

***SERE NI CUMU* AND THE CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF PLACE AND IDENTITY IN TAVEUNI, FIJI**

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Introduction

This paper examines a Fijian popular music genre known as *sere ni cumu* ('bumping songs'). My research investigates how and why Fijians have used this genre to express and construct their sense of place and identity (that is, who they are and where they are from). It explores how Fijians have adopted and localised contemporary, globally disseminated popular music styles to create *sere ni cumu*; it also describes the way musicians use this music to articulate their real and imagined relationships to specific places (both natural and supernatural) and groups of people (see Anderson, 1983; Soja, 1996).

While *sere ni cumu* is performed throughout Fiji, the information presented here pertains to Taveuni, the third largest island in the Fijian archipelago. This island is used as a case study in which to examine global cultural flows and the dynamics of music adoption and localisation. This paper is the result of a six-month period of field research on the island of Taveuni, which I undertook from March to September 2005, as well as a subsequent fieldwork trip from mid December 2005 to February 2006. This paper presents a preliminary analysis of a portion of the data collected during this fieldwork, as well as addresses the theoretical background underlying my research.

Context

Viti^[1] (Fiji) is an archipelago consisting of over 300 islands (only approximately 100 of which are permanently inhabited) located in the south western Pacific Ocean. Its total landmass of 18,272 square kilometres (of which the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, comprise 87 percent) is scattered over 650,000 square kilometres of ocean. Fiji is situated between latitude 15 degrees and 22 degrees south, longitude 177 degrees west and 178 degrees east, at the confluence of Melanesia and Polynesia. Geographically, the islands form part of Melanesia, but the indigenous population includes people of both Melanesian and Polynesian descent.^[2] While the relative influence of Polynesian and Melanesian elements found in the indigenous culture and

language varies enormously, Polynesian features generally dominate in the East and Melanesian in the West.^[3]

Out of an estimated total population of over 880,000 people, a substantial proportion is comprised of non-indigenous peoples.^[4] Around half of the current population are the descendents of Indian indentured labourers imported to Fiji to cultivate sugarcane from 1897 to 1916, following Fiji's cession to Britain in 1874.^[5] Tensions between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians have resulted in three military coups (two in 1987 and another in 2000). Other immigrants include Chinese, Europeans and other Pacific islanders. This cultural diversity has resulted in a wide range of musical styles being performed in Fiji today. Many of Fiji's musical styles and genres—particularly contemporary popular music, and the music of non-indigenous Fijians—are yet to be documented by academic research. *Sere ni cumu* is one of these under-documented genres.

While *sere ni cumu* appears throughout Fiji, my research is primarily concerned with its performance on the island of Taveuni. Choosing to focus on one island enabled me to discover the differences between *sere ni cumu* ensembles both within and between villages in a limited geographical area. The main disadvantage was that it left me unable to fully describe broader stylistic differences between different regions in Fiji. I chose Taveuni because it afforded the opportunity to compare bands from village, semi-urban and resort environments. In addition, commercially available recordings of bands from the island, recordings contained in the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited (FBCL) archives, as well as the unpublished findings of David Goldsworthy and Meli Tuqota's fieldwork in Taveuni (January-February 1986),^[6] provided the grounds for comparison between past and present performance practice and repertoire. In practical terms, Taveuni is also accessible via public transportation, and has banking and healthcare facilities.^[7]

Taveuni is known as the 'garden island' of Fiji due to its lush vegetation and fertile soil. It lies seven kilometres off the south-east coast of Vanua Levu, is 42 kilometres long and averages around 11 kilometres wide. Taveuni's total landmass is 84,307 acres. The highest mountain (Mount Uluiqalau) rises 4072 metres above sea level, making it the third largest mountain in Fiji. Northern Taveuni is mountainous with many creeks and rivers which flow year-round. Southern Taveuni only rises to around 100 metres, and there are fewer creeks or rivers (which only run after substantial rain). The island is part of the province of Cakaudrove, and is divided into three *tikina* (districts): Vuna, Cakaudrove and Wainikeli. Taveuni is home to numerous rare species of fauna and flora (including the *tagimaucia* flower which grows almost exclusively on this island), which are protected in the Bouma National Heritage Park and Waitabu Marine Reserve. Taveuni's approximately 12,000 human inhabitants live in fourteen registered villages, as well as a number of settlements and freehold estates/plantations. Most people living on Taveuni are subsistence farmers, although some are self-employed or earn wages as civil servants or hotel workers. The majority are Catholic, Methodist or Hindu, although other faiths are also practiced on the island.^[8]

Theoretical Approach

The study of popular musics, particularly in non-Western countries such as Fiji, is aided by drawing on a theoretical and methodological lattice that connects a number of related fields—particularly those of ethnomusicology and popular music studies.^[9] Ethnomusicology can be defined as the study of people making music, or the study of music ‘in’ or ‘as’ culture (see Blacking, 1976; Nettl, 1983; Seeger, 1987). It utilises the analytical tools for transcribing and analysing sound found in musicology, as well as an ethnographic approach to data collection through fieldwork with an emphasis on participant-observation (see Malinowski, 1961) found in social/cultural anthropology. Ethnomusicology thereby provides the essential tools with which to situate specific musical practices in their social contexts. In recognising the “intersecting contexts and networks” (Cohen, 1993:135) of popular music, the field (or multiple fields) of cultural studies provides a broader sweep, taking into account the mass mediation of cultural practices such as music, and the complex relationships between performers, producers, listeners, consumers and the society in which they live. Arjun Appadurai’s concept of ‘scapes’, particularly that of ethnoscaapes, which describes the increasingly complicated and intersecting relationships in “the changing social, territorial and cultural reproduction of group identity” (Appadurai, 1991:191) is also useful.^[10]

The ways in which non-Western countries have incorporated the music of Western cultures in the development of contemporary indigenous styles has been a significant area for discussion in ethnomusicology (see, for example, Feld, 1988; Keil and Feld, 1994; Slobin, 1992, 1993; Erlmann, 1993; Guilbaut, 1993). In attempting to define processes and explanations for musical practices in which imported musical styles have been adopted and localised, a number of terms (such as acculturation, syncretism, musical borrowing, transculturation, hybridisation and indigenisation) have been suggested and debated as part of a wider scholarly discourse on the effect of mass media in global and local contexts (see Kartomi, 1981; Lull, 1995; Manuel, 1995; Mitchell, 1993; Slobin, 1993). Such attempts at definition are further complicated by notions of authenticity and inauthenticity in Pacific Island cultures (see Jolly, 1992; Linnekin, 1992).

As the pace of the process of globalisation continues to accelerate, people have begun to re-think and reflect upon place in different ways. The dynamics within the multiple relationships between identity and place continue to change as people become increasingly aware of human interconnectedness around the globe. Postmodernist scholars have argued that globalisation has resulted in an identity crisis, a sense of placelessness, cultural deterritorialisation and homogeneity. Anthony Giddens (1990), for example, argues that globalisation has altered the way in which people experience space and time, involving a loss of historical continuity and memory, and a preoccupation with instantaneity and with surfaces disconnected from the meanings behind them. Giddens asserts that one consequence of modernity has been “the phantasmagoric separation of space from place, as places become thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them” (Giddens, 1990:18). Similarly, Jody Berland states that “situated in many places at the same time, tuned in, hooked up, wired into, we know how to see ourselves as part of a global

village and to see its boundarylessness as the essence of who we are” (Berland, 1988:343). Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) also asserts that electronic media have blurred traditional distinctions between individuals and groups, social situations and physical places, and that this has contributed towards the homogenisation of places and group identities and experiences and to the lack of a sense of place.

I would argue instead that, in a world that is historically, socially and spatially interconnected, place continues to matter. Although Fijian bands tended to initially copy overseas songs, the music scene diversified as new songs were composed and local styles appeared. Moreover, with the increasing mobility of music (as contemporary global entertainment industries disseminate musical styles more extensively and rapidly than has been possible in the past, making an increasingly wide range of musical resources available to a growing number of people), music plays an increasingly important role in expressing and constructing peoples’ sense of belonging to (or alienation from) particular places and groups of people which may (or may not) be geographically distant from their own. As Frith states, music plays a crucial role in the on-going construction (not merely the expression or representation) of multi-layered identities: “the question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about the people who play and use it, but how does it create them as a people, as a web of identities?” (Frith, 1996:121).

An emerging body of work in cultural geography has provoked new ways of thinking about music’s role in locating culture, and constructing place, space and cultural identity (see Carney, 1998; Connell and Gibson, 2003; Howes, 1991; Kong, 1995; Leyshon, Matless and Revill, 1998; Nash and Carney, 1996; Pocock, 1989; Smith, 1997). Rather than treating place as simply an inert geographical setting for social and cultural activity, such research has recognised music’s spatial dimensions, the mutually generative relations between music and place, and music’s role in the politics of place, the struggle for identity and belonging, power and prestige.

In any examination of the ways in which Fijians think about place and identity, it is crucial to discuss the term *vanua*. According to Enele Ravuvu:

The term vanua has physical, social and cultural dimensions interrelated. . . . Vanua literally means land, but also refers to the social and cultural aspects of the environment. There is . . . a very strong triad which links living people, the physical areas upon which they thrive, and the spirit world of dead ancestors and other cosmological entities. (Ravuvu, 1988:6-7)

This multifaceted concept thus embodies a series of relationships that Fijians have with each other, with other living creatures, with their physical environment, as well as the supernatural realm. Wendy Ratawa conducted research in Labasa, Vanua Levu in 1991, investigating the relationship between vocal music and the concept of *vanua*. Ratawa found that:

Within the performance context and musical structure, traditional chants are closely related to kinship, and there is a close relationship with a geographical place—they

correspond, enhance and embody the vanua in a specifically located place and social group [whereas] newer Fijian songs reflect the vanua but not in a parochial sense, as there is now a shift of interpretation from the concept of vanua from an emphasis on kinship to a holistic Fijian ethnicity. (Ratawa, 1991:1).

I agree that ‘newer Fijian songs’ such as *sere ni cumu* have broadened Fijian’s sense of place and identity, but would go further by suggesting that this music still enables Fijians to articulate and construct their sense of ‘rootedness’ to particular places where they (or other members of their culture) currently live or have resided in the past. As well, *sere ni cumu* enables Fijians to identify themselves in imaginative and sometimes cosmopolitan ways with people who occupy (or wish to occupy in the future) places that are similar or different to their own. A preliminary analysis suggesting some of the ways in which Fijians use *sere ni cumu* to construct and express ‘roots’ as well as ‘routes’ (see Clifford, 1997) is discussed in the following section.

Sere ni cumu

Fijians broadly divide music into two categories: *meke* (a traditional art form incorporating dance, costume and music, and performed mainly on formal occasions) and *sere* (songs, including popular songs performed on informal occasions as well as those sung in church) (see Lee, 1998:776; Ratawa, 1998:780). My research concentrates on *sere ni cumu* (‘bumping songs’),^[11] a genre of popular^[12] music which is widespread throughout Fiji today, and is performed in villages as well as at local resorts and hotels. These songs are covers of, or influenced by, styles from Europe and America (for example, rock, pop and country and western), other Pacific Islands or the Caribbean (particularly reggae). They are often performed at informal *yaqona*^[13] drinking sessions, and are also associated with informal dance types broadly termed *tauratale* or *danisi* (from the English ‘dance’).

The exact origin of the genre is obscure. Goldsworthy (1998) states that *sere ni cumu* were associated with the first legally allowed sales of beer to indigenous Fijians in the 1920s in Suva, and suggests that this genre originated at parties where men bumped their drinking glasses together. This is supported by Paul Geraghty, a linguist who lectures at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, who explained to me that the term for this music was originally *sere ni cumu saqa* (*saqa* meaning barrel or tankard), and that it referred to the practice of Fijian men sitting in a circle at a table, resting their heads against their tankards of beer (personal communication 29/10/04). Many *sere ni cumu* songs still performed today date from World War II—an intense period of creativity for this genre—when soldiers from the US, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia interacted extensively with Fijians.

Currently, musicians distinguish two main styles of *sere ni cumu*: *trio* and *sere bass* (also called *sere ni ma’awa* or ‘old songs’, even though they may only be fifteen or more years old). *Sere bass* performance features a large group of bass vocalists (*bass/besi*) in addition to three solo voice parts: *tatabani/tatabana*, *domo tolu/va’ababa*, and *laga/lagalaga* in descending order in terms of their vocal range. Only the three solo parts are heard in *trio*. The types and roles of the instruments, their tuning and playing

techniques have also changed over time.^[14] The technique of *vadivadi* (plucking) which characterised *sere bass* guitar performance in the past has been replaced by various ways of *scrumming* (strumming) for the rhythm guitar, and a range of left and right hand techniques for the lead guitarist. A variety of different tunings (for example, Open *ki* (key), Hawaiian *ki*, Spanish *ki*, and Island *ki* for the guitar; Spanish *ki* and English *ki* for the ukulele) are now remembered by few of the older players.^[15] The only chords used in *sere bass* were *dua* (tonic), *rua* (subdominant) and *tolu* (dominant), whereas *trio* also featured *warning* (seventh), *minus* (minor) and *flat* (supertonic) chords. Standard Western tuning (that is, E, A, D, G, B, E) was used for every performance I witnessed, and Western chord positions are being used increasingly in *sere ni cumu* performance.^[16] Anyone can participate in *sere bass* performance, which makes it ideal for use at large social gatherings. *Trio* performers are expected to perform to a high standard, and are usually heard at small social functions such as *yaqona* drinking sessions. The tempo tends to be slower, and the overall pitch lower in *sere bass* when compared to *trio*.

Sere bass, being closer stylistically to *meke*,^[17] tends to be preferred by older people (those in their 40s and above), and provides them with a means to connect with and celebrate their cultural roots. *Trio*, which tends to be most popular with those in their 20s and 30s, exhibits a greater degree of Westernisation than *sere bass*, but is still regarded as being part of the *sere ni cumu* oral tradition which has been passed down through the generations and which continues to change as new songs are continually added to the repertoire and old ones fall into disuse. For teenagers and those in their early 20s, ‘programme music’ bands^[18] as well as popular overseas groups/artists^[19] are most popular. This music is a route which links them to Western societies, and to a modern, Westernised Fiji.

Factors other than stylistic change can also tell us a lot about how Fijians use *sere ni cumu* to articulate and construct their sense of place and identity. The song *Koi ra na vuda* tells of the geographical origins of the Fijian people and their migration to Fiji. According to Ilaitia Tuwere (2002:22), the story of the Kaunitoni migration was unknown before the 1890s. Since its publication by Basil Thompson (1892:143-146), it has become widely accepted among indigenous Fijians, and has become the basis for a sense of national identity—an identity based upon the belief of common descent and common geographical point of origin.^[20] Numerous songs mention an individual’s *yavu* (ancestral house site), *koro ni vasu* (mother’s village) or *koro* (village). Some songs reflect the importance of significant local landmarks,^[21] while others indicate in a more general way how Fijians perceive their landscape.^[22] The band names chosen by some groups,^[23] the personal interactions that occur during music performances, as well as song lyrics, provide a wealth of information regarding Fijian social relationships. Information can also be found in the lyrics about how Fijians relate to the supernatural world, with references both to pre-Christian and Christian themes. A sense of a Fijian national identity, or a ‘holistic Fijian ethnicity’ (Ratawa, 1991:1), is evident in patriotic songs (*sere ni vanua*).^[24] The predominant use of standard Fijian dialect (*va’abau*) in *sere ni cumu* performance also points towards the fostering of a sense of national identity. Older *sere ni cumu* in particular were sung in the local dialect (Gato), indicating a greater degree of localisation. Some participants also asserted that regional

styles of *sere ni cumu* exist, which would contribute towards the formation of regional identities. Indo-Fijian songs were performed using aspects of Indian vocal technique along with the *sere ni cumu* instrumental accompaniment, perhaps indicating greater acceptance of Indo-Fijian culture. While there seems to be a measure of acceptance for Indo-Fijians, there is a song about the exclusion of Solomon islanders.^[25] Where Pacific Islander songs (such as Tongan, Samoan, Māori, Gilbertese and Solomon islander) are performed, this may contribute towards the formation of a broader Pacific Island identity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I must emphasise that this analysis is a preliminary one, and that a more detailed study is the next step in my research. This paper merely outlines the theoretical background of this research and suggests some ways in which it might be useful in explaining how *sere ni cumu* is used by Fijians to construct, experience and imagine *vanua*. Future research will aim to show how this music shapes their conceptualisations and perceptions of past and present homelands, their social relationships and their relationship with the supernatural world. *Sere ni cumu* (a localised version of globally disseminated musical styles) has also enabled Fijians to form broader geographical and social identifications (for example, as a nation which includes certain social groups and excludes others, as a Pacific Island or Oceanic community, or as a modern/Western Fiji).

Endnotes

[1] The name ‘*Viti*’ refers to the action of the early ancestors of breaking small branches as they made their way to Nakauvadra so that they might trace their way back should they get lost. It became adopted as the name for the whole island group. The name ‘Fiji’, as the archipelago is more widely known by, is Tongan (Tuwere, 2002:15; see also Roth, 1953:54). Nakauvadra, the symbolic home of the ancestral Fijians, is in the north eastern part of Viti Levu.

[2] ‘Indigenous’ is a politically charged term, with emotional/psychological implications regarding a person’s sense of legitimacy of belonging to the land. Indigeneity involves the autochthonous claims of Fiji’s Melanesian and Polynesian population, who call themselves *i taukei*. Following the wave of immigration that followed Fiji’s colonisation by Britain, the descendents of subsequent immigrants to Fiji (including those from other islands in the Pacific, as well as those from Europe and Asia—some of whom can trace their family’s history back generations in Fiji) are excluded from being categorised as *i taukei*.

[3] See Tuwere (2002:15) and Glamuzina (2001:326)

[4] The July 2004 estimate was 880,874. See <http://www.exxun.com/Fiji/c_pp.html>.

[5] Fiji became an independent nation in October 1970.

[6] This survey of music genres, including *sere ni cumu*—took place in eight villages on Taveuni (Dreketi, Naqara, Lamini, Waica, Navakawau, Vuna, Lavena and Naselesele), as well as the village of Dreketi on Qamea island. The recordings (fifteen audio tapes and two videotapes) from this fieldwork are held in the Archive of Māori and Pacific Music, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

[7] From Viti Levu, there are regular flights from Nausori, as well as regular ferry services to the island (which also travel to Koro island and Savusavu, Vanua Levu). In addition to the larger ferries, two companies provide a combined ferry-bus service between Taveuni and Savusavu. The only bank on Taveuni is the Colonial bank. Although I could cash traveler's cheques, I was not permitted to open an account as I did not own land and was not married in Fiji. ANZ permitted me to open a local account, and I was able to withdraw money from agents Morris Hestrom and Kaba's Supermarket. There is a hospital at Waiyevo, as well as health clinics at Vuna, Waimaqera and Bouma.

[8] Personal communication from A Rasaciva 12/1/06. The Cakaudrove Provincial Council Office, Somosomo, Taveuni.

[9] See Shuker (1994), Negus (1996), Hayward (1996:10-42), Whitely (1997:xiii-xxxvi) and Middleton (1990) for information on the historical and theoretical development of popular music studies. Rice (1997:101-105) briefly summarises theoretical and methodological (particularly with regard to fieldwork) developments within ethnomusicology.

[10] Sara Cohen (1993) outlines the most significant reasons for a dialogue between ethnomusicology and popular music studies.

[11] *Sere ni cumu* is also known by a number of other terms: *sigidrigi* (from the English 'sing-drink') or *silidrigi* (a recent term deriving from *sigidrigi*), *sere ni verada* (veranda songs), or *sere ni va'avuravura* (songs about the surrounding environment).

[12] I should note that my use of the term popular music in relation to this *sere* or non-*meke* does not reflect a dichotomy between popular/unpopular or commercial/non-commercial types of music. Both *meke* and *sere* have been influenced by foreign musical styles; both are well-liked by indigenous Fijians; both live and recorded examples can be found; and there are aspects of formality and informality attached to both. I have used this term because *sere ni cumu* approximates Western popular music in its performance style; it is performed more frequently than *meke*, and because (although there are types of *sere* which pre-date the time of European arrival) *sere* is nowadays regarded as being more contemporary (or less traditional) than *meke*.

[13] The plant *Piper Methisticum*, known as *kava* throughout Polynesia. The roots and stems of this plant are dried and then pounded (masticated in the past), made into an infusion and then drunk.

[14] The steel guitar and *sepuni* (spoons) have fallen into disuse; the function of the *wa dua* or *kisi ni ti* (one-string, tea-chest basses) has been taken over by that of the bass guitar, and that of the mandolin by the lead guitar; where ukuleles were once home-made they are now bought; and groups such as the Garden Island Resort band use amplified as well as acoustic instruments in addition to a microphone.

[15] Spanish *ki* (for both the guitar and ukulele) and English *ki* have now fallen into complete disuse. They were remembered in name only, and could not be reproduced from memory.

[16] This is largely due to the Charismatic Music Ministry which has been established in the last five years or so. Musicians are taught Western chords, and this is carried through from sacred into secular performance. The strained, loud voice with slurring between pitches used in *sere ni cumu* is actively discouraged in sacred music performances, and this aesthetic also carried back to *sere ni cumu*.

[17] In terms of the inclusiveness of performance with the involvement of many people, vocal texture and vocal style of performance, lower overall pitch when compared to more recent forms of music etcetera.

[18] It is known as ‘programme music’ because it is characterised programmed keyboard and drum tracks instead of acoustic instrumental accompaniment. Examples include *Voqa ni Delai Dokidoki*, *Delai Sea*, *Nautosolo* and *Kabu ni Delai Kade*

[19] Artists such as Shania Twain, Lucky Dube, Bob Marley, Mokoma, Abba, the Backstreet boys, Michael learns to rock, Boyzone and Celine Dion

[20] For an explanation of the myth itself, see Tuwera (2002:22-23).

[21] Such as *Uluiqalau na delana cere dina* which is about Taveuni’s highest mountain.

[22] Islands are always described as ‘ciri yawa yani’ (floating far away), often shrouded in mist. The numerous references to white sandy beaches and swaying palm trees suggests that the tourist aesthetic of Fiji may have had some influence on indigenous Fijians.

[23] Such as the Vuanimaba trio from Qeleni village, named after their *mataqali* (sub-clan).

[24] Such as *Viti noqu Viti* (Fiji, my Fiji).

[25] The song *Melanesia* (see Appendix) is for the Solomon Islanders and their descendents resident in Fiji. Like the Indo-Fijians, the Solomon Islanders were brought to Fiji by the colonial administration to provide a labour force. In the past, these people were highly regarded and valued within Fijian society. This position changed after the military coups of 1987. Rotumans and their descendants began to occupy the position of high esteem previously reserved for the Solomon Islanders. Government policy with

regard to Fiji's Solomon islander population changed. Despite a considerable degree of intermarriage with indigenous Fijians, they are not considered to be Fijian. They do not have access to *mataqali* (sub-clan) owned land. They are also no longer recognised as being Solomon islanders by their country of origin. As outcasts, they have no political voice. In 1984, tension between indigenous Fijians and Solomon Islander students resulted in physical conflict at the University of the South Pacific.

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Appendix

Koi ra na vuda

Verse 1

<i>Koi ra na vuda, meu tukuni ira</i>	Our ancestors, let me tell you
<i>E na nodra lako mai Sauca Aferika</i>	How they travelled from South Africa
<i>Isa ko Verata nodra koro dina</i>	Verata their true village
<i>E na batini drano levu mai taqani ika</i>	From one side of the lake in Tanganika

Verse 2

<i>Lutunasobasoba e liutaki ira</i>	Lutunasobasoba their leader
<i>E na nodra lako mai Sauca Aferika</i>	In their journey from South Africa
<i>Vata kei nai oqori a watina</i>	With his wife
<i>Marama ni ceva dina mai Ijipita</i>	Lady from Egypt (ie inferring that the beauty of Lutunasobasoba's wife equals the Queen of Sheba's)

Verse 3

*Lutunasobasoba e lima na luvena
Era kawa turaga tu vei keda
Dua wale ga na luvena yalewa
Obui Savulu e tiko mai Bureta*

Lutunasobasoba has five children
They are our chiefs
Only one daughter
Obui Savulu staying in Bureta (Ovalau)

Verse 4

*O Roko Moutu e tiko mai Verata
O Vela Siga mai Burebasaga
Otui Nayavu mai batiki raraba
O Dau ni Sai e tiko ma kabara*

Roko Moutu staying in Verata
Vela Siga is in Burebasaga
Tui Nayavu in Batiki
Dau ni Sai is in Kabara

Verse 5

*Vuni nodra lako mai taqani ika
E na mate lila levu e tauvi ira
Ra soko sivita na wasa talani tika
Ra qara vanua e na wasa Pasifika*

The reason they came away
Because of a wasting illness (starvation?)
They crossed the Atlantic Ocean
Looking for a land in the Pacific

Verse 6

*Sa labati ira e dua na cagi laba
Era tiko leqaleqa e loma ni waqa
Na Kaunitoni vata kei na Duibana
Na Kaunitera na yacani nodra waqa*

A hurricane hit them
They felt unsafe in their canoe
In the Kaunitoni and the Duibana
The Kaunitera is the name of their canoe

Verse 7

*Tagi mate o Lutunasobasoba
Isa noqu kawa ra sana vakaloloma
Noqu kato vatu dina sa mai tasova
Ni rau lutu vata kei na kenai vola*

Lutunasobasoba was wailing
Oh my descendents, I feel sorry for you
My stone chest has been emptied
And it goes with my book [which
contained the accumulated lore of the
people, such as knowledge of medicine,
weather forecasting, fishing, handicrafts
and fortune-telling.]

Melanesia

Verse 1

*Noqu bula au solia
Meu na colata voli ga
Colacola koa vakataqara
Yacamu au na valataka*

I give my life
For me to carry
The responsibility that you allocate
Your name, I will fight for it

Verse 2

*Tubutubu era ogataka
Gauisala me cara wavu me caka
Viti ko sa tiko vinaka
O qai biliga lesu noqu waqa*

The parents were occupied
For the roads and the bridges to be made
Fiji, your well-being
And you push away my boat

Chorus

Melanisia soqosoqo au lewena
Au vaqaraqara vanua voli
Turaga ni lomani au mai
Kerea meu dei eke

Melanesia is my group
I was looking for land
God, grant me mercy
Please let me stay forever

Verse 3

Loma ni lekatu au taubale voli
Tacaqe au lutu au na taubale ga
Ni sa noqu i to ko Jisu
Sa sega vei au na taqaya

I walk through the jungle
I trip/tumble over and I keep on walking
When Jesus is my guide
I am not scared