate they remain unchanged. In contrast, decoration ***(kanukanu)*** must vary from vessel to vessel and, in effect, presents a wide range of variability A potter is forbidden to copy the decoration of another potter and held in low esteem if she does so. As a proof of this, I have not found two vessels of the same type manufactured in the same area that were decorated in exactly the same way. This characteristic, together with a great artistic sensitivity and a good level of technical quality, was also noted with wonder by Europeans who visited the Fiji islands in the mid-1800s (see Williams [1884] 1982:59; Gordon-Cumming 1881:245; MacDonald 1885: 1). However, it is apparent that the decorative variety prescribed to, and shown by, Fijian pottery is not the result of a casual way of proceeding.

Decoration cannot be carried out at random ***(vakaveitalia)*** but, as the Potters state, it must be "thought about" ***(vakasamataka).*** Respect for a scheme that is rigid in theory but flexible in practice is required. The scheme is revealed through a series of fixed technical acts that, once learned and mastered, are performed almost automatically The potters know exactly what type of vessel they are about to shape and how to shape it. In contrast, decoration is a structured process that, on one hand, makes possible the realization of numerous alternatives and on the other, requires respect for the rules governing the stylistic tradition of each pottery center. As I said above, decoration is sustained by a system through which a particular style is produced. This system provides the potters with a means of organizing the

elements needed to create decoration in that style. Now I consider the components that constitute the system and point out changes that have occurred.

The Decorative Problem

Basically, the decorative problem concerns the relation between the form of a vessel and its decoration. To solve the decorative problem, the area to be decorated must first be defined, then a basic procedure for building up decoration must be established.

With the exceptions of certain specimens of ***i vakariri*** from Nasilai and of ***kuro*** and ***sira*** from Yanuya that show thin parallel hatches impressed around their lips, cooking pots were not decorated. Soot accumulation through continual use would inevitably hide any embellishment. In contrast, water containers, drinking vessels, and bowls were decorated. Water and drinking vessels have their surfaces subdivided into two clearly distinct areas, one the lower half of the vessel, which is always plain, and the other the upper half, which is decorated. According to today's potters, this subdivision is imposed by technical and practical factors. When the vessel is molded and decoration started, the lower surface is already too dry. In this condition decoration by impression or incision is impossible, while an applied decoration does not stick perfectly and will sooner or later come off. Moreover, during the molding and soon after, the vessels are handled by the base. Specimens of ***kituqele*** from Nasilai with completely decorated surfaces are an exception, as are certain specimens of ***kituqele*** and other types of open bowls, such as ***vuluvulu*** and ***dari,*** which have smaller than usual decorated areas. Decoration is restricted to a narrow zone below the lip in ***kituqele,*** to the rim in ***vuluvulu,*** and to the lip in ***dari.***

Sections can be distinguished within the decorated area of all the old vessels and of some more-recent specimens from Nasilai. These sections occupy fixed portions of the surface and accomplish different visual functions, which are stressed both by the decorative units used and their combination. First, a narrow section (which I will hereafter call section A) can be isolated between the decorated area and the plain one; on shouldered vessels this section always coincides with carination. It is made up of single or multiple decorative bands--if multiple, the bands are arranged in a field--and has the double function of framing the decorated area and separating it from the plain portion. A wide central section (hereafter called section B) follows; this is the section on which the viewer's attention is usually focused. On the majority of vessels this section is subdivided into several

horizontal, vertical, or oblique decorative fields. On other specimens section B appears as a single field. A third decorative section (hereafter designated section C) can be distinguished on handles and rims. The portion of the handle's surface that is decorated is the upper one, treated as a single field. Two decorative bands often define this section; the bands usually lie along the curvature of the handle and frame an intermediate band. On the rims of water containers and ***i vakariri,*** decoration is nearly always placed on the lip.

Basic procedures are followed in decorating a vessel. Work proceeds from the lower to the upper part and, in the case of a circular area, from left to right. If the decorated area extends onto two faces, the decoration of one face is generally completed first, then the vessel is turned and the other face finished; otherwise, partial decoration of both faces is undertaken alternately. Two procedures have been recorded regarding the arrangement of fields and bands in the decorated area. Almost all the potters build up decoration by delimiting a field and filling it, and so on, until the decorated area is completed. Potter Seru Tosoqosoqo of Nasilai plans the decoration of his vessels in a more systematic way.[4] In the first phase, he divides the decorated area into fields by incising lines with a knife. Halfway up the vessel, where the decoration will start, a string of hibiscus coir is carefully placed to guide the knife blade in incising the first line. Depending on the chosen decoration, one or more lines are then incised parallel or perpendicular to the first. The fields so delimited can be further divided by additional incised lines corresponding to future decorative bands. Having completed the ***toqa-toqa*** (marking, tracing) or arrangement of fields and bands, the potter starts decoration following the traditional process of delimiting and filling.

Decorative Techniques

Fijian potters execute decoration by incision, by impression, and by appliqué work and modeling. With the first technique the smoothed, leather-hard vessel surface is intaglioed with a pointed tool--usually a fine twig of a shrub ***(sasa)***--to obtain the desired hollow decoration. Impressed decoration is achieved by applying pressure with the dentate border of a shell ***(kani koli).*** For the applied technique, small pieces of clay are shaped with the fingers and stuck on the vessel surface, where they are further modeled. More than one technique is usually used in decorating a vessel, each potter being familiar with all of them.

Potters have their own preferences about the distinctive features of the tool used, for instance, its degree of thinness or sharpness, and select their twigs and shells with great care so as to achieve the desired effect, which can

range from a very fine incised or impressed sign with a sharp outline to a marked one opening at the edge. Besides shells and twigs, Nasilai potters have begun to use practically any tool that produces an adequate sign.

Basic Units of Decoration

Decorative elements, motifs, and configurations are the basic units of decoration, comprising visual complexes that represent a particular level of organization. A decorative element is the smallest self-contained component of decoration that is manipulated as a single unit. Motifs are formed by putting one or more decorative elements together in patterned ways. Decorative configurations are arrangements of motifs with sufficient complexity to fill a field. Defining the smallest units of decoration has been problematic; although they need not be the irreducible minimum of decoration, it becomes difficult to separate them from larger decorative units once they are conceived as composites. A way out of this difficulty has been to ask the potters themselves to identify the decorative units on portions of completed vessels. Their answers provided information about the terms used to describe the basic units of decoration as well.

The decorative units used by Fijian potters can be categorized as being either two-dimensional or three-dimensional. Two-dimensional decorative units are ultimately impressed or incised, three-dimensional ones are applied. Decorative units are distinguished also by their practical/visual functions: some are used only as "delimiters," some only as "fillers," others act as either delimiters or fillers, a few act as delimiters and fillers at the same time. Differing orientation of elements was not considered to be a distinguishing characteristic; elements that were similar but not perfectly identical were not distinguished whenever their differences appeared unintentional, the result of a potter's individual touch.

Figure 17 records and describes the decorative units (DUs) found on Nasilai pottery datable to between the second half of the last century and the first decades of the present one (circa 1850 to 1930); Figure 18 focuses on recent pottery.

In its present form, the rope motif (Fig. 18, DU 16), called ***dalidali,*** must be considered a development of a motif found on old specimens (Fig. 17, DU 26). DU 26 as well as DUs 19 and 27 (Fig. 17) were shaped by applying small pieces of clay one after the other and modeling them with the fingers to obtain a very thin band slightly in relief. This thin band is, in itself, a decorative unit (Fig. 17, DU 19), which was further elaborated with impressed and incised hatches (Fig. 17, DUs 26, 27). Nowadays the ***dalidali*** is created

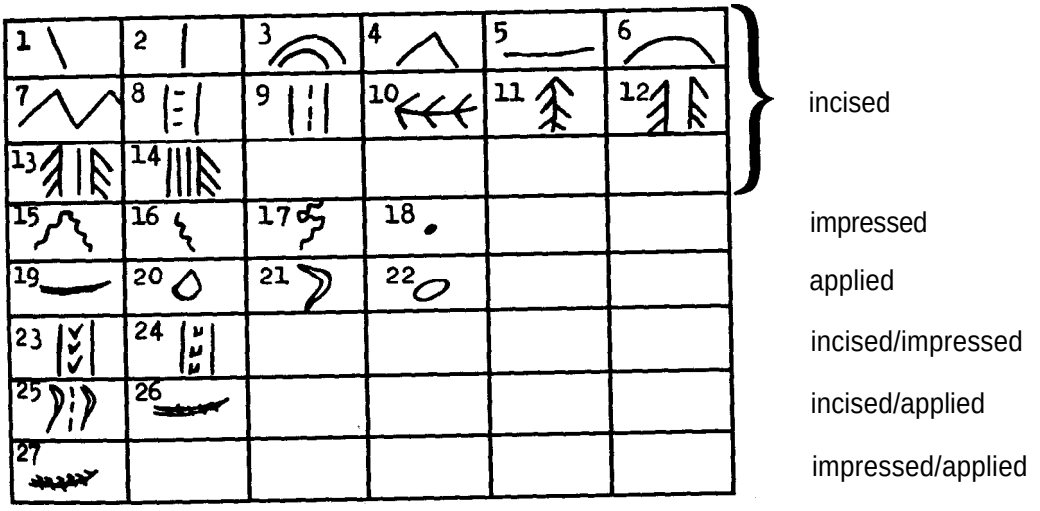

FIGURE 17. Decorative units used on Nasilai pottery circa 1850 to 1930.

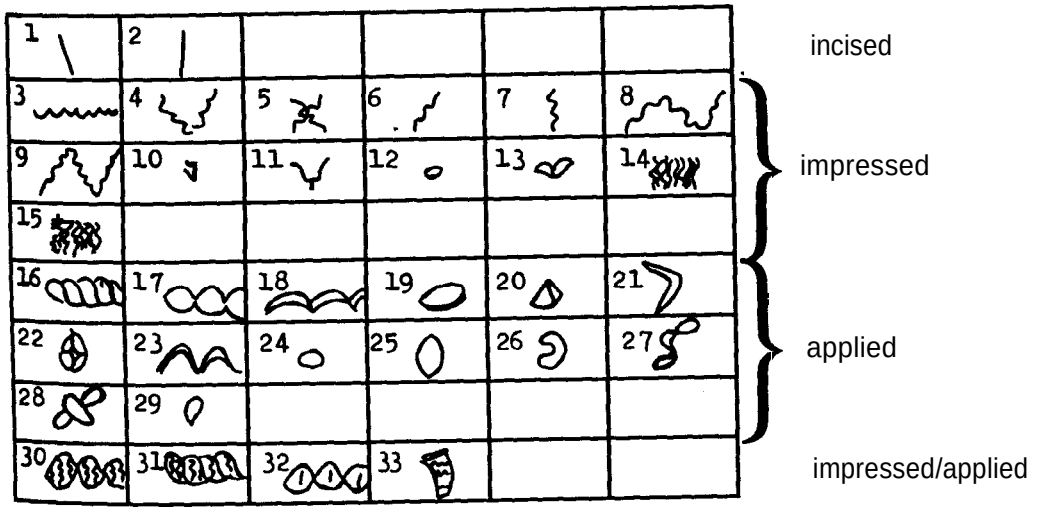

FIGURE 18. Decorative units used on present-day Nasilai pottery.

by applying and flattening a cord of clay; a thin reed ***(gasau)*** or the handle of a knife is then impressed transversely on the sharp edge of the wide band-

The forming of the ***wacodro*** or wave motif (Fig. 18, DU 17) is similar to that of the present-day ***dalidali,*** but the reed or knife handle is impressed vertically to the edge of the band. Both of these decorative units can be enriched with impressed hatches (Fig. 18, DUs 30, 31); if the ***wacodro*** is obtained by impressing the fingertip, the nail imprint is left (Fig. 18, DU 32).

In spite of differing techniques and visual effects, DU 14 (Fig. 18) is terminologically and functionally similar to a motif of incised, oblique hatches

that is found on old specimens (Fig. 17, DU 1 in continuous sequence). Both are called ***banika*** and appear in the same position in section A.

A traditional decorative unit considerably elaborated is the ***soki*** (Fig. 17, DU 20). In the present-day production the small, pointed knob assumes the form of a large tetrahedron (Fig. 18, DU 20). A change in function parallels the change in form: once it was a delimiter or a unit chiefly present in the delimitation section; now the ***soki*** is nearly always used as a filler.

Among modern decorative units (Fig. 18), DU 25 is a stylized banana bunch, while DU 29 is a stylized leaf. DU 12 had been created to replace buttons (Fig. 18, DU 24), which did not stick well on too-dry surfaces. DUs 10 to 14 have been obtained by impressing nontraditional tools on the vessel surface; in order, these are: the triangular end of a small iron bar, the side of a razor frame, the end of a razor handle, the grooved plug of a toothpaste tube, and two variants from a small, grooved plastic wheel.

Rules of Composition

Rules involve knowledge about how to use decoration in solving the decorative problem. Rules are of two types: one specifies the framework within which the basic units of decoration are to be used; the second type governs the occurrence of basic units. As already mentioned, a rigid rule of composition imposes the division of the vessel surface into two parts, only one of which is decorated. Another rule that can be considered rigid, limited to the past Nasilai production, forces division of the decorative area into three sections.

A general principle of harmony between vessel form and decoration influences the potters' work until the choice of each decorative unit is made. The following extracts from conversations with potter Seru Tosoqosoqo of Nasilai show how this principle of harmony is formulated:

> In decorating my vessel, I follow its form. If I have to decorate a spherical vessel, such as the ***gunugunu,*** I will put a decoration which is consistent with its form. . . . The form of a vessel cannot be in disharmony with decoration; if it is so, that vessel will not be beautiful.
>
> . . . The oil lamp has a hemispherical, carinated body. So, when you are about to decorate it, take a ***sasa*** and incise lines on its rim and walls. If you model a cord of clay, apply it on the lamp surface and flatten it; or, if you model knobs, that ***ramarama*** will not be beautiful because such decoration hides its form. Use an incised or

impressed decoration in order that the beautiful profile of the lamp may be well visible.

Decoration impose its own order on form; consequently, harmony between decoration and form is necessary so the form is not hidden or, worse, destroyed. If the form is undermined by decoration, the overall aspect ***(irairai)*** of a vessel is in question. The ***saqa tabua*** shown in Figure 19 (top) may not be considered beautiful because in the arrangement of the decorative area the opposite direction of the two groups of lines is in conflict with the vessel's form, which invites the eye to a single direction of vision focusing on the side rim. Subsequently, some of the lines were erased and incised again in one direction only (Fig. 19, bottom); moreover, the potter thought it better to group the lines in fours with an intervening space to obtain a field where he could arrange additional decorative units. Compared to the first solution with its decorative bands in a continuous sequence, the chosen one allows greater decorative enrichment.

Respecting the principle of harmony, several rules of composition can be

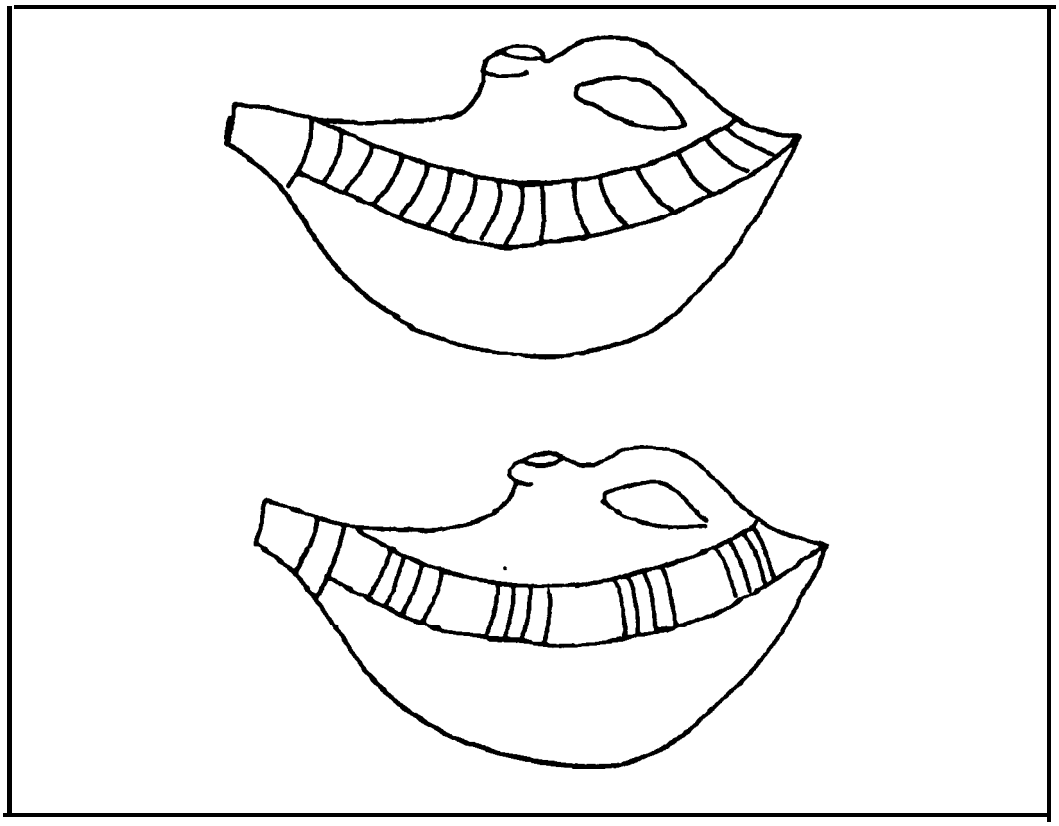

FIGURE 19. Arrangements of the decorative area of a *saqa tabua.*

applied in arranging fields and bands within the three sections, widening the possibilities of combination. Other rules, the ones governing the choice of decorative units and their arrangement in bands, give the potters a real freedom of combination, making the realization of numerous alternatives possible. A range of possible combinations implies a series of choices between alternatives of equal potential, but just because the decorative process follows rules, one choice is not necessarily equal to another.

The differing validity of each choice makes the potters' statements on the difficulty of decoration important and unequivocal, and throws light on their decorative procedure. "Thinking" decoration, as a conscious act prior to starting, consists of a total but nondetailed mental arrangement of the vessel surface. Dividing the vessel surface into two areas--the plain and the decorated--and then dividing the decorated area into fields by incising lines with a knife is a method that reveals and helps the intense work of mental arrangement. The vessel surface is like a sheet of paper and the knife like a pencil: line after line, the surface is organized under the potter's eyes. At any moment, with a single and instantaneous act, the potter can control the result achieved and more easily determine the next lines to incise or erase to attain a satisfying arrangement. The process of delimiting a field and filling it is then extremely helpful in choosing and arranging decorative units. In effect, decoration is a process of gradual enrichment: fields are realized one after another and filled in successive steps with a progressive narrowing of the possible alternatives and an increasing facility in the selection and composition of the decorative units (see Gombrich 1979).

Decorative Units and Rules of Composition in Three Pottery-Making Centers

Nasilai

Considering both the older and more recent Nasilai pottery, I shall try now to see how decorative units are composed in fields and how these fields are arranged in each of the three decorative sections.

Section A. On older vessels, whenever section A consists of a single decorative band, the band is nearly always made up of small pointed knobs in a continuous horizontal sequence (Fig. 17, DU 20). A band of such ***soki*** is always featured prominently even when section A is made up of more than one band. It can be preceded by DU 1 in continuous sequence or by DU 6 or 7 (Fig. 17). It can be followed by a band of DU 6 or 7 in continuous sequence or by single or double band made up of DU 19, 27, or 26 (Fig. 17).

On recently produced specimens, section A shows a different configuration owing to both the different decorative units used and their composition. ***Soki*** have been partly replaced with big knobs and bands of ***wacodro*** and ***dalidali*** used singly or together with other decorative units in well-defined decorative fields. In past production, section A was usually decorated with several bands, but the bands were not delimited or framed to form fields. In the new configuration, ***dalidali*** and ***wacodro*** bands, which could have a decisive visual function of separation, appear flattened. In contrast with a band of ***soki,*** they may also be left out.

Section B. On older vessels, homogeneous fields are formed of parallel vertical lines in continuous sequence of DU 8, 9, 23, 24, 14, or of DU 4, which acts as filler and at the same time as the delimiter of DU 16 (Fig. 17). These fields, alternating with a portion of plain surface, may be rendered over the entire section B following the scheme ***a-a-a-*** . . . (hyphens denote a portion of plain surface). When section B is divided into vertical fields, this scheme forms one of two recurring configurations. The second configuration contains two heterogeneous fields arranged in alternate discontinuous sequence ***(a-b-a-b- . . .***) or in alternate continuous sequence ***(abab*** . . .). More-involved compositions follow the schemes ***ab-a*** and ***ab-a-a-ba.*** One of the two heterogeneous fields is made up of DU 8, 9, 23, or 24 (Fig. 17), which are repeated in continuous, discontinuous, or alternate continuous sequence. The second field may be constructed with DU 18 (Fig. 17) or, more often, with parallel slanting lines.

The differing orientation of fields and decorative units in the second configuration requires explanation. The verticality or horizontality of a field can be stressed by the direction in which decorative motifs wind: vertical fields and vertical bands, horizontal fields and horizontal bands are consonant. But the other alternative is also exploited: section B can be divided into fields conflicting with the orientation of the decorative units that they receive. Vertical fields, arranged in trapezoidal sectors, break the continuity of the decorated area and disguise its circularity, Horizontal fields do not; they present nondelimited fields, that is, fields made up of different decorative bands in continuous, often in alternate, sequence that are combined with delimited fields, that is, fields made up of a framed band. Delimited fields can be repeated in an alternate continuous sequence or in discontinuous sequence.

On some specimens of ***saqa moli,*** section B can be treated as a single field: it can receive a kind of decoration called ***vakasai,*** made up of incised crossed lines arranged in bands of different inclination; it can also be filled with DU 6 or 16 (Fig. 17) in open order. The upper section of a ***saqa ikabula*** is a slightly curved surface treated like a single, nondelimited field, which is

decorated with DU 11 or 12 (Fig. 17). The spaces delimited by the oblique lines are filled with DU 1 or 18 (Fig. 17).

Section B of present-day Nasilai pottery can be divided into homogeneous horizontal bands according to the traditional scheme ***abcd.*** . . . More often the decoration is arranged in horizontal fields in continuous sequence according to the scheme ***abacad*** . . . ; moreover, the bands filling the fields consist of two or more decorative elements arranged in continuous alternate sequence. A variant scheme, ***abab-aba,*** is often adopted in the composition of vertical fields. A more usual rule of composition is that of delimiting section B and filling it with decorative elements, such as fillets in open order, applied bands in continuous sequence, or applied big buttons. On small vessels, the decorative area can be treated as a single, delimited field filled with homogeneous decorative elements in horizontal sequence or with heterogeneous elements in continuous alternate sequence. On other small vessels and on all jars, traditional composition schemes have completely disappeared. The decorated area presents itself as a visually undelimited space whose decorative elements are applied in a single band according to the two last-mentioned sequences. Interestingly, the decorated area is always the upper section of small vessels.

Section C. On concave rims with flat, oblique to the exterior lips, the angle between rim and lip can be underlined with incised or impressed oblique hatches. Lips are decorated with incised parallel lines that can act as delimiters for a band of impressed oblique hatches. Incised parallel lines or parallel bands of impressed hatches are recurrent on straight rims. A band of ***soki*** along the edges or at the center of a handle underlines its curvature. In the first configuration, the band of ***soki*** acts as delimiter of a field that may be filled with parallel hatches, applied buttons in open order, or incised parallel lines. In the second configuration, the ***soki*** band may constitute the only decoration, or it can be delimited with incised hatches or impressed parallel lines. Small handles of ***saqa tabua*** and ***gunugunu*** can be underlined with incised parallel lines, hatches, or dentate impressions in open order. At the top of handles of older specimens of ***gunugunu*** and ***saqa moli,*** a prominent cylindrical applied knob is often found, which acts as a visual element of the junction of the arms.

Lower Sigatoka Valley

The decorative units used by lower Sigatoka Valley potters are limited in number and form. A semicircular impression of a dentate shell appears with the greatest frequency (Fig. 20, a). Arranged in continuous sequence, this

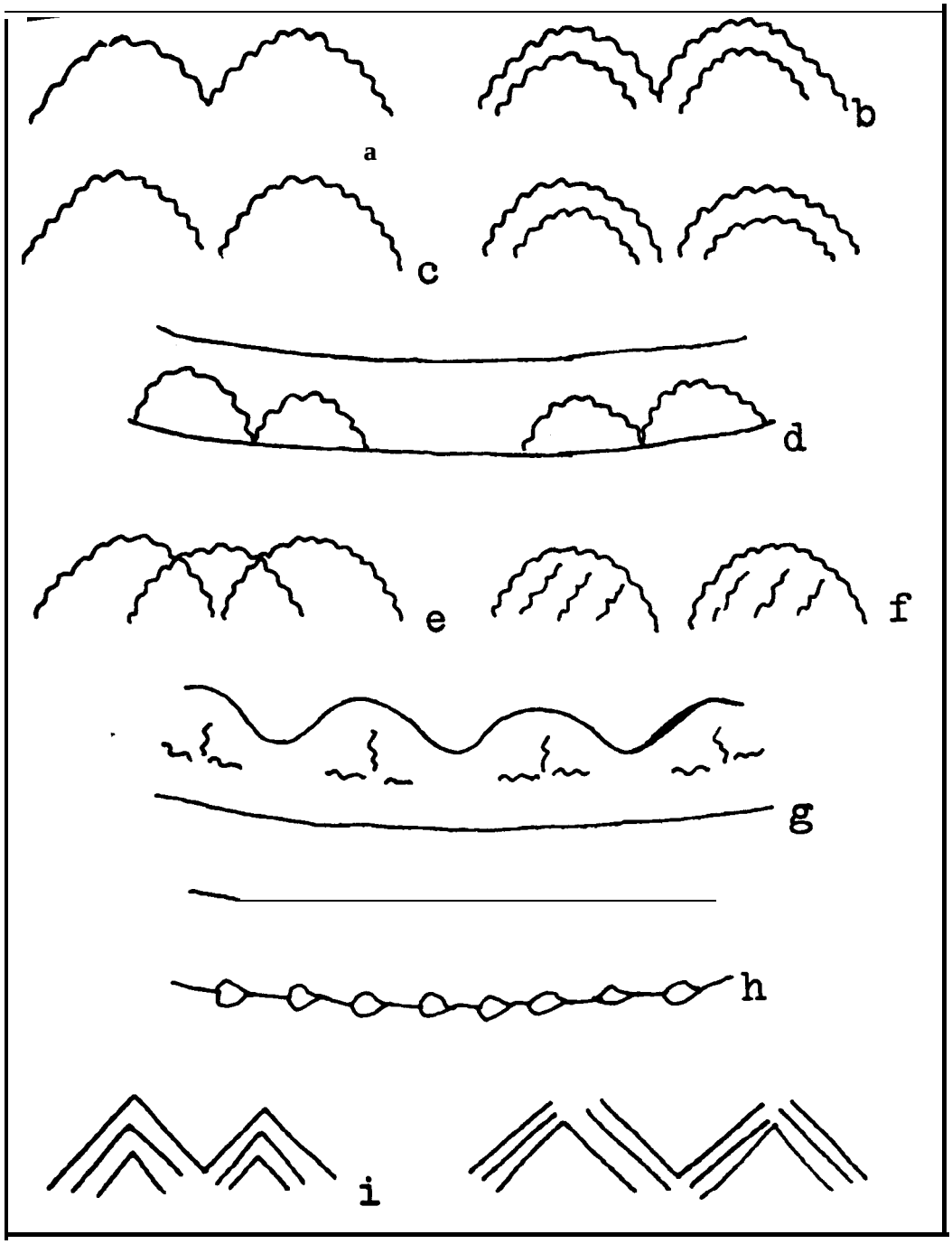

FIGURE 20. Decorative units used in the lower Sigatoka Valley.

unit decorates the lips of traditional and small-scale ***dari,*** the rim of ***vulu-vulu,*** and the shoulders of small vessels. The semicircular impressions can also be paired around the rim of traditional ***dari*** and the shoulders of small vessels and jars (Fig. 20, b). Both single and paired arcs can be arranged in discontinuous sequence around the rim of ***vuluvulu*** and the aperture of pig-

shaped vessels (Fig. 20, c). Around the rim of a ***vuluvulu,*** two single arcs may be grouped in four units separated by a gap of plain surface (Fig. 20, d). On three traditional ***dari,*** the spaces delimited by the arcs are filled with impressed oblique hatches (Fig. 20, f). Single or double wavy lines, impressed with the usual dentate shell, have been found around the shoulders of jars.

A new decorative unit consisting of three impressions, two in a horizontal discontinuous sequence and the third normal to the gap between the first two, is framed by each scallop of the rim of some present-day ***vuluvulu*** (Fig. 20, g). Three ***dari*** manufactured in Nasama show serial notches on the outer edge of the rim, made by impressing the fingertip (Fig. 20, h). Multiple incised triangular units constitute a motif for decorating rims of ***vuluvulu*** and shoulders of small vessels (Fig. 20, i).

The "carapace" of turtle-shaped vessels are decorated with new incised linear motifs (Fig. 21) that are arranged taking as the point of reference the "head," the four "flippers," and the tail end, or the head-tail axis; the carapace can also be treated as an undifferentiated space. New impressed or incised decorative units (arcs, points, lines) are arranged around the central aperture of other specimens of turtle-shaped vessels.

The ***soki*** and the ***wacodro,*** two decorative units borrowed from the Nasilai stylistic tradition, are now used as delimiters of the decorated area of vessels with two, three, or four rims and of fruit-bunch vessels. ***Soki*** act also as fillers. It is of interest to note how these two units differ from the Nasilai forms, the result of potters' copying illustrations and applying entirely new techniques. The Sigatoka Valley ***soki*** are more prominent than the present-day Nasilai ones and have assumed a perfectly conical shape. The ***wacodro*** band is considerably wider since it is shaped by applying a thick cord of clay that is then squared rather than flattened and pointed. Serial notches are made on the rectangular band in relief by impressing the fingertip.

Yanuya

The decorative units found on Yanuya pottery consist of finely incised hatches, zigzag or straight lines, and small applied knobs. The knobs have a cylindrical shape, instead of the hemispherical one typical of those from Nasilai. The lines are arranged in triangular units in continuous or discontinuous sequence and the spaces may be filled with hatches or small knobs (Fig. 22). These motifs are used as single bands to decorate the rims of ***vuluvulu*** and the shoulders of ***cubu.*** The lips of ***vuluvulu*** as well as the lips of other vessel types are decorated with hatches made by impressing a thin twig.

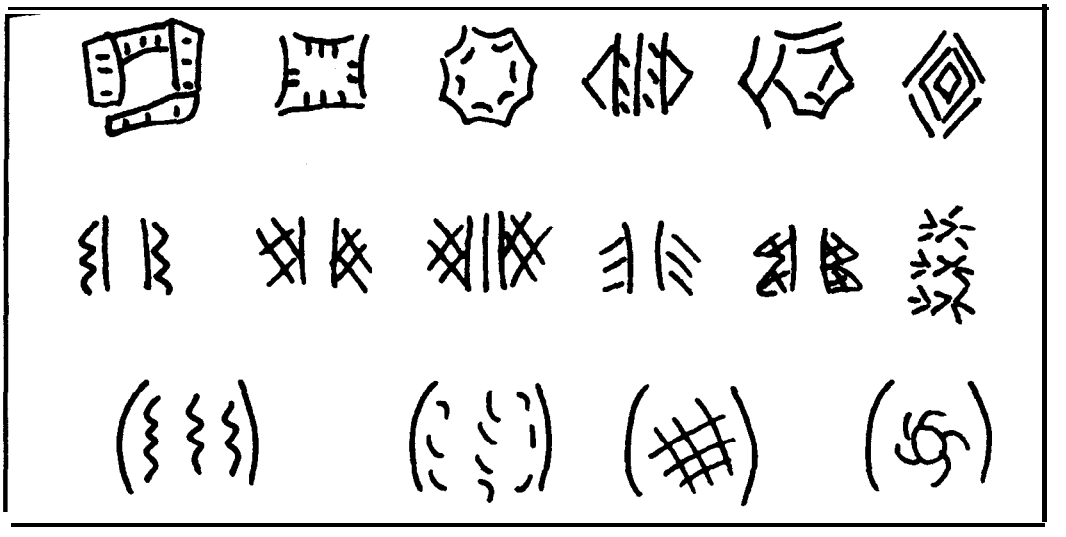

FIGURE 21. Decorative units used on the "carapace" of turtle-shaped vessels, lower Sigatoka Valley.

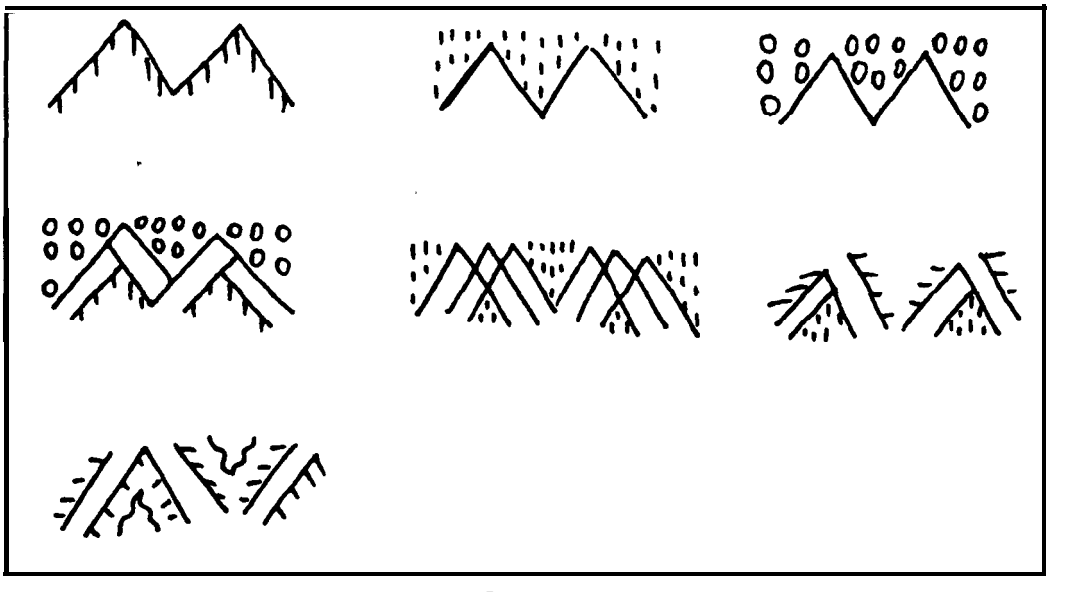

FIGURE 22. Decorative units used in Yanuya.

Decorative units and rules of composition have remained unchanged in Yanuya during the period considered.

Conclusions

From the foregoing, the stylistic changes in postcontact Fijian pottery can be summarized as follows: (1) diversification in production, (2) miniaturization and, in certain cases, increase in size, (3) flat bases and stands, (4) light-

ness, (5) words on vessel surfaces, (6) surface blackening, (7) glaze and decoration on traditionally unglazed and undecorated vessels, and (8) general upset of the decorative system.

These changes are cumulative in effect and all have been induced by the tourist market and the new destination of the vessels. Production has diversified to offer the purchasers--usually conducted-tour tourists but a small number of more-discriminating professional and amateur collectors and such, as well--a greater choice and increase the potters' chances of selling their vessels and thus earning some money.

Two processes have been followed in the creation of new vessel types: varying the form of traditional vessels or imitating vessels that are typical of other areas, Western items, or elements of the local environment. The creation of new objects by variation and by imitation of elements of the local environment can be considered traditional processes. For instance, ***saqa dina, gusu i rua, mua i rua, kitu,*** and ***gunugunu*** of Nasilai are variations of each other. Europeans who visited Fiji last century did not fail to note the similarity of form between cooking pots and the nests of a solitary bee (a species of ***Eumenes)*** that Fijians emblematically call ***"na kuro ni yalewa kalou"*** (the goddess's pot), or between certain water containers and sperm whale's teeth, turtles, and fruit bunches, suggesting that potters drew their inspiration from them (see Smythe 1864:39; Gordon-Cumming 1881:246; Johnston 1883:266).

In contrast, the imitation of Western items or of vessels typical of other pottery centers is a recent practice, which was surely forbidden in the past and which arouses mixed reactions, ranging from the most stubborn refusal in Nasilai and Yanuya and the most eager acceptance in the Sigatoka Valley. Although pottery making is the typical activity of the women belonging to the marine communities, the exchange of stylistic features among the different centers must not have been widespread in the past. First of all, before the arrival of the Europeans, intercommunity contacts were rather scanty and occurred along well-established routes. Moreover, a sort of copyright also acted as a restraint for the borrowing of stylistic features. According to Gordon-Cumming, "under no circumstances the potters of a district will copy a pot brought back from another island or district" (1881:18). This exclusivity was strengthened by endogamous marriage rules and by restrictions according to which a girl could undertake pottery making only after her marriage to a male member of her own community. The isolation of the different pottery centers diminished after the mid-1800s in consequence of the pacification and extension of the Fijian states. Nevertheless, it has not completely disappeared, considering that the potters whom I visited were generally unfamiliar with the output of the other villages, nor did they

know their exact names and locations. I noticed that respect for tradition is stronger in Nasilai and Yanuya; two fishing communities, than in the lower Sigatoka Valley, where I have recorded attempts to copy vessel types and decorations of the Nasilai tradition.

In any case, potters creating a new type of vessel show a need for a concrete starting point from which to explore new formal possibilities. The potters universally justify this process by referring to the difficulty in thinking of and then putting into concrete form an absolutely original object. Conceiving a new object requires considerable concentration; putting a new idea into concrete form might require new technical innovations, the risk of failure, and wasted time. This is particularly true for pottery, whose production process demands a correct execution of well-defined technical methods to achieve the desired result.

In the case of creation by variation, I would particularly stress how a variant may differ by the addition or exclusion of minimal elements of form on the same base form, or in a slight variation of both the base form and another element. This way of working is doubly profitable since it is economical both in the conception and execution; for this reason, it shows itself as the most obvious course to follow. Only when the possibilities of formal elaboration offered by a previously fixed "base type" are exhausted will the potters turn to their environment for inspiration. This is what has been happening in the still-active pottery centers for decades. As an example, potters in Lawai, Nakabuta, and Nayawa have reacted to the necessity to diversify first by varying ***kuro, dari,*** and ***vuluvulu,*** and only then by conceiving new forms and elaborating new techniques to produce them by imitating the production of other centers. Also, new forms and techniques, usually conceived by one potter, quickly diffuse among the other potters of the community and even among those of neighboring centers. The first turtle-shaped vessel manufactured in Lawai had been modeled by Leone Matalou, who copied it from a publication. Displayed in the meetinghouse for sale to tourists, it was copied by other Lawai potters; then its form was gradually modified, resulting in the current variants.

The form or ***i bulibuli*** of a vessel is inherited from the past and is considered to be fixed, constant over the years. A general rule prescribes this invariability. Fijian potters justify it by adducing that their grandmothers achieved a unique perfection that requires no further intervention, only faithful perpetuation. Nevertheless, traditional vessel forms are slowly and more or less consciously varied, accompanied by a general change in function. For the potters, the vessels are no longer utilitarian objects that may also be beautiful but considered primarily decorative, their practical functions disregarded or completely lost. New functions may accord with the dif-

ferent contexts for which the vessels are now intended. So a ***vuluvulu*** is conceived not as a finger bowl but as an ashtray, involving formal changes such as notches around the lip. A preference for the decorative function involves also formal changes, such as the discontinuation of filling-holes and pouring spouts.

At a more general level, all the vessels are conceived by the potters as souvenirs: they remind tourists of their journey, the places visited, the people met. For this reason, words like "Fiji," the village's name, or the potter's name are incised or impressed on the surface. The potters have further adjusted their vessels to meet purchasers' demands. Miniaturization and lightness facilitate direct tourist sales, diminishing problems of space and weight in transport. Flat bases and stands are also a response to tourist preferences, allowing the vessels to stand without using the traditional support ***(toqi)*** made from dried banana leaves twisted into a circle. However, where direct contact with tourists is difficult and the potters have to rely upon the Government Handicraft Centre of Suva to sell their vessels, an increase in size is considered economically preferable--bigger vessels sell for more money--and personally more prestigious--"You must be a ***dau tulituli,*** a master potter, to shape a 40- to 45-cm-high vessel!"

Stylistic changes (1) to (4) have affected technology. In the lower Sigatoka Valley, these changes have given rise to intense experimental work to find suitable techniques. There, the traditional forming technique allows the modeling of large- and medium-size vessels only and requires much time and skill; moreover, the technique is unsuitable for modeling the zoomorphic objects that constitute much of contemporary production. The new technique in use today was designed first to solve the zoomorphic problem; it then was found to be useful in shaping small-size vessels and jugs. In contrast, shaping small vessels has been an easy task in Nasilai, where a secondary tradition of very small vessels has existed since the mid-1800s. Thinning walls and increasing size instead have affected technology there. In the traditional Nasilai forming technique the base was shaped using the knee as a mold, requiring a thick slab of clay that, once hollowed, was difficult to thin. In addition, the potters could not consistently make bases of a certain size and perfectly round shape. Some eighteen years ago, when Seru Tosoqosoqo started to make pottery, he tried to find a solution by using an enameled basin and plastic buoys as molds. Thinning the walls caused an even more radical change in the technique. Instead of adding coils of clay to build them up, Tosoqosoqo started adding rectangular slabs to the base by flattening coils of clay, while his sister Maraya directly flattens a piece of clay and uses a knife to cut out a slab of suitable size. These changes seem to stimulate the potters' technical skill, though producing small-scale vessels has affected it negatively both in Nasilai and the lower Sigatoka Valley.

We have, in effect, the loss of technical knowledge entailed by a tradition. This is true also as regards the blackening of vessel surfaces. The traditional surface is of a uniform reddish color if unglazed and of a light color with different shades of red, pale maroon, green, and grey melting into each other if glazed. The potters' efforts are directed at obtaining the traditional color during firing and glazing, but the last two production phases are the least controllable and the expected result is not always achieved. Moreover, the ***dakua*** tree, which grows in the interior of Viti Levu, is now protected by the Ministry of Forestry. Tapping ***dakua*** sap was declared illegal in 1949 because it damaged the trees. The ***makadre,*** once obtained through relatives and friends living inland or bought at the town markets in Suva, Nausori, and Sigatoka, is now very scarce. Consequently, the potters often have none with which to glaze their vessels, and they substitute industrial varnish. Although giving the same shiny effect as the traditional resin, varnish does not produce those shades of color that are so appreciated. The potters show disappointment when they fail to achieve the desired effect but, since a black object will probably please the tourists, they are not stimulated to improve their skills.

The tourists' preference for glazed and decorated vessels has also led the potters to glaze and decorate traditionally unglazed and plain ware. This is true of cooking pots, which highlights the new attitude that considers the vessels as decorative objects.

As regards the decorative system, we have seen that changes have occurred in the decorative units used and in their composition. For the most part, the decorative units now used fall within the category "three-dimensional" or "applied." These are the only decorative units used on small vessels, that is, on almost all the pottery manufactured in Nasilai today. On other types of vessels applied decorative units are found together with impressed ones, but the applied units predominate both numerically and visually. Incised decorative units are hardly used. The frequency of the three types of decorative units is thus reversed in comparison with the older production.

According to the potters' statements, this change in decoration fits into a general change in taste. Nowadays an applied decoration is preferred since it stands out from the surface of the vessel, producing an effect of richness and profusion conspicuous even at distance, whereas an incised or impressed decoration tends to be lost in the glazing process: the resin, rubbed on the surface while still hot from firing, fills the grooves and produces an effect of flattening and visual darkening.

Although potters stress the ease of ***executing*** an incised or impressed decoration compared to an applied one, they do not dwell on the aspect of ***conceiving.*** Though easier to execute, an incised or impressed decoration is

actually much more difficult to realize because of the greater number of decorative units that must be conceived. Overall, decorating a vessel with applied units requires less concentration and is quicker: it is sufficient to arrange properly only two of them to cover the entire decorated area of a reduced-size vessel. Traditional, more elaborate schemes of composition thus tend to disappear. Such being the case, it would not be wrong to say that the aesthetic justification for preferring applied decoration has grown out of the resolution of a technical problem, that of decorating easily and properly.

According to tradition, decorative units should not be modified but, in effect, they assume new forms with constant use. Their modification can be slow and the potters can be unaware of the changes; instead, an individual can create completely new decorative units that, once adopted by the group, enrich the traditional reserve of forms. The potters can get inspiration from elements of nature or the local environment that usually undergo a considerable process of stylization; sometimes the similarity in form has been the main criterion in the selection of a new decorative unit among the many possible. Nowadays the potters also have a greater number of tools that can be used for expressive purposes. These tools can be chosen by chance: the potter wants a new decorative unit, but she has no idea what type; an iron bar within reach can be impressed on a small piece of clay and, if the mark left is satisfactory, it is used as a decorative unit. At times the potter has a clear idea of the decorative unit she wants to create and she will go intentionally in search of the tool that allows her to execute it. Although permitted by tradition, the creation of new decorative units is not, anyway, very common and equally practiced by all potters. A surface incision or impression or a piece of clay stuck on and modeled does not necessarily turn into a new decorative unit. Either conceived by the potters or suggested to them from the outside, a new sign must appear congruent both on the formal and technical level with the set of decorative units already in use.

Achieving congruence requires competence and creative capabilities that not all potters have or are inclined to put to the test. Therefore the creative work of only a few potters influences the production of all the others. Once adopted by a potter, a new decorative unit enriches her personal “vocabulary”; with the passing of time it will be adopted by others and enrich the traditional reserve of forms.

Before this happens, two contrasting and deeply felt exigencies must be reconciled gradually. On one hand, each potter claims the right to distinguish herself from the others and, consequently, any open attempt at copying is harshly censured. On the other hand, the other potters’ appreciation and their willingness, even if only verbally expressed, to adopt a new decora-

tive unit are expected as signs of affirmation of the "adequacy" of the originator's creative capabilities. Disapproval of copying is totally absent within the household, where, on the contrary, the potters themselves encourage their daughters, sisters, and nieces to use the latest creations. Disapproval rises with. the increase of physical and social distance but, since adoption by others raises self-esteem, new decorative units end up being used sooner or later by all the potters. Use of specific decorative units consequently becomes more or less widespread, although each potter prefers some and not others.

Most of the changes recorded here have been pursued consciously and stubbornly by the potters. This suggests that the artist&rafters, rather than the objects, should be placed at center stage in the task of understanding ethnographic art; that whatever the rules, standards, and conventions of style, whatever purposes and expectations a society may set up for its members, the individual is a central factor in producing innovation. Nevertheless, only some of the changes recorded have been acknowledged by the potters. Their failure to recognize all the changes is due to the fact that the concept of "tradition" that Fijian potters refer to is rather narrow, exclusively based on the range of vessels manufactured by the preceding generation. Individual potters' knowledge of "tradition" lacks historical depth not only because of the limited documentary sources available, but also, and above all, because of the present decay of their craft.

According to the degree of respect for tradition, vessels are divided into three different categories. The first category comprises the greatly valued traditional vessels or ***ka makawa (ka,*** thing; ***makawa,*** ancient). To be recognized as such, a vessel must have the established formal configuration whose general distinctive features are roundness and balance, a rich and harmonious decoration on the proper portion of surface, and the traditional color. A traditional vessel must also be lightweight and give out a metallic sound if tapped. Finally, its surface must not show cracks. These last-mentioned characteristics are technical rather than stylistic, but they have equal importance for Fijian potters in defining a traditional vessel and its intrinsic beauty.

According to the potters, the very common small vessels of today can be included within the traditional category. In effect, water containers in the shape of a turtle, fruit bunch, double canoe, or whale's tooth so small as to appear "of little practical use" were recorded by Roth (1935:226). Earlier, Commander J. E. Erskine of HMS ***Havannah*** wrote of having seen drinking vessels made in Rewa that were "so small as to appear intended for playthings for children" (1853:194). These small vessels were certainly part of a well-defined group that could have been used for storing scented coconut oil; anyway, taking their social destination into account, their intrinsic value

could be more symbolic / decorative than practical. Present-day vessels of small size differ from this group in their merely economic value, in their tourist destination, and in being replicas of full-size traditional vessels; they could be considered traditional only in their faithfulness to their models.

Vessels showing an elongated body form, a flat base, or even a stand--all recurring features in present-day production--continue to fall within the standard types. They are given the traditional names, followed by the expression ***"ka vou,"*** for example, ***saqa dina ka vou, gunugunu ka vou*** (new ***saqa dina,*** new ***gunugunu),*** and so forth. Although the new stylistic features do not destroy the form of the vessel, they do spoil the purity of the roundish line. Vessels with names incised on their surface and black in color are also included in this category. These modified standard types of vessels are accepted more readily in the lower Sigatoka Valley than elsewhere; in valley communities they can be included among the valuables presented during ceremonies on the occasion of births, deaths, marriages, and political meetings. In Nasilai and Yanuya, they are considered the result of the progressive loss of technical skill and cultural control suffered by the potters' community.

A third category, of completely new types of vessels, simply and generically named ***ka vou,*** "new objects," must be considered. The potters assume an ambivalent position towards these vessels: they are prized as a result of lively imagination and' technical skill, yet disparaged for being outside of tradition and undermining its validity as a source of common behavior and identity.

Contrary to the supposed conservation (Foster 1956) or even stagnation during the centuries (Balfet 1965) often attributed to pottery, both the archaeological and historical records emphasize chronic change in Fijian pottery and the rapidity with which it occurred following contact with Western culture and the establishment of colonial rule. Certainly Fijian pottery is one of the category of items that can change easily. The fact that the pace of change in pottery making seems to have accelerated dramatically in the postcontact period can then be ascribed to a greater susceptibility to change provided by the modern socioeconomic context. The contemporary competitive commercial context certainly makes potters more susceptible to innovative influences, and thus provides more impetus to change, than did the traditional noncommercial setting (in times when the status quo prevailed, at least--at other times, such as during the mid-1800s with the increasing power of the Bau and Rewa chiefs, greater attention to rank differences had repercussions for Nasilai potters, encouraging the creation of new types of chiefly vessels). In a general context of innovative influences, however, it must be cautioned that the nature and rate of change may differ from area

to area within Fiji. Compared to the pottery of Nasilai and the lower Sigatoka Valley, Yanuya production has showed itself, in fact, to remain more faithful to traditional canons.

Several scholars have concluded that change in pottery does not reliably and predictably accompany other kinds of cultural change (Charlton 1968; Adams 1979; De Boer 1984). Contrary to this, the developments in Fijian pottery of historic times show how changes in pottery making and socioeconomic changes are closely intertwined. If we categorize the sources of change as either external or internal, it seems that pottery changes have been generated more by external causes; these have stimulated the changes internal to the system, which then have stimulated further pottery changes. Since pottery is not merely an amorphous collection of interchangeable elements, these changes have interacted, and activity in one sector has led to activity in another. All this does not imply that pottery has always, and erroneously, been described in static terms. Rather it reminds us that we must take both local circumstances and historical developments into consideration.

NOTES

This article is based on eight months of field research in Fiji, October 1986 to May 1987. I wish to express here my appreciation to the Fiji Museum staff for their invaluable assistance; my special thanks are due to the then director, Mr. Fergus Clunie, and to his assistant and museum conservator, Miss Gladys Fullman. I also owe a great debt to the many potters and villagers who gave me a friendly welcome and furnished information on pottery.

1. Miss Gordon-Cumming and Baron von Hugel arrived in Fiji in 1875 just as Sir Arthur Gordon, first governor of Fiji, was establishing the British colonial administration. They soon became involved in collecting local artifacts. Gordon-Cumming's and von Hugel's collections are at the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge; Gordon's collection is at the Anthropological Museum, Marshall College, Aberdeen. Lieutenant Wilkes and Captain Magrunder visited the Fiji Islands with the United States Exploring Expedition, whose elaborate survey resulted in more accurate information on the group, vital to European expansionism in the region. The collections of Fijian pottery that I refer to are at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

2. Only coconut-shell cups are used to drink *yaqona* nowadays. Their use spread through Fiji with the Tongan *tanoa* and its respective *kava* rituals in the 1700s. Until then, Fijian *yaqona* drinking was religious in nature, usually conducted within the spirit house and involving only priests, chiefs, and male elders of a clan. No use was made of a cup, since the drinker sucked *yaqona* directly from an earthenware bowl or dish, or from a vessel of *vesi* tree *(Intsia bijuga)* wood. Earthenware *yaqona* drinking cups are later than coconut-shell cups, most likely connected with the rise of the Rewa and Bau chiefs' power in the mid-1800s.

3. Carved wooden masks are not found in traditional Fijian culture. For Fijian traditional masks, see Clunie and Ligairi 1983.

4. Seru Tosoqosoqo of Nasilai is a young man who learned how to make pots in his adolescence, instructed by his mother. He is proud to be a potter and enjoys general esteem. Leone Matalou of Lawai is another example of a male potter. Although in the past pottery making was practiced strictly by women, men today also undertake it to supplement their families' incomes.

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