

FROM COLONIAL POMP TO TOURISM REALITY: COMMODIFICATION AND CANNIBALIZATION OF THE FIJIAN FIREWALKING CEREMONY

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In 1935 the rite [firewalking] was performed before two members of the British Medical Association. The eminent doctors examined the men carefully before and after the ceremony. . . . The men of Mbengga [sic], not knowing of these learned disputations, unconcernedly carry on the strange custom of their ancestors (Luis Marden, *National Geographic*, October 1958: 560–61).

The Fijians had another way of disposing of the bodies. They ate them. . . . This was a culture devoted to killing, and when there wasn't an enemy around to meet their needs, chiefs took to killing the commoners among them (J. Maarten Troost, *Getting Stoned with Savages: A Trip through the Islands of Fiji and Vanuatu*, 2006, 175).

Introduction

THE FIJIAN FIREWALKING CEREMONY (*VILAVILAIREVO*), traditionally performed only by members of the Sawau community on the island of Beqa, is a prime example of a propitiation ritual that has become romanticized and subsequently commodified to suit the requirements of tourism. Over the last two centuries, the ceremony has been shaped by the requirements of tourism as well as those of colonial pomp and circumstance, finally emerging as a

signature brand statement of Fijian national culture (Pigliasco and Colatavanua 2005; Pigliasco 2010; Pigliasco and Lipp 2011). Vilavilairevo, literally “jumping into the earth oven,” belongs to that set of topics haphazardly pillaged and investigated by scientists, psychologists, folklorists, missionaries, travel writers, and anthropologists. This traditional cultural expression, owned by the Naivilaqata priestly clan of the Sawau community of Beqa, has been often misconceived and misrepresented, with the result of a degradation and debasement of their beliefs and actions.¹

The earliest commentators on the cross-cultural phenomenon of Fijian firewalking speculated about the body–mind relationship of people undergoing the ordeal. Some early scholars found the “paranormal” aspect of firewalking especially alluring, whereas others attempted “scientific” observations. The history of scientific investigation of the firewalk is largely a history of skepticism, however. Some recorded the temperature of the bed of burning coals or hot rocks (Haggard 1903), determined how long the feet of the firewalkers were in contact with the fire, and measured the flow of blood to their feet and the thickness of their calluses (Marden 1958: 560–61; see also Danforth 1989, 208). In Beqa, Fulton (1903, 191) took samples of the stones used by firewalkers.² Some early observers tried walking on fire themselves.³ A few burned their trousers (Langley 1901), and in 1892, Lady Thurston casually dropped her handkerchief in the fire to see if it would burn (Lindt 1893, 52; Jackson 1894, 73; Thomson 1894, 204).

An even greater interest in the sensational and spectacular emerges in the travel and tourist literature. These articles are essential for understanding the dialogical construction of the modern spectacle from the point of view of the tourist. A clichéd equation stands out in some of the anthropological literature as well: vilavilairevo equals tourism. Most of the accounts place the vilavilairevo ceremony at the heart of their arguments on commodification and staged or emergent authenticity (Thompson 1973; Rajotte 1978a,b; Britton 1979; Henning-Brown 1984; Crick 1989; Smith 1989; Burns 1993, 1994, 2003; Stymeist 1996; Linnekin 1997; Wood 1997; Stanley 1998; see also Sarah Oram, unpubl. manuscript, *The impact of tourism on two Fijian villages: A comparison of Rukua and Lalati on Beqa Island, Fiji*, Jesus College, Cambridge Univ., 1997). “Emergent authenticity” is a term coined by Cohen (1988), stressing one aspect of the wider phenomenon of “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). It connotes that “a cultural product, or trait thereof, which is at one point generally judged as contrived or inauthentic, may, in the course of time, become generally recognized as authentic even by experts” (Cohen 1988: 279–80).

My initial interest in studying tourism from an anthropological perspective was to look at the intersection of intellectual property and cultural tourism to disentangle the intertwined topics of property, commodification, tradition,

and change on the island of Beqa and understand the ways in which the vilavilairevo ceremony is reshaped. More recently, I also became interested in understanding how tourism reaches and changes the relationship between cultural products and the society that produces them. In Mortensen and Nicholas's (2010, 11) words, "Nearly everywhere, tourism makes the potential commodity value of cultural heritage more apparent and more accessible."

In the contemporary context of media promotion and the burgeoning industry of world tourism, indigenous rituals that have become commodified represent a well-defined and highly active point of contact between local and global realities. In such ritual performances, and in the organizational and discursive practices that support them, indigenous and globalized systems of identity, economics, law, and aesthetics interact in dialogic processes of representation and transformation.

Here, I intend to examine how culture, taste, and values may function to legitimate the power of dominant cultural and social forces in representing traditional cultural expressions like the vilavilairevo ceremony of the Sawau people and what impacts these have. Although a preoccupation with authenticity has motivated much of the contemporary writing on tourism, the issue Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1994) observe appears to be more one of "authentication," that is, who has the power to represent whom. Said (1978), Foucault (1980), Appadurai (1986), Marcus and Myers (1995), Trask (1993), and others suggest that the power to represent or to consume other cultures is a form of "domination." In this paper, however, I employ the concept of cultural cannibalization, a western ideological device, a colonial tool, and a particular tourist gaze to consume, and to represent for popular consumption, the alien Other in Fiji and Oceania in general.

Accidental Cannibals, Exotic Arenas

Early colonial accounts indicate that the vilavilairevo ceremony was being performed to entertain colonial representatives and foreign dignitaries visiting Fiji by the end of the nineteenth century (NM 1885; Lindt 1893; Thomson 1894; Hocken 1898; Jackson 1899; Haggard 1903; Allardyce 1904). All accounts mention the name of the native intermediary who arranged for vilavilairevo to be exhibited on the Island of Beqa: Jonacani Dabea, the Turaga-ni-Lewa i Taukei mai Rewa (Native Stipendiary Magistrate of Rewa), a *bete* (member of the priestly clan) originally from Rukua village in Beqa (NM 1885; Lindt 1893; Thomson 1894; CF 1907). Whether the first colonial officials who traveled to Beqa to witness the vilavilairevo were emulating the grand voyages of Stendhal or were just proto-tourists, Jonacani Dabea can be seen as the first "impresario" of the vilavilairevo spectacle (Pigliasco 2010) (Fig. 1).



FIGURE 1. Jonacani Dabea (third from right) with a group of firewalkers, probably at Korowa, Beqa. Courtesy Rod Ewins's private collection.⁴

As a result of missionary and colonial activity and education, money became a main factor of change in Pacific island economies as people pursued wealth and prestige. Boyd (1985), for example, argues that the emergence of the *singsing bisnis* in Papua New Guinea's Eastern Highlands should be understood within the context of post-colonial tourist pressures that radically altered the political economy of the region. The Fijian village economy differs from capitalist economy thus, commodification is not the best term for explaining the monetization of the vilavilairevo ceremony. Diachronically, it appears to have been an innocuous economic process. It allows the whole community to be engaged, while preserving and emphasizing the authority structure and traditional knowledge of the social order and sociocultural relationships (*kila ni bula vakaveiwekani kei naitovo*) as the chief, the Tui Sawau, and the Naivilaqata *turaga ni matataqali* (head of the priestly clan) direct the mode and volume of production.

The entrepreneurship related to the vilavilairevo ceremony represents a small-scale cash-generating enterprise, which is expected to yield substantial long-term financial returns to the participants and their kin. Unlike Papua New Guinea's *singsing*, the returns and prestige accumulated with the vilavilairevo in Beqa are communally shared. However, a tendency toward more self-interested endeavors emerged in the early 1970s among a new cat-

egory of entrepreneurs and promotional agents. Currently, seven groups from the Sawau *yavusa* are performing vilavilairevo on a regular basis, approved by the Tui Sawau and the Naivilaqata priestly clan elders in Dakuibeqa, for a total of more than one hundred male individuals between fifteen and sixty-five years old entitled to perform it. There are five groups on Beqa: three from Dakuibeqa, one from Naceva, and one from Soliyaga;⁵ outside Beqa, there are two groups: one from the neighbor island of Yanuca and one from Lapanoni settlement in Deuba on Viti Levu.

The interplay between romance and realism, along with the construction of authenticity, is a complex representational process reflecting past international folklore exhibitions, human showcases, and exotic antiquities. Between the end of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, exotic postcards marked genuineness. They circulated idealized images of natives while promoting tourism (Desmond 1999, 43). Generally only available at remote tourist locations, they became specimens and trophies guaranteeing reality (Stewart 1984). To be alluring, they had to mix exotic scenery with exotic natives, preferably depicted as primitives living in the past.

Colonial photography is more than mere representation or objectification but is, according to Bacchilega (2007, 13, 19), a form of “translation.” Lutz and Collins argue that, “the multiplicity of looks is at the root of a photo’s ambiguity, each gaze potentially suggesting a different way of viewing the scene” (1993, 215). For example, postcards moved across oceans reproducing the racial theories and stereotypes that assisted European expansionism and the binary opposition of civility versus savagery (Maxwell 1999, 9, 14). In Fiji, rare postcards showing the vilavilairevo ceremony represented the exotic to tourists who wanted to see real natives in their native environment doing real native things (Desmond 1999, 120) (Fig. 2).

What matters, Bacchilega (2007, 20) points out, is that “these stereotypical images were accepted as ‘real,’” and the coded realism of photographs of faraway places and peoples was thus seen to provide more powerful “evidence” than words (Maxwell 1999, 11). In Lutz and Collins’ (1993, 215) words, “we are captured by the temptation to view the photographs as more real than the world or at least as a comfortable substitute for it.” The situation in the past was not much different from the situation in contemporary times. Baudrillard (2001) observes that, in the era of the media and consumer society, people have fewer and fewer relationships to external reality; they are caught up in the play of images. Brookfield notes (1989) that the developed world loves the Pacific that it has created through its own mythology. Thus, cannibals, headhunters, indigenous warriors, and “profane” rituals have been domi-



FIGURE 2. Firewalking at Korowa on Beqa. Courtesy of Rod Ewins's private collection.

nant in the play of images since the advent of cultural tourism. In tourist postmodern reality, the Fijian firewalkers have been often misrepresented and conflated with cannibals and sorcerers by both tourist practitioners (McDermott 1978) and anthropologists.⁶ As Mortensen and Nicholas (2010, 11) point out, “it takes but a moment to snap and upload a picture of a sacred site to a travel blog. What are the implications and effects of such



FIGURE 3. A postcard on sale in the hotels and airports in Fiji. The routinized presentation of the firewalking evening show at the Naviti Resort on Viti Levu’s Coral Coast is designed to elicit cannibal nostalgia in a tongue-in-cheek manner: “For those who would like to take photos you can move in a little bit closer, take a quick one . . . move in closer, but not too close! These men haven’t had a white man for years . . . one white man was cooked in this kind of pit, that was long time ago, the missionary Mr. Thomas Baker, if you go to the [Fiji] Museum, you will only see a bit of the sole of his shoes, the cannibals they ate his shoes too, good chewing gum! [audience laughing].”⁷

practices that may threaten the special character of a ritual performance? When, how and to whom does it matter?” (Fig. 3).

The time of cannibal tours, it seems, has not ended yet but merely been reformulated for the fast-paced modern capitalist economy. Lindenbaum and others argue that primitivism, and especially the icon of the cannibal, retains much of its ideological force (MacCannell 1992b, 19; Schutte 2003, 473; Lindenbaum 2004, 491). Lutkehaus (1989, 423), for example, points out the metaphysical aspect of the western fascination with the exotic “Primitive Other” when a group of rich tourists cruising up the “mysterious” Sepik River in Papua New Guinea are caught by the camera of Dennis O’Rourke in his much-discussed docu-film *Cannibal Tours* (1981). MacCannell (1988:45 in



FIGURE 4. The cover of the Arts Village 2005 brochure. Courtesy of the Arts Village.

Lutkehaus 1989, 427) observes that, “a lesson of the film is that the New Guineans experience their myths as myths, while the tourists experience their myths as symptoms of hysteria” (Fig. 4).

O’Rourke believes that voyeurism and nostalgia are both fueling myths like those of the Noble Savage and cannibalism (see Kilgour 1998, 247). In more recent times, to serve cultural tourists with a spoonful of nostalgia, instead of “importing” the tourists to the village, in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s



FIGURE 5. Firewalking show at the Beqa Lagoon Resort. Photography by the author.

words (1998, 61), “the village is exported.” There are different ways in which the tourist site produces the desired effect. The largest resorts and the Arts Village host firewalking shows in “firewalking arenas” lit by *tiki* torches.⁸ Bleachers under a semicircular thatched roof are about ten feet away from the pit in the middle of the arena. A statuesque Fijian welcomes the public at the entrance to the arenas at the Warwick Hotel and at Fijian-Shangri-La Resorts. The arenas resemble movie sets more than open-air stages; they are transformed into recognizable versions of the exotic landscapes seen in films and reality shows such as *Survivor* (see Stanley 1998, 20).

At Beqa Lagoon Resort on Beqa Island, shows are held once a week at sunset, a few yards from the beach. Combining the wild and the civilized, the atmosphere is very colonial-chic with tiki torches blowing in the breeze and rattan chairs placed for the occasion around the *lovo* (fire pit). The guests usually emerge from the bar’s veranda with their aperitifs and cameras a few minutes before the firewalkers make their colorful entrance. There are no restrictions on the guests, who circulate during the show, taking pictures and even touching the firewalkers’ feet. Right after the show, before dinner is served, guests mingle and have their photographs taken with the firewalkers. This temporary intimacy allows guests to ask questions, usually about the firewalkers’ “paranormal” power and analgesia (Fig. 5).



South Pacific

ROYAL DAVUI
ISLAND - FIJI

FIGURE 6. The Royal Davui webpage promoting their firewalking show for their guests.

A similar *mise-en-scène* is offered at the Royal Davui on Ugaga Island just across from Beqa, one of the top five luxury resorts in Fiji. The resort's online advertisement promises a “*new* legendary Fijian Firewalking experience,” subverting the clichéd image of the *dauvila* in the pit by offering just a close up of a young *dauvila* wearing a colorful ceremonial wreath (*salusahu*), creating a sense of intimacy. Here, the guests descend from the Banyan Bar & Lounge at their discretion; there are no announcements, stage managers, recitations of the legend, or assigned seating area. This also allows a relaxed intimacy as guests stand around the performance space sipping their drinks. The scenes at both these resorts probably contribute to what Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett call “tourism realism” (1994). This kind of realism can be distinguished from the vulgar simulation of authenticity offered at all the other hotels and the Arts Village. This calculated “realism” has enough spectacle mixed with exotic danger to be credible but not too much to disturb the guests (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994). As with the Mayers Ranch performance of the Maasai in East Africa, the example Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discuss, firewalking becomes experience theater built on improvisational, kinesthetic, tactual, and intimate principles, where indigenous performances and indigenous bodies, detached from their cultural context, are marked, polished, and immediately offered to the guests (Fig. 6).

Cultural Icons, National Symbols

It's been more than a decade since Vilsoni Hereniko, like many other Pacific Island scholars, has pointed out that most Pacific Island nations have a tendency to project stereotyped images incurring in unplanned discrepancies



FIGURE 7. Souvenirs appropriating the firewalking trope on sale at Nadi's International Airport. Photography by the author.

between these romantic images and the modernization of the national character (Hereniko 1999, 157). In his analysis of tourism for nation building and the invention of national identity in Fiji, Bossen (2000) observes that the state may become the organizer of cultural reproductions and licensing authority concerning the authenticity and quality of products and souvenirs sold to tourists. Also, the state may become the arbiter of conflicts between ethnic groups that compete with each other and the state for access to the opportunities provided by tourism, as in Fiji's pending Decree to Protect the Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights in Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture (Pigliasco 2009a, 2011) (Fig. 7).

In 1885 and 1892, the firewalking ceremony was performed before a vice-regal party, a few colonial officials, various chiefs from Viti Levu, and 500 natives. As Bigay et al. (1981) and Crosby (1988) speculate, it is possible that the village or villages involved received some form of compensation from Thurston's government, although neither Lindt (1893, 51) nor Hocken (1898, 668) mention recompense (Fig. 8).

According to Rukuan elder Aporosa Bulivou, firewalking exhibitions were not yet deterritorialized and commercialized at the time a group of firewalkers from Rukua and Dakuibeqa was invited to participate in the New Zealand International Exhibition held in Christchurch in 1906. They performed nine times under the guidance of Dakuibeqa's *bete levu* Sevanaia Waqasaqa



FIGURE 8. Jonacani Dabea (fifth from left, bearded man wearing a white *sulu*) organized a vilavilairevo ceremony for a vice-regal party on 1 September 1892 in Nawaisomo, Beqa Island. Among the guests were Governor and Lady Thurston, Chief Medical Officer of the colony Bolton Glanvil Corney and his wife, and Basil Thomson (published in Lindt 1893, 56–57).

and Rukua's bete Mesui Toganiyadrava; Tui Sawau (Sawau Paramount Chief) Ratu Peceli Vitaukitoga also participated (Aporosa Bulivou, recorded by Mika Tubanavau in 1978, quoted in Crosby 1988, 68). Occasional exhibitions were held outside Beqa in Suva at the Grand Pacific Hotel, Albert Park, Thurston Botanical Gardens, Fiji Museum, and Government House (Figs. 9, 10).

In 1954, Dakuibeqa's firewalkers were called to escort Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh on a special Tasmanian Empire Limited Airways flight from Suva to Auckland. A group of selected firewalkers, mostly from the *mataqali* Naivilaqata, accompanied by the Tui Sawau Ratu Aca Naborisi and his nephew Ratu Timoci Matanitobua, performed the vilavilairevo for them in Fiji and New Zealand (Fig. 11).

The aftermath of Fijian independence in the 1970s is characterized by a strong sense of an "imagined political community" (Rutz 1995, 77). "Tradition" gained in strength as a consequence of new democratic rules



FIGURE 9. Members of the Sawau community preparing the *lovo* at the New Zealand International Exhibition in Christchurch on 17 December 1906. Courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library.

of political competition between ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians, backed by a consenting Methodist Church's ethnonationalist emphasis (Pigliascio 2012). Taking advantage of the inflow of foreign capital and the support of the Fiji Visitors Bureau, indigenous impresarios like Peceli Vitukawalu, known as the first "ambassador" of Fijian firewalking in Fiji and abroad, brought Sawau performers to New Zealand and Hawai'i, welcomed Prince Charles to Fiji, and obtained long-term contracts with hotels and resorts in Fiji (Fig. 12).

Throughout the 1970s, with the support of Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamiseva Mara, who is considered the founding father of the modern nation of Fiji, the Sawau firewalkers performed internationally and locally. Most notably, between November and December 1972, bete levu Semi Raikadra, Tui Sawau (Sawau Paramount Chief) Ratu Mitieli Baisagale, Ratu Mara's brother Ratu Lefoni Uluilakeba, and seventeen dauvila from Beqa were invited to participate in a six-week trip to India, sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce of Fiji and the Fiji Visitors Bureau, to attend the Seventy-Second Asia Trade Show. Joketani Cokanasiga, at that time an officer of the Fiji Visitors

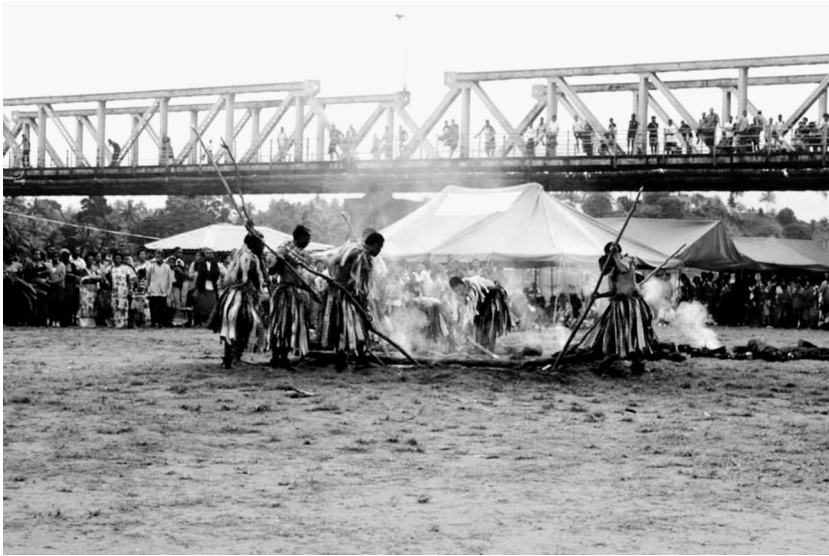


FIGURE 10. Members of the Sawau community preparing the lovo at the Rewa Day celebration held at Syria Park in Nausori, Fiji on 26 July 2013. Courtesy of Felix Colatanavanua.

Bureau, was in charge of escorting the group to India. As he explains below, Dakuibeqa had ties with the central government because Ratu Mara had married Ro Litia Cakobau Lalabalavu Katoafutoga Tuisawau, better known as Adi Lala, who in turn had a close relationship with the Tui Sawau's family:⁹

Dakuibeqa, the acknowledged home of *vila*[*vilarevo*] was always closely associated to the Ministry of Fijian Affairs thanks to Ratu Mara and his wife Adi Lala. Ratu Mara established a *vila*[*vilarevo*] village fund for the domestic shows, and I was the Trustee. What happened is that the firewalkers complained about both their financial and status recognition; thus the housing project took place under the direct superintendence of Ratu Mara, at that time Administrative District Officer in Navua. About ten houses were built with the village fund. I was personally going to Dakuibeqa all the time. (Joketani Cokanasiga, pers. comm.)¹⁰

If the Asaro “mudmen” are strong contenders for becoming national symbols of Papua New Guinea, despite its enormous linguistic and cultural diversity (Otto and Verloop 1996),¹¹ the Sawau firewalkers are



FIGURE 11. Bete levu Semi Raikadra (first on the left, standing) and a group of Sawau firewalkers just before boarding a plane to New Zealand in 1954. Courtesy of Samuela Vakuruivalu.

no less likely to become national symbols of Fiji, as emerged from a conversation I had with Josefa Tuamoto, director of marketing of the Fiji Visitors Bureau:

Do you remember the poster “Hot Days, Hot Nights?” We’ve used the firewalkers in Sydney at Darling Harbour. Would you believe that we had firewalking there? That was years back, before I came into the picture, before I came into the Fiji Visitors Bureau. I know there is documentation there. I think we have done it also in New Zealand. And I don’t know whether they [the firewalkers] have been to the U.S. I know they went to Japan. . . . I think in the past that probably might have been the right campaign. Now, with the information available in the Internet, they [the tourists] know what they want. They come in and they say, “okay, I want to go on a tour that also includes firewalking. I want to go in that and I want to see firewalking. . . .” Yeah, most of them [the tourists] know what they want. . . . Essentially the unique icons in Fiji are firewalking and Fiji Water. . . . The challenge for us, though, at the [Fiji Visitors] Bureau, is to make sure we deliver what they [the tourists] want. (Josefa Tuamoto, pers. comm.)



FIGURE 12. The poster “Hot Days, Hot Nights, Fiji Islands,” conceived by the Fiji Visitors Bureau, and photographed in a house in Beqa. Photography by the author.

Most important, this is also part of the process of reconciliation of the vilavilavevo ceremony, as it moves toward eventually complying with the morals of the wider Fijian community and the Methodist ethnonationalist focus that encourages reinterpretation and renewal rather than removal. In other words, a particular strain of Fijian nationalism within the Methodist church is interested in having the ethnic Fijian community maintain authority over its own sociocultural affairs and tying religious identity to ethnonationalism as tightly as possible (Tomlinson 2009, 166; Pigliasio 2012, 57).

Domesticating the “Myth,” Cannibalizing the “Legend”

Elsewhere (Pigliasio 2012), I have explained how Fijian Methodism allowed a wide range of reordering strategies and reinterpretations of

the vilavilairevo, while Pentecostalism has been marking with infamy the Sawau community, denying its members their own agency in safeguarding tradition. The reproduction of tradition among the Sawau and their vilavilairevo practice is causing an unprecedented dogmatic schism between Fiji's Methodist Church and two Pentecostal Churches in the village of Rukua. These Christian cultural dynamics and social tensions surrounding the vilavilairevo created by a denominational opposition are swiftly reshaping local notions of heritage, social sentiment, and social capital, profoundly harming the vilavilairevo ceremony and its representation.

Over time, the western representation of the “myth” or the “legend” of vilavilairevo has distorted the original meaning of a ceremony that has preserved its practice but lost its verbal explanation. Beginning in 1992, I collected more than 200 references ranging over more than 150 years on Beqa and Sawau history and the firewalking ceremony in Beqa and Oceania. One aspect emerging from the negotiation of the Sawau people's cultural heritage is the western classification of the *italanoa* (narrative) of *nai tekitekivu ni vilavilairevo* (how firewalking began) in Beqa as myth, legend, or folktale. In many cultures, it is hard to draw a sharp line between myths and legends: “Clearly, translation—from one language to another, from one culture to another, from one genre to another, from one medium to another, and from one discourse to another—plays a crucial role in transmission of ‘traditional’ narratives” (Bacchilega 2007, 13, 2010, 3; see also Haring 1995).

The *italanoa* of vilavilairevo and other Fijian popular *italanoa*, collected and identified in colonial times as “legends” or “myths,” served to imagine and market a new touristic product constructed for non-Fijians, where “tourism operates as a form of translation” (Bacchilega 2007, 16). Building on Bacchilega's analysis of the Hawaiian *mo'olelo* (stories) published in popular magazines and books beginning in the late nineteenth century, I have elsewhere explained how the Fijian *italanoa* of vilavilairevo has been mistakenly associated with western conceptions of legends, myths, and fairy tales from the past and, hence, misunderstood, trivialized, and, more recently, demonized by church officials (Pigliasco 2012).

The above is an example of what Niranjana (1992, 47) calls “intercultural translation, or the translating of one culture into terms intelligible to another.” It is an “epistemic violation,” according to Bacchilega (2007, 15) and Spivak (1999, 161), or a “domestication,” according to Venuti (1998, 5), in that the colonized world is recodified in terms of the colonizers' world. In the case of the *italanoa* of vilavilairevo, the epistemic violation or domestication appears to me very selective, pointing at, distorting, or highlighting

only some key aspects of the Sawau immortal *italanoa*, while ignoring others. If you allow me the pun, the process resembles a sort of cannibalization, where salvageable parts are taken from the original and disabled ceremony, because it is deprived of the offerings (*madrāli*) to the patron spirits of Fijian firewalking (*veli*) and managed into an event that is more time efficient and more receptive to aesthetic manipulation.¹² This ongoing process of cultural cannibalization offers a nonthreatening Disneyfied image of Fiji and its cannibal past to the tourist industry. Interestingly, despite the changed context, the indigenous actors cooperate very well, for they generally perceive socio-cultural continuity between the old and the new situation.¹³

Film has also proved a particularly powerful form of translation and objectification; and translating cultural norms for the screen, particularly those from isolated or relatively unknown communities, according to Vilsoni Hereniko (2010: 16–17), is a daunting task. In the process of the cultural cannibalization of the vilavilairevo, perhaps Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Tom Vendetti's thirty-minute *Fiji Firewalkers* (2003) stands out. It cheerfully mixes Fijian folklore and village life recodified through a voiceover by new age musician Paul Horn. The film builds to a crescendo with the firewalking ceremony. Although firewalkers from the chiefly village of Dakuibeqa refused to participate in the filming because the script included a surreal cannibalistic ending in which the director, Vendetti himself, is chased and eaten, a group of villagers from Rukua accepted Vendetti's profitable offer in Thomas's words (1994, 64) "imposing the trope of savagism upon themselves, yet in an unserious fashion that makes the term 'denigration' inappropriate." According to my longtime field collaborator Mika Tubanavau, firewalkers also accepted the requirement to wear Tahitian-style firewalking *liku* (skirts) of *Cordyline* leaves, which according to Vendetti were more authentic than the pandanus skirts traditionally worn in Fiji (Mika Tubanavau pers. comm.).

Although tourism certainly operates an ideological framing that has the power to reshape culture to its own needs (MacCannell 1992, 1), a similar or greater abuse comes from the scientists who reframe the local narratives into a different generic shape. For example, in Stymeist's (1996) widely cited "Transformation of Vilavilairevo in Tourism," published by the *Annals of Tourism Research*, the process of cannibalization of the Fijian firewalking ceremony reaches its perfection. Stymeist appears to draw his conjectures about the vilavilairevo embodying "numerous referents to war and cannibalism" (Stymeist 1996, 15) on the basis of an arguably spurious rhymed translation of the *italanoa* of vilavilairevo:

"What may thy name be, libertine?/ Methinks a rogue I spy": / The dwarf he sighed and then replied, / "Tui Namoliwai." / "Namoliwai,

Namoliwai, / Now, harken unto me, / I sought an eel, but thou this
 night / Mine offering shalt be.” / “The clubbing and the baking
 whole / Will follow in due course: / But these are items of detail /
 Which call for no discourse” (Davidson 1920, 93).

The *italanoa* itself is about a gift promised to the storyteller for his stories. Tuiqalita (or Tui Qalita), a *bete* of the Naivilaqata priestly clan of the Sawau community of Beqa, promised to bring an eel he had seen in a hole upstream in the Namoliwai river region. Tui Namoliwai is the mythical chief of the *veli*, a term used in Beqa and Fiji to describe fairy creatures or gnomes often found in the mountainous areas of Fiji, and populating Fijian oral histories. Each variant of the tale renegotiates the sequence of verbal utterances, acts, and gestures performed by Tuiqalita and Tui Namoliwai. These include: Tuiqalita promising a gift to the storyteller; Tuiqalita discovering Tui Namoliwai; Tui Namoliwai pleading for his life; Tuiqalita negotiating and accepting the gift of *vilavilairevo*; Tuiqalita and Tui Namoliwai performing the firewalking; and their agreement and farewell.

However, according to Stymeist, “the many prominent, multivocal references to war and cannibalism in *vilavilairevo* are unmistakable” (Stymeist 1996, 8). In his interpretation, the ritual is about the symbolic “conquering of the earth-oven in which a human being might be buried and baked” (Stymeist 1996, 9). I have elsewhere (Pigliasco 2010) observed that this practice of allegedly “conquering the oven” did not become pervasive and institutionalized among other tribes at war in Fiji who also used earth ovens. In other words, why, in centuries of exo-cannibalism, should this deflecting practice have become established only in Beqa? Beqa is a small island not particularly notorious for cannibalism compared to the provinces of Rewa, Ra, Bau, Somosomo, and Rakiraki. Elsewhere in Fiji, cannibal orgies were also probably infrequent (Derrick 2001, 21) and confined to ceremonial sacrifices in celebration of victory, the launching of a chief’s canoe, or the lowering of a chief’s mast (Thomson 1968, 103). In addition, as I have also pointed out before (Pigliasco 2010), the Huahine-Raiatean anthropophagic tradition is not very rich, because in Polynesia, human sacrifices were mostly symbolic, involving mutilation and insults in addition to the actual consumption of the flesh of the victims (see Portlock 1789; Mariner 1817; Ellis 1853; Oliver 1974; Valeri 1985; Cook 1999). It appears unlikely that, whether the firewalking ceremony was transmitted from Fiji to Huahine-Ra’iātea or vice versa, an identical ceremony with the same rules and syntactic structure had a completely different function.¹⁴

In addition, it should be noted that the gruesome details of Fijian cannibal feasts (see Endicott 1923; Diapea 1928; Lockerby 1982; Erskine 1987) were

not necessarily accurate firsthand accounts as claimed but constructions of idealized anthropophagy rituals. For example, William Endicott, third mate on the *Glide*, published a book titled *Wrecked among Cannibals in the Fijis*. An appendix included the story “A Cannibal Feast in the Fiji Islands by an Eye-Witness,” supposedly written after having seen such a feast in March 1831. The story was also published in Endicott’s home-town newspaper, *The Danvers Courier*, on 16 August 1845.¹⁵ Nowhere in Endicott’s original log, conserved at the Peabody Essex Museum, is there “any reference to his having witnessed a cannibal feast” (Obeyesekere 2005, 167). Obeyesekere (2005) believes that who actually wrote the cannibal feast story is not as important as that it was a typical fabrication of ritual, cannibalistic vengeance.

Several scholars have argued that the nineteenth-century ethnographic imagination of cannibalism was a colonizing trope, a tool of empire to create a moral distance from the exotic “Other” (Arens 1979; Hulme 1998; Obeyesekere 1998, 2005; Goldman 1999; Dixon 2001; Kilgour 2001; Lindenbaum 2004; Halvaksz 2006).¹⁶ Another problem emerging from Stymeist’s reading is his argument that sitting on the *lovo* emulates a former practice of placing the *bokola* (cannibal victims) in a sitting position and insulting and mutilating them before cooking them (Stymeist 1996, 8). The supposed sitting posture of cannibal victims comes from a single reference in Peter Dillon’s description of a cannibal feast he claims to have seen on 6 September 1813 in Bau (Dillon 1829: 14–5 discussed in Clunie 2003, 55; Davidson 1975, 36):¹⁷

Fires were prepared and ovens heated for the reception of the bodies of our ill-fated companions, who, as well as the Bow [Bau] chiefs and their slaughtered men, were brought to the fires in the following manner. Two of the Vilear [Wailea] party placed a stick or limb of a tree on their shoulders, over which were thrown the body of their victims, with their legs hanging downwards on one side, and their heads on the other. They were thus carried in triumph to the ovens prepared to receive them. Here they were placed in a sitting posture while the savages sung and danced with joy over their prizes, and fired several musket-balls through each of the corpses, all the muskets of the slain having fallen into their hands. No sooner was this ceremony over than the priests began to cut and dissect those unfortunate men in our presence. Their flesh was immediately placed in the ovens to be baked and prepared as a repast for the victors. (Dillon 1829: 14–15 discussed in Clunie 2003, 55)

Interestingly, no other accounts from seamen, traders, or travelers include a description of *bokola* placed in such a position inside the *lovo*. Obeyes-

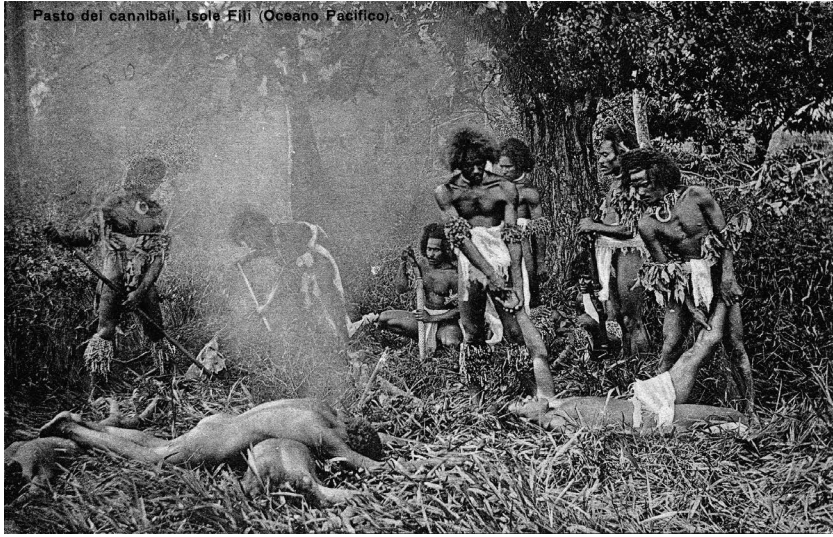


FIGURE 13. (Cannibal Meal, Fiji Islands Pacific Ocean.) Unused postcard, publisher: Edit. British & Foreign Imports & Exports – Milan, Italy. Copyright 52845. According to Ewins, this is the second staged “cannibal” production of New Zealand photographer Thomas Andrews around 1890. The title he gave to it was “The Banquet.” (Courtesy of Rod Ewins’s private collection.)

ekere believes that Dillon, who was holed up during a battle, was unlikely to have seen such activities, and invented the seemingly real account of Fijian man-eating “quite unlike genuine cannibal tricksters” (Obeyesekere 2001, 111) to present himself as a hero in the midst of savages (Obeyesekere 2005: 198–89).¹⁸

“Cannibal talks” are still one of the most important topics (Fig. 13) in cultural criticism today, for cannibalism pierces discussions of difference and identity, savagery and civilization, and the consequences of Orientalism (Kilgour 2001, vii; Lindenbaum 2004, 476; Obeyesekere 2005, 265). Building on Bacchilega’s (2007, 16) observation that “the set of visuals and ideas associated in the tourist’s mind with a particular locale” are reinforced by the conflation of messages, it is notable that firewalking is often presented through a variety of jolly reinterpretations of the italo-anoa (oral account) of the vilavilairevo inside the enclavic tourist space, creating a “circus exotique” atmosphere, as in the Arts Village’s 2005 brochure:¹⁹

If you are looking for the Fijian Hot Spot, it doesn't get toastier than bare feet, scorching rocks, and one of Fiji's greatest traditions—the Beqa Firewalkers. You can see it at the Arts Village Firewalking Show. Be prepared to be astonished. Be prepared to laugh, but most important, be prepared to have a spectacular experience. This show is a mixture of firewalking, fashion parades, singing, dancing, acrobatics, stunts, storytelling and fighting and is purely for your entertainment. The fire is smoking, the stones are sizzling hot, and the atmosphere is moody. You start to get the feeling that what you're about to witness is not for the faint hearted. Now the firewalkers emerge from the island, chanting. It is suddenly clear that firewalking is a male only practice. One by one, they do the impossible and pass over the stones with grace and pride. Would you walk barefoot through an 850°C (1,562°F) fire? This is not something to be tried at home.

Embodying Postmodern Aesthetics

Communications between artists and consumers are indirect. The mass dissemination of visual messages about cultural products in Fiji and other exotic destinations contributes to a dialogic construction of a meta-culture of newness: the new cultural identity of peoples who are visited by tourists (Urban 2001). Tourism authenticates and renegotiates local cultural products. Through feedback between the market and cultural producers, local cultural expressions are becoming increasingly adapted to the tastes of the audience.

The authentication process happens outside “Bourdieuian space” and right inside enclavic tourist spaces. Nakamura observes that:

When natives stop acting like natives—that is to say, when they deviate from the stereotypes that have been set up to signify their identities—their “aura” is lost: they are no longer “authentic” (Nakamura 2002, 6).

In other words, in these new, altered realities, the native artist/performer has to respond to a distant alien aesthetic. Witnessing western tourists complaining that the Sawau dauvila (firewalkers) wore trunks under their *kie-kie* (colored pandanus leaf men's skirts), reminded me of what was observed by Silverman (1999, 2004) on the Sepik; an inappropriate ritual attire may offend tourists' sensibilities; however, it does not affect either the ritual efficacy or the ritual practitioner (Fig. 14).



FIGURE 14. A dauvila from Naceva village performing at the Royal Davui unconcerned about his floral surf trunks under the costume. Photography by the author.

A major concern of the tourism industry is to anticipate tourists' tastes, applying in tourism advertising and messages a sort of theory of reception aesthetics to meet the consumers' horizon of expectation. Hence, when traditional cultural expressions become commodified and showcased in response to those anticipated tastes, a few questions arise: What is the nature of the aesthetic dialog between performer and audience in cross-cultural encounters? Does the performer apprehend his own aesthetic experience in the reflection provided by the audience's reactions?

The communicative process occurs indirectly between artists and consumers (Fig. 15). The "firewalking impresarios" described above are similar to what Jules-Rosette (1984, 16), Crick (1989, 332), and Van den Berghe (1995, 581) call "middlemen," cultural interpreters and transformers of popular conceptions who renegotiate the cultural product to their own advantage (see Evans 1976; McKean 1976; Van den Berghe 1980; Cohen 1988; Bendix 1989; Nuñez 1989).

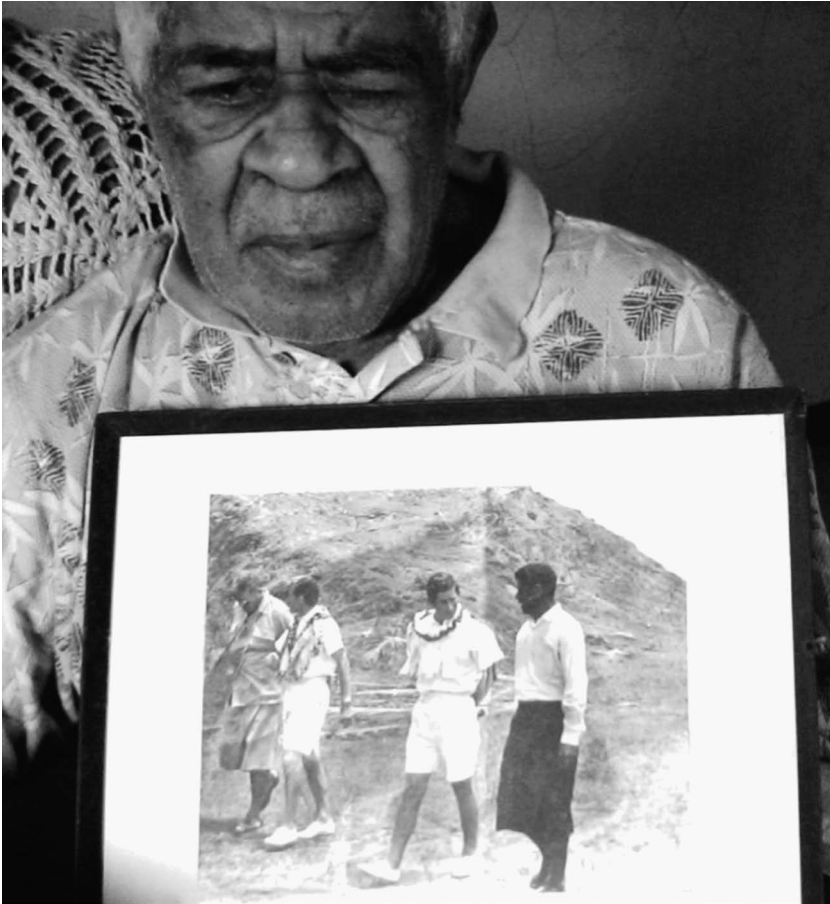


FIGURE 15. Peceli Vitukawalu holding a picture of Prince Charles (second right) on his visit to Rukua on 12 February 1974; also visible are Peceli himself (first right) and Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister Ratu Penaia Ganilau (first left). Photography by the author.

I stress the idea that aesthetics in contemporary anthropology is a problem of representation and communication rather than of taste. Jules-Rosette's (1984, 229) work with African tourist art indicates that cultural products are dialogically constructed through mirroring and double reflections between the artists and the audiences. Silverman (1999) suggests that the native artist looks across the aesthetic boundary at the tourists' faces to interpret their reading of the art. Similarly, Bruner observes that Third World South Pacific

cultural displays serve as a “mirror for western fantasies,” reflecting back in performance what the tourist desires (Bruner 1991, 228).

Artists and consumers are joint producers of tourist art as a communicative process. The communication is indirect. The pattern resembles that of mass-mediated communication, because the artist/performer may never come into direct contact with the consumer. The consumers, in turn, rely upon middlemen and retailers for their evaluation of what is sold (Jules-Rosette 1984, 194). Studies of the effects of tourism on host societies are replete with examples of cultural products that, through a dialogic feedback process along the market chain to its producers, are becoming increasingly adapted to the tastes of the guests (see Graburn 1984; Jules-Rosette 1984; Cohen 1988; Bendix 1989; Picard 1990; Bruner 1991; Van Den Berghe 1995; de Burlo 1996; Lindberg and Johnson 1997; Silverman 1999; Fillitz 2002; Chhabra 2005). Over the last century, the Sawau iconic performance has been reshaped by the middlemen (their impresarios) and by the western aesthetics reflected in the tourist enclaves that constantly reinterpret and renegotiate ethnic Fijian cultural products to transform them into marketable ones.

Another example of such processes is the employment by Methodist officials in Fiji of a parallel between the Beqan firewalkers and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walking through the fiery furnace of Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. This has become a hoary leitmotiv in church sermons and in the cultural education kindly provided for tourists by hotel emcees as part of a Methodist ethnonationalist emphasis responsible for refashioning ancient beliefs and practices in accordance with the Fijian Methodist Church's dogma in response to an Evangelical emphasis on newness that has recently been trying to ban the firewalking performance in Fiji (Pigliasio 2012). The Methodists' use of the biblical account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego follows the same pattern illustrated by Toren (1988, 696), instantiating Fijian tradition, and adapting it without denying historical change or doing violence to tradition.

Leach argues that “logically aesthetics and ethics are identical. If we are to understand the ethical rules of a society, it is the aesthetic that we must study” (Leach 1954, 12; see also Arno 2003, 809). The traditionally culture-bound aesthetics of Sawau firewalking performers index their intuition of the *kila ni bula vakayalo* (social, historical cosmos) moving away from mythic reality and toward global modernity. In his early writings, Benedetto Croce (1921)—a Neapolitan thinker who in America is sidestepped and relegated to the shadows of Vico, Gramsci, and Gentile—argued that aesthetics must be identified with intuition, which he used in the Latin sense of achieving knowledge from direct perception or contemplation. Berleant (2002, 20) observes that aesthetic perception plays a fundamental role in the art creator's or performer's

mind, for the “authenticity” of the aesthetic experience “provides a powerful means of reappraising and modulating ancestral cultural experience by digging beneath the layers of accrued meanings and cognitive habits.”

Believing that aesthetics is consistently linked with ritual communication, Arno has more recently argued that the accomplishment of meaning that is outside of language—meaning that draws directly on social experience and spills out of the language that attempts to contain it—has often been talked about as involving intuition. (Arno 2003: 816–17)

Similarly, taking Bakhtin’s (1981, 276) ideas about language and social dialog, Bruner (2005: 170–73) argues that stories are dialogic with culture and history, where tellers and listeners actively engage in an interpretative act to make the story meaningful to themselves and relevant to their own life situations; each story is a dialogic process of many historically situated particular tellings. In this aesthetic abstraction of the commodified product, form and meaning conform to a stereotypical package according to a western sumptuary law of taste.

Conclusions

Jolly (1997, 121) asks if Euro-American fantasies “are mere foreign fictions which bear no relation to the realities of Island life.” Her answer is “unfortunately not. They surely distort the lived reality.” These representations are “an intimate part of the processes of colonization, militarization, and neocolonial dependency.” The Sawau vilavilairevo indexes how representations spurred by the processes of the tourist industry and religious conversion become part of the Sawau realities, narratives, and aesthetics. In Sawau, “reality,” vilavilairevo represents a process through which the past and aspects of Sawau social life derived from the past are revalued in the present, where the western spectator provides a new sort of audience (Lindstrom and White 1994, 14). In other words, although their cultural products are accommodated to a post-modern present, refashioning these products provides them a meaningful connection between past and present (Bankston and Henry 2000: 402–03), reformulating their identity *sui generis* in important respects (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 142).

Borrowing again from Comaroff and Comaroff (2009, 150), ethnicity is inevitably becoming a commodity involving a dialogic construction of narration (Bruner 2005, 170) to achieve tourism reality and shared benefits. Although challenges of cultural loss, misrepresentation, and misappropriation are raised by the situation, and negative aspects of the cultural manifestations of tourism have been a roaring leitmotif of a certain literature, tourism is seen as a viable opportunity for economic development. The vilavilairevo suggests

how staged performances of heritage and the images they produce for the global tourism audience also afford the performers opportunities for asserting various forms of cultural hybridity, creative agency, and aesthetic innovation and for supplementing the community's social capital (Silverman 2004, 339; Lipp 2009; Pigliascio 2010; Pigliascio and Lipp 2011). Bruner argues that performance is "constitutive," because every time heritage or tradition is enacted, it is given a new life, regardless of where that enactment takes place (Bruner 2005, 257), which shows how the heritage industry is a "new mode of cultural production" and its survival depends on intangible cultural property, which lives in the performance (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 150; Pigliascio 2009a, 2010, 2011).

On the other hand, the cultural cannibalization process operated by the state and the tourism industry reshapes, reframes, and recodifies Sawau cultural heritage, fostering "the illusion of no mediation, to produce 'tourist realism' which is itself a mediated effect" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 8). Early colonists feared the indigenous Fijians would disappear completely unless cushioned from the harsh impact of market forces (Fraenkel and Firth 2007, 3). Thomas (1994: 34–35) points out that Fijians are "not only typed as cannibals, but also radically detemporalized, in that the history of their engagement with Europeans is erased." Edmond (1997, 14) reminds us, however, that native cultures did not begin, or begin again, with European contact. There was continuity as well as discontinuity across the rupture caused by the arrival of the colonizer. Over more than two centuries, across Fiji's dramatic changes, the Naivilaqata's gift transformed itself into a utilitarian cultural elaboration, which through the process of cultural cannibalization outlined in this chapter has made "the foreign power indigenous" (Jolly 2005, 138).

A dialogic affection for the colonial authority and a spiritual repositioning spared the vilavilarevo from being outlawed. Refashioning national stereotypes, the hybridization offered by the independent nation of Fiji first, and subsequently by the tourist industry, spared it from extinction. Nevertheless, the most recent external forces operated by the tourism industry and the new Christian beliefs produce alarming modes of interference in which, to paraphrase Tomlinson (2013: 133–34; Robbins 2007), ideologies of rupture and newness are becoming more central to many Christian and western understandings, in contrast to anthropological assumptions of deep cultural continuity.

NOTES

1. Elsewhere (Pigliascio 2007, 2009b, 2010), I have written that my study of the vilavilarevo in Fiji, and comparatively of the *umu tī* (firewalking ceremony) in Ra'iatea, leads me

to suspect that in Beqa the practice had the character of a first fruits ceremony (*isevu*), but is not a typical one. In Beqa, the vilavilairevo was staged whenever they had a large quantity of *masawe* (cordyline rhizomes) to be baked (Thomson 1894, 194; NM 1885, 2; Toganivalu 1914, 2). Oral accounts recognize vilavilairevo as part of a thanksgiving ceremony (Pigliasco 2007, 2009b, 2010; see also Young 1925, 222; Kenn 1949, 26, 32; Crosby 1988). Analysis of the rhizomes and stems of *Cordyline fruticosa* and *Cordyline terminalis* reveals that they contain a soluble polysaccharide composed mainly of fructose that once baked could be stored for long periods. The root was also baked and stored to supply carbohydrates (Pigliasco 2007, 2009b, 2010). Although the observance of taboos has become in the meantime less necessary as a function of Christian practice, until the early 2000s, every time the masawe were cooked, the *bete* (traditional priest) of the Naivilaqaata clan offered a small but symbolically important portion of *qalu* or *vakalolo* (a sweet pudding) made of taro mixed with baked cordyline sugar to the *veli* (little gods of firewalking). These *madrali* (offerings) were a necessary condition for the desacralization of the new harvest.

2. Robert Fulton was a physician on a New Zealand ship. He had one of the stones from the *lovo* carried for miles in a palm-leaf basket back to the ship. He tried to cool it off in the sea, but the stone, still hot, fell out of the basket and he had to drop it overboard, conserving only a fragment, later analyzed by Professor Park of the Otago School of Mines (Simpson 1955, 238).

3. Notably, Colonel Gudgeon, Governor of Rarotonga in Rarotonga (Gudgeon 1899: 58–60; Henry 1901, 54; Lang 1901, 454) and George Ely Hall, the Turkish Consul-General, with Commodore Germinot in Taha'a in 1900 (Henry 1901, 54; Lang 1901, 454).

4. Tuck's Post Card. Publisher Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd.

5. As for the village Rukua, religious divergences and ongoing tensions among villagers caused the sporadic performances to be staged "outside" the village's boundaries at the old settlement of Naduruvesi, often without the explicit consent of the Naivilaqaata clan custodians in Dakuibeqa (Pigliasco 2007: 304–05, 2012).

6. Some either simplistic or superficial analyses have attempted to infuse the vilavilairevo with "referents to war and cannibalism" (Stymeist 1996, 15), or "magic" and "idolatry" (Newland 2004, 8).

7. Elaisa "Junior" Cavu, Naviti Resort, Fiji, 23 March 23, 2005, h. 18:30.

8. Fiji's first theme park, Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre (PHCC), less than a mile east of Deuba, modeled after the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawai'i, was renovated and reopened as Arts Village in 2005. Until then, under the direction of Manoa Rasigatale, impresario, playwright, and a connoisseur of Fiji's ancient traditions, the vilavilairevo ceremony was reshaped and choreographed into the PHCC's signature experience.

9. After Beqa was conquered by Rewa in 1839, the Tui Sawau family acknowledged that they were the subjects of Roko Tui Dreketi, the paramount chief of Rewa Province, to which Beqa belongs (France 1969, 82). When the *masi* (title) of the Tui Sawau was returned to Beqa, the Roko Tui Dreketi and the Tui Sawau Ratu Peceli Vitaukitoga agreed that in commemoration the Tui Dreketi's surname from then on would be changed to one word: Tuisawau.

10. Cokanasiga was formerly an officer of the Fiji Visitors Bureau, then went into politics and served as the Minister for Public Works and Energy (2000–01) and Minister of Home Affairs (2001–04).

11. In the 1960s, a National Geographic Society photographer on assignment in Papua New Guinea paid for a staged performance in the Asaro River valley village of Kurumugi. The name “mudmen” was applied to the performers by tourist agents, and the dances were lengthened (Schechner 1988; Otto and Verloop 1996).

12. See note 1.

13. Tourism’s literature is replete with examples of local people interpreting novel situations in traditional terms and, thus, perceiving a continuity of cultural meaning that may escape the tourist-observer (Greenwood 1982, 27; Smith 1982, 134; Goldberg 1983, 488; Cohen 1988, 383; Errington and Gewertz 1989, 51; Picard 1990, 62).

14. See note 1.

15. Sahlins argues that “A Cannibal Feast in the Fiji Islands by an Eye-Witness” was actually written by Endicott’s shipmate Henry Fowler, since an “F” is inscribed at the bottom of the newspaper article (Sahlins 2003, 3).

16. Representations of the savage “other” were enormously popular in Europe. Another example is the *Journal of William Lockerby: Sandalwood Trader in the Fijian Islands during the Years 1808–1809*, which contains a gruesome account of a cannibal feast (1992: 44–45, 59–59). William Lockerby was a mate on the *Jenny*. His captain left him stranded in Vanua Levu, where he lived from May 1808 to June 1809 under the protection of the chief of Bua. Obeyesekere argues that, although there is no doubt that he was present in Vanua Levu, his account was not written in Fiji but long after and that he injected gruesome details into his narrative to please the reading public (Obeyesekere 2005: 190–91).

17. Peter Dillon was born in Martinique, the son of an Irish immigrant. A self-proclaimed explorer, raconteur, and discoverer of the fate of the La Pérouse expedition, he sailed to Fiji in 1813 as third mate on the *Hunter* under Captain James Robson to look for sandalwood.

18. An analysis of Dillon’s description of the battle also reveals invented names and inconsistencies, such as in the number of dead Europeans (Obeyesekere 2005, 220). Dillon’s graphic account was nevertheless used in Maynard and Dumas’ *The Whalers* (1937). Maynard was the surgeon of a French whaling ship in New Zealand around 1838. Several of his works about his adventures were edited by his friend Alexandre Dumas (Père), including *Les Baleiniers* (1861, translated in 1937 as *The Whalers*). Dillon’s adventures appeared also in George Bayly’s *Sea Life Sixty Years Ago* (1885), a collection of sentimental reminiscences based on his unpublished *Journal of Voyages*.

19. A recent webpage on www.artsvillage.com.fj reads: “The stage comes to life with the spectacular meke and fire walking shows. They include the phenomenal Beqa Firewalkers and re-enactments of ancient Fijian legends. This is an extravaganza of stunts, singing, music, dancing, costumes, storytelling and legends” (<http://www.artsvillage.com.fj/culture.html> [accessed 30 October 2014]).

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