

The Early Development of the Bula Tale Co-operative in Fiji Islands : Its Experimental Practice and Aftermath

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The Early Development of the Bula Tale Co-operative in Fiji Islands: Its Experimental Practice and Aftermath

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The aim of this paper is to depict how Fijian society dealt with the Bula Tale co-operative with special reference to its involvement in communist controversy. The Bula Tale was a co-operative group and commenced its activities in the early 1960's mainly in four villages of Nadroga/Navosa province, Fiji. It was also known as the Bula Tale Communist Party for a short period. What is conspicuous about this group is that its members radically changed their way of life for better living. For example, they not only abolished or simplified some aspects of Fijian customary procedures such as marriage and funerals, but also prohibited themselves from drinking kava. At the same time, the Bula Tale people encouraged themselves to work hard. Owing to these striking features of their practices and provocative naming of communist party, the Bula Tale caused the sensation and had no choice but to relocate their settlement to another province. In this paper I follow this uproar of the Bula Tale and try to interpret this event on the background of the 1960's Fiji.

Key words: inversion of tradition; co-operative group; communism; the Bula Tale; the Lami

In this paper¹⁾ I will examine the early development of the Bula Tale co-operative group in the southwestern part of Vitilevu, Fiji Islands. The Bula Tale launched its activities in 1961 mainly in four villages of Nadroga/ Navosa province, namely Togovere, Kabisi, Emuri, and Vagadra. The Bula Tale tried to change some aspects of Fijian traditional customs to improve their standard of living. Interestingly, it identified itself for a period as communist (*Komiunisi*).

In spite of such an interesting historical event, there are few research papers about this group. In 1970 a local Methodist preacher Eparama Naivolasisiga submitted a report on the Bula Tale, based on a few months fieldwork (Naivolasisiga, 1970: 1-21). In his masteral thesis, Simione Durutalo described the origin of Bula Tale from a socio-political viewpoint and ascribed it to alienation of land rights (Durutalo, 1985: 406-410). Although later studies on the Bula Tale more or less accepted this viewpoint, his explanation holds true only for Togovere and Kabisi. Other villages have stable land rights (e.g. Niwa 2005).

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Nicholas Thomas treated an aspect of the group in his influential paper as an example of “inversion of tradition” (Thomas, 1997: 186-209). Although his analysis provides us with interesting insights regarding the process of objectification of tradition, he missed information on the Bula Tale which was buried in the vernacular newspaper *Vakalelewa ni Pasifika*. He mainly relied on remarks of Apimeleki Ramatau Mataka in *The Fiji Times* as we see in the following section, although Ramatau was only a temporary leader of the Bula Tale.

In his comprehensive book on Fijian history of 20th century, Brij Lal touched on the Bula Tale briefly as an example of a forerunner of political parties (Lal, 1992: 188-190). Besides these papers, we can find only brief references to the Bula Tale (cf. Howard, 1991: 61-62, 83; Kasuga, 2001: 339-340; Lawson, 1991: 120-121; Mamak, 1978: 50-51; Mayer, 1963: 100; Meo *et al.*, 1985: 4; Nayacakalou 1975: 95; Norton, 1990: 70; Robertson, 1998: 166; Sutherland, 1992: 117).²⁾ To sum up, the activities and development of the Bula Tale have never been fully studied.³⁾

The aim of this paper is to depict how Fijian society dealt with the Bula Tale with special reference to its period of communist party.⁴⁾ In the next section, I will give a short account of the Bula Tale. Then, I will examine how surrounding societies dealt with the Bula Tale’s “Communist Manifesto”. At the same time, I will follow how the Bula Tale was chased away from its home villages and split the organization due to conflicts with neighbouring societies. In the final section, I would like to discuss the positionalities with which the Bula Tale had to cope with in the 1960’s.⁵⁾

What is the Bula Tale? : Its Characteristic Practices

The Bula Tale is an unregistered co-operative group. The meaning of *bula tale* is “rebirth” in Fijian and these words evoke “the resurrection of Jesus” for Fijian people who are mainly followers of Christianity. What is conspicuous about this co-operative is that its members radically changed their way of life for better living. Under the leadership of Apimeleki Ramatau Mataka,⁶⁾ the Bula Tale abolished or simplified some Fijian customary procedures. For example, it simplified the process of rituals such as marriage and funerals so as not to spend too much time and money on them. It refused to use *tabua*⁷⁾ within the community and prohibited its members from drinking *yaqona*.⁸⁾ Both *tabua* and *yaqona* are such essential components of almost every Fijian ritual activity that it is very difficult for ordinary Fijians to imagine how to perform rituals without these two.

At the same time, the Bula Tale people were required to strictly follow their labour ethic. They did not hesitate to work even on Sundays, which later caused disgust among some sections of Fijian society, especially Sabbatarian-oriented Methodist followers. They regulated their everyday lives by a timetable and encouraged themselves to work hard together not only on weekdays, but also on Sundays.

The daily schedule was as follows; they got up at 5 o'clock a.m. and began to clean their village green; they took a rest at 7 o'clock; they had breakfast at 8 o'clock and began to work again after an hour; they started to prepare for lunch at 11; they had lunch from 12 o'clock; they returned to work again from 1 o'clock and kept working until 4 p.m., finishing their work at that time. After that, they spent their evening at will. Additional work on their farm depended on their will; they had dinner at 6 o'clock; they went to bed at 9 o'clock (VP 6/13/1961: 12).

Consumption of alcohols and cigarettes was strictly prohibited. According to informants, they were not allowed to possess private property such as clothes and the likes in the early days of the Bula Tale. Furthermore, instead of sending their children to school, the Bula Tale people educated their children by themselves. To sum up, their way of life was entirely different from that of ordinary Fijians. A Fijian who had some acquaintance with the Bula Tale once said to me, "The Bula Tale people are not Fijians".

Birth of the Bula Tale

The Bula Tale was established after the shutdown of the Tabanivono Co-operative (Naivolasi-ga, 1970), and formally commenced its activities as the Bula Tale on 10 January 1961 mainly in four villages of Nadroga/ Navosa province, namely Togovere, Kabisi, Emuri and Vagadra. When the Bula Tale first opened a market in Nadroga/ Navosa province, both the *Roko*⁹⁾ of Nadroga/Navosa, as well as a relative of *Ka Levu*, the paramount chief of the region, are said to have attended the opening ceremony (VP 8/31/1961: 9). The lifestyle of the members soon caught people's attention and a vernacular newspaper named *Vakalelewa ni Pasifika* started covering their activities as early as 13 July 1961. On 12 August 1961, a national newspaper, *The Fiji Times* also carried articles referring to the Bula Tale as "the Bula Tale Association".

Taking heed of this group, the Fijian Affairs Board, a governmental organization founded in 1944, issued a comment. The Fijian Affairs Board administered Fijian affairs in the colony. The Deputy Secretary for Fijian Affairs at that time was Ratu Kamisese Mara, an eastern high chief. After examining the constitution of the Bula Tale, he suggested to Ramatau that he amend some clauses that were likely to be at odds with the law of the colony. At the same time, he emphatically advised Ramatau to study rules relating to co-operative and to seek advice from the registrar of co-operative societies, F.E.M. Warner. The co-operative society was an officially authorized association which the colonial government had initiated to facilitate the economic development of local society.

Ratu Mara thought that the Bula Tale should grow under that framework. He also advised provincial officials not to suppress the Bula Tale's activities by force, but to try to instruct the Bula Tale to follow the rules of the colony, as one of the purposes of that co-operative was to promote

“economic development”(FT 8/15/1961: 3).

We should note that Ratu Mara, who at least looked through the Bula Tale’s constitution and met Ramatau, was not cautious about the Bula Tale at this stage. The acting *Roko Tui* Nadroga of Nadroga/ Navosa also had several meetings with Ramatau and got some information about the activities of the Bula Tale (FT 8/15/1961: 3). This means that even though the Bula Tale people led a unique way of life under its own rules, it was not recognized as dangerous enough to be banned by the government.

The Declaration of the Bula Tale as a Communist Organization

On 24 August 1961, the Bula Tale reached a turning point. Ramatau defined the Bula Tale’s activities as “Communists” in public. Ramatau contacted the Fiji Times and declared that the Bula Tale Association had changed its name to the Bula Tale Communist Party.

The Bula Tale Communist Party was “Communitic in theory and in practice”, Ramatau asserted. Its organization would be a “third government” next to the colonial government and the Fijian Administration, which was a separate administration for native Fijians. He reportedly said that “the party would have nothing more to do with Fijian Affairs Regulations, but it would abide by the laws of the land”. “If it is Communism which will make things better for everybody, then why not”, he added (FT 8/25/1961: 3; cf. VG 8/29/1961; Lal, 1992: 188).

After this announcement, some people supported this “Communist Manifesto”. For example, the Indo-Fijian Pritam Singh expressed his admiration for the Bula Tale Communist Party because, in his opinion, this group had made the first attempt from within Fijian community to improve their standard of living (FT 8/25/1961: 3).

A number of Fijians who had sympathy for this party also expressed their support. For example, the former union organizer of Cakaudrove, Vanualevu, Esekaia Bolabola expressed his support for the Bula Tale Communist Party. He said, “ever since Fiji was ceded to Great Britain in 1874, the Fijians have been suffering, more particularly under the present outdated and chaotic Fijian Administration” (FT 8/25/1961: 3). The Fijians needed a change from this situation, and so “if Communism is the answer to our problems,... by all means let it come” (FT 8/25/1961: 3). Laitia Saini of Nayau, Lau, also made sympathetic comments to the leader of the Bula Tale, “If what Apimeleki is doing is ‘Communism’ or any other type of ‘ism’, why not?” (FT 8/25/1961: 3; cf. Durutalo, 1985: 408-409).

It is clear from these comments that some people, regardless of their ethnicity, especially those who were critical of the government of the day, interpreted and accepted the activities of the Bula Tale as an attempt to achieve better living.

Reaction toward the Bula Tale

Unfortunately for the Bula Tale, the word “communism” was too provocative in the period of Cold War even in Fiji. This word might have come to Ramatau’s mind because some practices and ideals of the Bula Tale such as the communalization of private property sounded similar to those of communism. At any rate, once the term “communist” appeared in the media, it went out of his control. As a result, this “Communist Manifesto” caused a great sensation across wide sections of Fiji.

For instance, the Fijian Association and the Fijian and Rotuman Ratepayers’ Association issued a joint statement, in which they criticized the Bula Tale Communist Party bitterly. The Fijian Association was a Fijian group founded in 1956. This group partly consisted of high chiefs of Fiji and had strong connections with the colonial government.

According to the statement, “Apimeleki Ramatau Mataka has claimed through your columns that four Fijian villages in the province of Nadroga have become ‘Communist’ under his direction”. Concerning Ramatau’s claims, both associations denounced “without any reservation a move along lines which we know well is not in keeping with the general opinion of the Fijian people.” And they continued, “the native people of this country, which the two associations represent, have known many movements of this kind in the past, and they know too that unscrupulous influences in the community have at times been quick to exploit the ignorant” (FT 8/26/1961: 3).

The president of the Fijian Teachers’ Association, Sakiasi Sovanivalu, made a statement as follows supporting the views of the Fijian Association; “The desire for communism expressed...[sic] by Apimeleki is that of a very insignificant minority of Fijians, who are not fully aware of the way of life inherent in Communism”. The Association supported co-operative societies which were properly organized and run, however, “co-operative societies are not to be regarded as, or confused with, Communism, a form of government which is alien to our freedom-loving people” (FT 8/28/1961: 3).

The Fiji Times gave an additional blow to the Bula Tale in an editorial article titled “Look The Other Way!”. The editorialist suggested that people should not take an indifferent attitude toward the Bula Tale, but take some measures to cope with it before the Bula Tale people pushed their way in dangerous directions (FT 8/28/1961: 2).

We can also find these kinds of anti-communist comments among ordinary people of the day. For example, one Fijian resident of Suva expressed his disgust at the Bula Tale because this unprecedented movement was a kind of activity that brings disgrace on their names (VP 8/31/1961). Furthermore, as if this were not simply a problem of small villages within Fiji, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* picked up the Bula Tale with a picture of Ramatau as an example of a communist group in

Fiji (PIM September 1961: 20, 140)¹⁰.

While media coverage got heated, a Government spokesman exceptionally took a calm stance to the Bula Tale and delivered a comment that “there was nothing new” in the activities of the Bula Tale except for its declaration as communist. Coming in line with the opinion of Ratu Mara, the spokesman reiterated the harmlessness of the Bula Tale Communist Party (FT 8/26/1961: 3).

Reaction from the Bula Tale

Ramatau immediately protested these offensive statements (cf. VP 8/31/1961: 12; VG 9/5/1961: 1). The definition of communism for him was “Communism—Vesting of property in the community, each member working according to his capacity and receiving according to his wants” (FT 9/2/1961: 5).¹¹ And according to Ramatau, the aim of the Bula Tale Communist Party was “to retrieve the Fijian people from the alien doctrine of private property to the traditional communal ownership” (FT 9/2/1961: 5).

As for the slogan of communism, Ramatau argued that he used this word in order to convey a nuance of the communal aspect of Fijian traditions. At the same time, he would like to shock the staffs at the Fijian office in order to show off the establishment of the Bula Tale. Naturally, the Bula Tale “has nothing to do with the foreign communism or any international political movement”, and the Bula Tale would like only to “extend the principles already practised in the four villages of Nadroga to other places in the colony” (FT 9/2/1961: 5).

Regarding religion, the Bula Tale, according to Ramatau, never took a negative attitude to it. He himself believed in Christianity and argued that, as for the negation of private property, “early Christianity did not recognize any private property.” That is to say, “no Fijian was communist” and what the Bula Tale had done was just a “cooperative venture” (FT 9/2/1961: 5). It is very difficult for us to assess whether his counterstatement was just an excuse for avoiding criticism or his real intention.

Rather, we have to bear in mind the fact that not all the members of the Bula Tale agreed with Ramatau’s “Communist Manifesto”. For example, there was a brief essay entitled *Domo ni Bula Tale* (voices of the Bula Tale) issued in August 1961 in the joint names of eight members of the Bula Tale. We cannot find any references to communism in this short article, where they expressed the aim of the Bula Tale in their own words. They just considered the reasons behind the difficulties Fijians faced in adapting to changes of real world, and they expressed their resolution to revive from the state of death and run for the new world of freedom (VP 8/31/1961: 9). “The purpose of the Bula Tale lies in liberating human beings from the burdens of the old world. We do not need earthly wealth such as money and goods. Only for the soul. UNITE THROUGH

LOVE”, they explained in Fijian (VP 8/31/1961: 9).¹²⁾

If we take a look again at the incident about the Bula Tale after reading these statements, we can not wipe away the impression that, setting aside the Ramatau’s careless remarks, coverage of the Bula Tale in the media made a small incident bigger. Although it is true that the rules of the Bula Tale had several striking features, the movement was not unprecedented in Fiji. We can find similar movements in other parts of Fiji such as the Daku movement in Tailevu province, and others (Spate, 1959, 1960, 1991; Chappelle, 1975; Nayacakalou, 1975; Scarr, 1980; Spate, 1959, 1960, 1991).¹³⁾

Ramatau’s alleged connection with Muhammad Tora adversely affected the reputation of the Bula Tale. In those days, Tora was a notorious trade unionist for his involvement in the strike of 1959 which shocked the colonial government. The strike, carried out by the Wholesale and Retail General Workers’ Union, was jointly coordinated by Tora who was a Fijian and James Anthony who was an Indian, proving that they can overcome the ethnic divide which the colonial government had manipulated so successfully through its divide and rule strategy (Heatfield, 2002; Lal, 1992: 165-169). In addition to this incident, the fact that Tora was one of the few Fijian converts to Islam (Lal, 1992: 168) was one of the factors that helped foster anxiety among the public.

Split of the Bula Tale: From the Bula Tale to the Lami

Notwithstanding the response of Ramatau, it was not easy to subdue the fear and suspicion toward the Bula Tale. Accordingly, the Bula Tale was exposed to pressure from various sections of Fiji.

To begin with, on 6 September 1961 officials of Nadroga/ Navosa province paid a visit to the four villages, the centre of the Bula Tale¹⁴⁾. This delegation consisted of two Europeans and two Fijians one of whom was Ratu Waka Vosailagi (FT 9/8/1961: 5). He was a high ranking chief in Nadroga/ Navosa province as well as a Roko Tui of Nadroga/ Navosa (Belshaw, 1964: Appendix IX).¹⁵⁾

This official visit was followed by the arrest of Ramatau in the middle of September at the Nadi airport. Although he happened to be there to see his friend¹⁶⁾, he was arrested for the alleged crime of trespass and loitering (FT 9/19/1961: 5; VP 9/21/1961: 12). We can realize from this incident how excessive attention was drawn to him because of his claim to be a communist.

Furthermore, the Bula Tale people got involved in additional trouble because of their rule of not sending children to school. They came into collision with the teachers of the Semo District School in November 1961. Some 43 children of the Bula Tale had already stopped attending school since 25 September 1961. The reason of their absence was, according to Ramatau, lack of money (FT 11/18/1961: 3; FT 11/20/1961: 3).

This conflict was brought into the Nadola Fijian Court at Sigatoka. All the accused members of the Bula Tale were arrested because they had failed to appear to answer summons. Ramatau and 17 other members of the Bula Tale were all charged under the Fijian Regulations. Ramatau, as the leader, was fined £5 in default, one month's goal and the others were fined £2.10 each in default, two week's goal (FT 11/18/1961: 3; FT 11/20/1961: 3; VP 11/23/1961: 12).

When the situation around the Bula Tale got complicated, the Bula Tale suddenly changed the name of the organization to Lami and Ramatau handed the leadership over to Emosi Sove in June 1962 (VP 6/7/1962: 12; VG 6/8/1962: 11). *Lami* means "Lamb" in Fijian and has the symbolic implication of Jesus for Fijian people. In this context, it implies *loloma ni Lami*, that is, "love like sheep" (VP 6/7/1962: 12; VG 6/8/1962: 11).¹⁷⁾ Even today, there remain some sympathetic members and ex-members of the Lami who call their group *Soqosoqo ni Loloma* "a group of love" (see Fig. 1).



Figure 1 An Image of the Lami
(VP 8/23/1962: 11)

This change was probably caused, at least in part, by the change of Ramatau's position within the organization. As we describe in the next section, after leaving the Lami, he started a new life as the leader of a political party based in western Fiji. At the same time, as if distancing itself from Ramatau's radical remarks, the Lami looked more interested in reshaping its image as a group of *Loloma*. For example, the Lami began to sell such items as sugar, flour and mandarins at low prices in order to *solia na Loloma*, that is, "to give one's love" (VP 6/7/1962: 12; VP6/14/1962: 12; VP6/21/1962: 11; Niwa, 2005).

Ramatau's Subsequent Footsteps: Foundation of the Western Democratic Party

In this section, before describing the development of the Lami, we would like to follow Ramatau's subsequent footsteps. As stated above, after stepping aside as leader of the Bula Tale, Ramatau got actively involved in the field of politics.

Ramatau began to prepare for the establishment of a political party aiming at the soon to be held election of 1963. A conference was held in Lautoka in August 1962, on the importance of western Fiji as a regional identity. Many prominent political figures attended such as Tora, Ratu Mosese Tuisawau, vice Roko Jeremaia Tuwai.¹⁸⁾ Ramatau was among them. They set up the goal of establishing an organization for the western part of Fiji from Serua province to Ra province (VP 8/23/1962: 12). Ramatau himself was a native of Sabeto in western Fiji.

This plan resulted in a political party named the Western Democratic Party on 22 September 1962 (VP 9/27/1962: 12). After heated discussion at a meeting held later at Kisan Hall, Lautoka to select party officials, it was decided to appoint Malelilili Raibe,¹⁹⁾ from Vadravadra, Ba, as president, and Penaia Rokovuni, from Ra, as one of the vice-presidents. Also elected were Ramatau and Tora, the former as another vice-president and the latter as the treasurer (VP 10/4/1962: 11; VP 10/11/1962: 12; NL 10/26/1962: 3). Many of the leaders were recruited from western Fiji, including the president himself.

Instead of using the term “communism”, Ramatau put forward the identity of western Fiji as the objective of the party at this stage. For example, he contributed his opinion to the column of vernacular newspaper, *Nai Lalakai* as one of the *kai Ra* (western Fijians). In the article, he claimed that although western Fiji is most lucrative area in Fiji, no western Fijians have ever become the member of the Legislative Council (VP 9/27/1962: 12; NL 9/21/1962). He now showed no sign of hesitation to make public his relationship with Tora. In fact, Ramatau had a familial relationship with Tora, who was also from Natalau, Sabeto. As the Western Democratic Party tried to obtain wider support among the people, it grew to the extent that it attracted more than 500 people to its convention at Tavua on 3 November 1962 including one of the high chiefs of western Fiji, Tui Tavua (VP 11/8/1962: 9).

However, the Western Democratic Party was defeated in the 1963 election and subsequently merged with the Fijian National Party which was led by Isikeli Nadalo.²⁰⁾ The candidate who stood against the Western Democratic Party was an eastern high chief, Ratu Penaia Ganilau. As the member of the Legislative Council, he held such a firm position in the colonial government that the party could not match him in the election (VP 5/10/1963: 4; Lal, 1992: 186-193; Meller and Anthony, 1968; Norton, 1990: 69-70; Lal, 1992: 186-193).

It is very difficult to trace Ramatau's footsteps after that. According to his relatives, Ramatau apparently joined the Lami for a while. In the course of time, he went to New Zealand, then to Australia where he spent the rest of his life. Although he got sick in his late years, he was said not to lose his faith in the principles of the Bula Tale.

Banishment of the Lami

While Ramatau became busy with his commitment to the Western Democratic Party, the Bula Tale was pressed to cope with neighbouring societies. As mentioned in the previous section the Bula Tale had changed its name to Lami probably in order to try to improve its image, however, we can not see any sign of improvement in its relationship with people outside of the group.

Rather, the Lami got into trouble with the government owing to its refusal to pay a kind of

provincial tax, *solu ni yasana*. Although Fijians of those days were obliged to pay *solu ni yasana* to their own home province (*yasana*) (Roth, 1973: 155-156), the Lami neglected this duty (VP 9/6/1962: 11; Naivolasisiga, 1970).

On the pretext of taxes in arrears, on 22 August 1962, the Tikina Council made a resolution to order the Lami to leave Togovere. Two days later, Buli Cuvu and the constables of that area were dispatched to Togovere for inspection and reportedly told the Lami to leave Togovere (VP 9/13/1962: 11).

Emosi Sove, then a leader of the Lami, wrote this incident emotionally from his point of view as follows. The constables broke the rules of village. They got into the houses and threw away their household utensils. Some of them were broken, some were lost. Those constables caught the men who were present and threw them onto the things they had already thrown out. The Lami people were beaten up and pushed away to the road (VP 9/6/1962: 11; VG 9/7/1962: 2, 12). Soon after this accident Togovere was said to be assaulted by people from a neighbouring village.²¹⁾

Blamed by the government and a neighbouring village, the Lami people had no choice but to leave Togovere and looked for another place to settle down. They examined candidate sites for re-settlement among the towns of western Vitilevu such as Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka, and Navua where they had already had stalls for marketing activities (Naivolasisiga, 1970; cf. VP 11/29/1962). Finally, they settled down in Ba (Naivolasisiga, 1970).

Once they had settled down near Ba town, the Lami people began to gather there from all over the western Fiji such as Navua, Nadroga and so on. At the end, however, a large portion of the Lami made up their mind to leave their group and returned to their home villages. The members were said to decrease from 1000 to 150, or so. In 1964 they moved again to Yalalevu at Ba (Naivolasisiga, 1970). They have made their living in Ba province until today.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have examined how the Bula Tale, which caused the first, and maybe the last controversy about communism in Fiji, was treated in the 1960's. Following its ups and downs, we can see the difficulties the Bula Tale encountered in its efforts to be accepted by government and the Fijian society of the day.

One of the reasons the Bula Tale was loathed by Fijian society seems to lie in the fact that it attempted to change the Fijian traditional way of life. Especially, the Bula Tale's practices (e.g. the abolition or simplification of ritual activities such as weddings and funerals) were totally at odds with ordinary Fijian practices and beyond their imagination. To reduce ritual obligations meant not only to lighten the burden of communal activities but also to break off the networks established

through kinship and exchange of goods. Furthermore, notwithstanding Ramatau's explanation, to work on Sunday was provocative enough to be taken as anti-Christian act for ordinary Fijian people who were mostly dedicated Methodists.

On the other hand, it is rather easy to understand the government's stance on the Bula Tale. The government of the day was closely associated with the eastern high chiefs through the Fijian Administration, which was under the authority of the Fijian Affairs Board. Thus, the Bula Tale's breach of Fijian Regulations such as keeping children staying away from school and not paying taxes were not only violations of the regulations but also could be taken as an anti-establishment movement of western Fijians against eastern Fijians. This is not necessarily an irrelevant interpretation. Ramatau himself later took part in founding the Western Democratic Party, one of whose objectives was to take care of the interests of people of the western parts of Fiji.

In addition, it was the time of post World War II period, when the fears of fascism was fading away little by little all over the world. At the same time, "the fear of communism" was becoming prominent, that is, "if poor countries were not rescued from their poverty, they would succumb to communism" (Escobar, 1995: 34). Under such circumstances, Fiji was at the stage of nation-building preparing for the general election of 1963, the establishment of self-government as a step toward independence and the changing of a constitution (cf. Lal, 1992: 186-187). Besides, Fiji was one of the main South Pacific territories of the British Empire.

Although it is not clear where Ramatau first found out about communism, it is probable that he came across the word by way of some media or from his relative, the unionist Tora. Anyway, this word was too provocative to be used in such an ideologically unstable period.

It is nothing unusual to think of changing tradition in order to make one's living better. Anyone would be able to hear this kind of opinion from ordinary Fijians today. Thus, the Bula Tale's experiment itself is not the unique case in history of Fiji Islands, but the very issue related with current state of Fijians.

Notes

- 1) This paper is revised version of a previous Japanese paper (Niwa, 2003).
- 2) One of the reasons for the paucity of studies on the Bula Tale may be because that the Bula Tale has frequently changed its name. For example, the Bula Tale is also known as the Dra, Dra ni Lami or simply as the Lami, the Bula Tale Communist Party and so on (cf. Niwa, 2005).
- 3) The exception is an article of Young (1992), however, he is mainly interested in the period of the Lami in the 1980's, not that of the Bula Tale.
- 4) Whole development of the Bula Tale from the beginning to the 1990s is documented in another

paper (Niwa, 2005).

- 5) I got information on the Bula Tale in 2002 through archival research at the National Archives in Fiji and the University of the South Pacific in 2002. I also conducted field research in Nadroga/ Navosa province and Ba province. I made full use of newspapers in this paper. I have indicated the sources with abbreviation as follows; FT for *The Fiji Times*, VP for *Vakalelewa ni Pasifika*, VG for *Volagauna* and PIM for *Pacific Islands Monthly*. For instance, (FT 5/1/2003) stands for an article of *The Fiji Times* on 1st of May, 2003.
- 6) In this paper I describe Ramatau as a leader of the Bula Tale, but he could also be described as a spokesman or at least a temporary leader. Some articles suggested that the real leader was another person (Naivolasisiga, 1970; Young, 1992; FT 3/5/1996). When I conducted field research in 2002, people of the Bula Tale (now known as the Lami) endorsed this fact. However, the real leader was not widely known to the people outside this group because he was detached from negotiation with outside societies.
- 7) *tabua* is an item of exchange made of whale's tooth.
- 8) *yaqona* is the Fijian word for kava.
- 9) Administrative units in Fiji were stratified from the top as *yasana*, *tikina* and *koro*. These three were administered respectively by a *Roko* or a *Roko Tui*, a *Buli* and a *Turaga ni Koro* (Roth, 1973: 140-149). That is, the *Roko* or *Roko Tui Nadroga/ Navosa* was responsible for affairs of the Nadroga/ Navosa area where the Bula Tale was located.
- 10) In the New Zealand parliament someone allegedly told, there were Reds active in the Western Pacific (PIM October 1961), although I still can not make clear whether the person was tacitly referring to the Bula Tale or not.
- 11) Ramatau also defined socialism as follows. "Socialism—Principle that individual freedom should be completely subordinated to interests of community, with any deductions that may be correctly or incorrectly drawn from it, substitution of co-operative for competitive production, national ownership of land and capital, state distribution of produce, free education and feeding of children, and abolition of inheritance, attempt to apply Christian precepts in ordinary life resulting in some approximation to the aims of 'ism' [sic]" (FT 9/2/1961: 5). We should note that his definition of communism is resonant with a passage of "Critique of the Gotha Programme". That is, "In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, have vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety

and society inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"(Marx, 1978: 17-18).

- 12) This was written as follows. "*Na i naki ni cavu yava ogo me sereki na tamata mai na i colacola ni vuravura makawa. E sega ni vinakata me vukei e na i lavo se i yau kei vuravura. Na yalo wale ga. ME DA DUAVATA ENA VEILOMANI*" (VP 8/31/1961: 9). I have heard this remark cited here in capital letters while I made conversation with ex-Lami members.
- 13) There were movements such as Apolosi Nawai's Viti Kabani (Macnaught, 1977, 1979; Kasuga, 2001) and other similar movements at Natewa Bay of Ra province, and Cautata of Tailevu province (Spate, 1959: 78). Other than these, there existed a cargo cult like movement, which was known as Kelekeletabua in Vunamoli village of Nadi highlands (cf. Qalo, 1997: 92; Robertson, 1996: 166). In Ra and Bua province, there was also Sairusi Nabogibogi's movement known as Soqosoqo ni Mesaia (cf. Lal, 2002: 4). Those latter movements have been scarcely documented.
- 14) Another source indicated that they only visited Togovere, Emuri and Kabisi (VP 9/14/1961: 12). This is probable, considering the relative isolation of Vagadra from the other three villages and the inconvenient transportation to get there.
- 15) Other people who visited Togovere were J.A.C. Hill (the western Commissioner)(FT 9/8/1961: 5), C.A.A. Hughes (District Officer of Nadroga) and Ratu Mosese Varasikete Tuisawau (*ivukevuke ni Talai Veivuke*) (VP 9/14/1961: 12).
- 16) This fact was suggested from an elder brother of Ramatau during my stay at Sabeto.
- 17) Some also suggested that the Lami was a name taken from a son of the leader of the organization.
- 18) Ratu Mosese and Jeremaia Tuwai attended this meeting, however, they did not become members of the Western Democratic Party. Instead, they established another party, Ba Fijian Association for Ba province (VP 10/4/1962: 7; cf. VP 10/11/1962).
- 19) In this paper, following the material cited, I described as Malelilili Raibe. He also typed as Malelili Raibe in another article (VP 10/4/1962: 11). Guessing from the context, he is likely to be the same person recorded as Malelei Raibe (Lal, 1992: 194), though I do not have any evidence at the moment to equate these two personalities.
- 20) Isikeli Nadalo was commoner from Nadroga/ Navosa province and also one of advocates of the interests of the Western Fiji. He was the secretary of the Nadroga Fijian Cane Growers' Association (Lal, 1977: 330-332; Norton, 1977: 68).
- 21) I write this fact based on the oral testimony provided by Togovere and other villagers. Unfortunately, I still can not find any contemporary material to authenticate incident.

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