



LOGS IN THE CURRENT OF THE SEA

Neli Lifuka's Story of Kioa
and the Vaitupu Colonists

Edited and Introduced by Klaus-Friedrich Koch

"People without a leader are like logs in the current of the sea; they don't know where to go."

Neli Lifuka is totally candid and colorful as he describes his conventional childhood on Vaitupu in the Territory of Tuvalu (until 1975 the Ellice Island Group), his early education and travels, his first job as an engine-room hand on a phosphate cargo ship, his experiences with American marines in World War II, and his crucial role in the unprecedented purchase of Kioa Island (just off Fiji) in 1946.

Klaus-Friedrich Koch visited Kioa for the first time 20 years later. Fascinated by the story of Old Man Neli's adventures and the difficulties encountered in the settlement of Kioa by the Vaitupuan colonists, he arranged to return as soon as he could with a notebook and recording equipment. This book is an edited transcript of Neli's autobiography, supplemented by an introduction and a legal analysis of the conflict between Polynesian customs and British colonial-administrative law which bewildered Vaitupu and Kioa for a great many years.

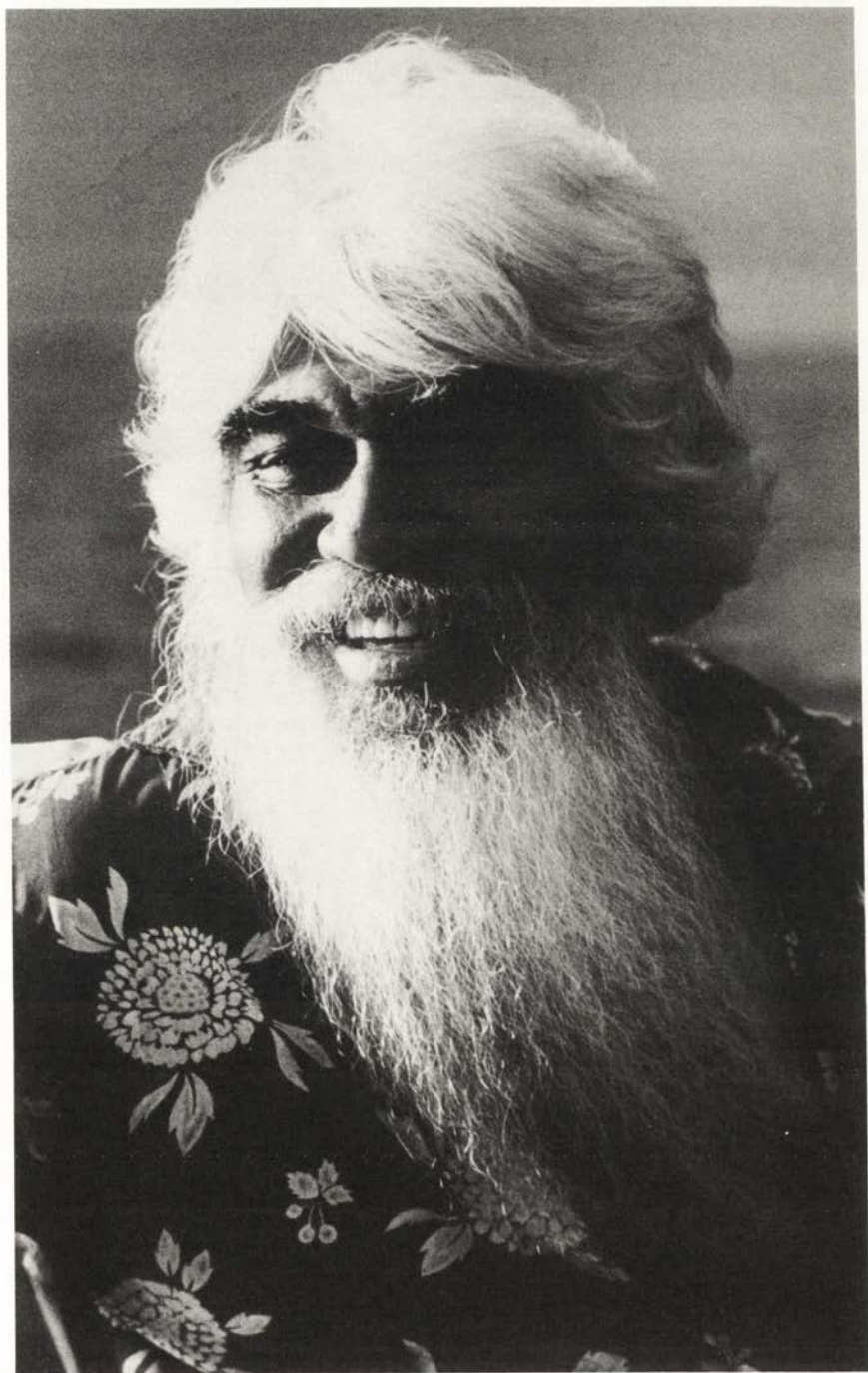
Professor H.E. Maude has written the foreword to this unusual chapter in Pacific history. Distinguished as historian and administrator, Professor Maude was Resident Commissioner in charge of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony at the time of the Kioa purchase.

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Logs in the Current of the Sea



Neli Lifuka

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EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY KLAUS-FRIEDRICH KOCH

With a Foreword by Professor H.E. Maude

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I. Title.

FOREWORD BY PROFESSOR H.E. MAUDE

It is not my intention to tell the story of Old Man Neli Lifuka's very varied career here, except to say that the earlier part of my own life in the islands seems to have intertwined with Neli's to a remarkable extent.

When I first left Australia for Ocean Island in 1929 he was an engine-room hand on the same ship; a year later he was on the Colony yacht *Nimanoa* when she took me to Beru as District Officer for the Southern Gilbert Islands. In later years Neli and I sailed on several ships and lived on several islands at one and the same time; and after World War II when he became Magistrate of Vaitupu, I was the Resident Commissioner in charge of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. Finally, in 1946, I went with Foua Tofinga to an auction sale in Suva where, on behalf of the people of Vaitupu, we successfully bid for Kioa Island in Fiji, where Old Man Neli now lives as a respected patriarch.

I remember Neli Lifuka as a man of my own age unusually adept at mastering the skills required for successfully performing any work that he was invited to undertake, whether for the government, commerce, or the phosphate industry. In addition, he was the best "mediator" I have ever known—the interpreter of one culture to another. He was able to perform a vital role in a period of rapid cultural and technological change by interpreting the often seemingly odd and unpredictable requirements of the European to his fellow-islanders, and vice versa. He could do this, never taking leave of his own culture, because his perceptions were unusually quick, and because, more importantly, he inspired the trust and affection both of his European employers and his compatriots, whether colleagues or subordinates. We all admired his honesty, respected his judgment, and knew from experience that if he thought any of us to be wrong he would tell us so in no uncertain terms.

Neli Lifuka of Vaitupu and Kioa is, on any assessment, an exceptionally able and courageous man, yet he is no paragon. He speaks of the trials and triumphs of his eventful life with a disarming frankness that impels us to relate to him with an understanding and a sympathy that transcends cultural differences. My personal knowledge of the events, islands and in many cases the people mentioned by Neli is sufficient to enable me to confirm the substantial accuracy of his narrative. His editor and friend, anthropologist Klaus-Friedrich Koch, wisely has been content to play the part of a passive redactor, reproducing Neli's own story as nearly as possible in Neli's own words and

confining his essential explanatory data to the notes and a separate section of legal analysis.

The Lifuka/Koch book can, in fact, be read with profit and delight by all interested in the Pacific islander of today, for in it we are told more about island life in a time of social and political transition than we can gain from a dozen textbooks. It is a welcome and opportune breakthrough in our regional literature, providing us with the first life history of a Polynesian villager who has remained closely connected with village life. It will be welcomed by anthropologists, psychologists, and historians alike. Furthermore, Dr. Koch has prepared a case study of the legal difficulties and delays involved in the transfer of the title to Kioa Island which will be of value to all concerned with the reconciliation of customary tenure and European-based law; a matter that is still causing misunderstanding and controversy in some Pacific states and territories.

In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony titles to native-owned land were based on local customary law and disputes were either settled by indigenous tribunals or by Europeans trained in anthropology and speaking the local language. The Kioa question could not, unfortunately, be so decided since it concerned two independent administrations. As a former Chief Lands Commissioner I must curb my inclination to comment at length on the points raised in this interesting case; but perhaps I may state my personal conviction that the problem of title could not have been properly resolved until the *matai* of Vaitupu and the settlers on Kioa had reached an agreement, and that any earlier decision would in all probability have conflicted with the best interests of the colonists and prevented the effective development of the island.

But these technicalities notwithstanding, it would be a thousand pities if anyone were to be intimidated by them into thinking that some special expertise is required to enjoy what is in fact a very special and a very human story.

H.E. Maude
Canberra, Australia
27th May, 1977

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Neli Lifuka and Klaus-Friedrich Koch

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My field studies on the history of the Kioa settlement, part of a comparative research project on law and conflict management in the South Pacific, have been supported by grants from the American Philosophical Society, the Milton and Clark Funds of Harvard University, the Comparative International Program in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard University, and the National Institute of Mental Health (No. R01 MH 19531). The Research Committee of the University of Virginia assisted in the editing of my tape recordings and in the preparation of the illustrations. The publication of this book has been supported by a generous grant from Northwestern University.

The Chief Secretary of the Western Pacific High Commission, Honiara (British Solomon Islands Protectorate), the Chief Secretary of the Colony of Fiji, and the Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony granted me access to their files relating to Kioa. Mr. Ian Diamond, archivist, and Mr. Salim Baksh, assistant archivist, showed me how to mine the Kioa material stored in the Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission. Mr. Diamond's interest in my study as well as his advice and cooperation has been very helpful.

Mr. Foua Tofinga of Suva, a Vaitupuan civil servant in the Fiji Government, who has been the "consul" of the Vaitupu and Kioa people to the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and to the Government of Fiji since the beginning of the Kioa settlement, has helped me to understand the cultural background of the many vicissitudes in the settlement of Kioa Island. In Funafuti I received valuable information from District Commissioner Penitala Teo. Discussions with Professor Ronald G. Crocombe of the University of the South Pacific, Suva, has enlarged my knowledge of the general problems of socioeconomic development in the Pacific.

Messrs. Diamond, Tofinga, and Crocombe and Mr. Bruce Palmer, Director of the Fiji Museum, and their families welcomed me in their homes on numerous occasions. Mr. Ronald Knox-Mawer, Puisne Judge at the Supreme Court in Suva, and Mrs. June Knox-Mawer, author of delightful books on Fiji and the South Pacific, were also most hospitable.

The cheerfulness and generosity of the people of Kioa and Vaitupu made my fieldwork a most enjoyable experience. To the amusement of the children I never learned to paddle an outrigger canoe

with any skill, and I failed miserably in my attempts to climb a coconut tree. I hope that the old men have forgiven the mistakes of etiquette that I must have made and that the young girls have excused my inept dancing.

Neli and his family gave me a home. I cannot adequately describe their kind care for me during several sojourns on Kioa.

This manuscript has been reviewed by Foua Tofinga and by Neli Lifuka himself. They corrected several factual mistakes in the original account and I have followed their advice in deleting a few paragraphs that contain controversial information which, in their view, should not be published in the form it was conveyed to me.

Andrew Arno, Ronald Crocombe, and Tito Isala also have read the manuscript; their questions and criticisms have been very helpful.

Professor H.E. Maude has honored me and the Kioa people by writing the foreword to this book. Professor Maude's vast research in Pacific history has made him the "Old Man" among the Pacific historians. If they held a congress in a Polynesian *maneapa*, he would sit at the high chief's post.

This book is dedicated to the children of Kioa.

Klaus-Friedrich Koch
Evanston, Illinois
July 1977

INTRODUCTION

This book is an anthropological study of a special kind. It is not conventional ethnography; it is not a personal account nor a legal case history. It has features of all these genres. And if justification for publishing a hybrid book is necessary, it must follow from the nature of the subjects with which it deals: an extraordinary man, an island, and a legal error.

Originally I planned to write a monograph about a unique event in Pacific history: the settlement of the small uninhabited Fijian island of Kioa by colonists from Vaitupu, who embarked on this venture by themselves, relying entirely on their own material and human resources. Vaitupu is one of the Tuvalu islands. Tuvalu used to be known as the Ellice Islands, and this name is used in Neli's account, in the old designation "Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony," and in citations from ethnographic and official records.

In my five research trips to Fiji I collected three sets of data: ordinary ethnographic field notes about the Kioa community, eight reels of taped oral history in the form of one man's autobiography, and more than a thousand pages of archival documents. As I began to sift and sort this material my monograph came to seem less important than the taped autobiography, and I undertook the laborious task of transcribing and editing the tapes. The idea and the reality of the Kioa venture emerged from them with more clarity than could have been achieved with any other form of ethnographic reporting. It also became clear to me that to understand the venture one had to know the personal history of the man who had devoted a good part of his life to its realization. For these reasons I decided not to tamper with the story I had recorded and to present it as an ethnohistorical biography. Nevertheless, I realized at the same time that the meaning of this account would be enhanced if I also described the conditions that affected the Kioa venture beyond the control of the man who planned it and of the colonists who followed his call. Consequently I have extracted from the archival records those documents that refer directly to the problems that vexed and angered the Kioa people for many years. This documentation by itself is a fascinating case study of a conflict between Polynesian customary law and British colonial-administrative law. It is, indeed, by means of this ethnographic hybrid that I believe I can best portray the story of Kioa Island.

The Man. One July day in 1968 I crossed the narrow strait between the islands of Vanua Levu and Kioa on a small launch owned by an Indian ferryman. Kioa was one of the communities I wanted to visit

in my exploratory survey of research sites for a comparative study of conflict management in the polyethnic nation then called the Colony of Fiji (Koch 1971). I knew nothing about Kioa except that the island was inhabited by Polynesian settlers from Vaitupu, a small island hundreds of miles to the north.

As my Indian skipper rowed me ashore from the launch anchored in Salia Bay, a white-haired man appeared among the palm trees fringing the beautiful beach. Slowly walking barefoot toward the water, clad in a blue shirt and a brightly colored *sulu* [an ankle-length piece of cotton wrapped around the waist and worn in many parts of the Pacific] the man welcomed the unexpected stranger with a joyous smile. "My name is Neli," he said. "I am happy to meet you on my island. Please come and have something to eat in my house." I introduced myself and asked permission to stay overnight. He agreed, and I arranged for the launch to return on the next day.

Dozens of children quickly gathered around us, laughing merrily and chattering in their Ellice language, amused, no doubt, by the unknown visitor, the older ones voicing their "Good morning, Sir," rather timidly. Neli ordered a few boys to carry my bags, a task they cheerfully accepted.

Neli's house stood out. In size and construction it differed markedly from the thatched dwellings scattered over the settlement. It had two stories, sheet-iron roofing, masonite walls, and it was painted light blue. We had fried fish and tea for breakfast, prepared by his daughter Luluta.

When I left the island the following day I was convinced that I had met a truly unusual man. Long talks with Neli as we walked through the village or along the beach, or while drinking *yaqona* with others at his house, had given me a sketchy view of a charismatic leader. He had fought with his people but at the same time struggled on their behalf in the turbulent years after the Pacific War was over when the migration to Kioa had begun.

Anthropologists are prone to ascribe historical developments to the constraints and chances for change inherent in a people's social organization and its ecological environment. Rarely do we study the individual leaders whose foresight and influence may direct the fate of their people beyond sociological measure. One cannot know whether Kioa would have become the home of one-third of the Vaitupu islanders without the work of Neli, or whether they would have found another solution for averting an assumed future overpopulation. But I trust that this book will make it clear that the presence of

the right man in the right place at the right time accounts for the particular course of that community's history for a generation or more.

I sensed the significance of Neli's story on my first day on Kioa and I asked Neli if I could come back the following summer to record it. He seemed pleased by the idea, because his own sense of history told him that, in his words, "the children born on this island should never forget the hard life their parents faced and should always remember that their true home is a faraway land, called Vaitupu."

In June 1969 I returned to Kioa. Neli and I secluded ourselves for one week in a crude shelter on the far side of the island. We took only a few mats and blankets, a few bottles of whiskey, a few tins of tobacco, a kerosene lantern, a tape recorder, and a notebook. Once or twice a day his daughters, Luluta and Tusi, or his son Kailopa would bring food from Salia in the family's canoe which they paddled around the island two hours each way. When we returned to the village, I had recorded 48 hours of talk on tape: the story of Neli Lifuka's life and of the Kioa venture.

Later, that same summer, I took Neli back to Vaitupu for a visit. We flew as far as Funafuti, another island in the Ellice Group, and then continued our trip by boat. The ship anchored at several islands before it reached Vaitupu, and on each I had occasion to observe a community assembled in the village meeting hall spell-bound by Neli's dramatic oratory. It had been Neli's most cherished wish to return to Vaitupu "in order to explain to my people what I have done in Kioa."

This book portrays Neli as the great man I came to know but I hope that his own words will show his shortcomings no less than his achievements. Neli is no saint; he made mistakes and occasionally he failed to live up to his own standards. He is a man caught in the middle of two conflicting cultural ideologies. Driven to action by a most extreme form of the Protestant Ethic, he nonetheless rejects much of the European culture that infused him with this ethic. A devout believer in the Christian god, he has fought against the ritual formality of the church and the insolence of its pastors. Responsible for enforcing the law of the Colony as a native magistrate, he broke the law and created his own. Fallen from the grace of the colonial government, he rose again to envied positions. Rejecting the traditional power of chiefs and the old men, he demands obedience to his commands. Maligned by his own people, he nevertheless has their respect.



Beach hut where Neli told his story (1970)

Intolerant of wasteful communal feasting, he is a most generous host himself.

These are perhaps contradictions, but most emanate from his unmitigated commitment to the welfare of his people. He had a vision when others had merely an idea. He saw what action was needed when others slumbered in desolation. If in the future an anthropologist were to study cultural and social change, applying his craft to the development of Kioa, he would find ample evidence for his varied hypotheses in the differences between the economies of the reef island of Vaitupu and the high (volcanic) island of Kioa. No doubt his analysis would be scientifically sound, but without the record here presented it would miss an essential point: the dreams and deeds of Neli Lifuka.

Vaitupu and the Past. In October 1947 a group of travelers from Vaitupu disembarked at Kioa, the vanguard of future contingents of colonists, sent there by their magistrate, Neli Lifuka, to cultivate the land. The settlement of these first colonists on an uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean heralded a unique venture in recorded history. Never before or later has a native community bought an island and devised its own plan, such as it was, for its development.

The home of the Kioa settlers, Vaitupu, is one of the nine Tuvalu islands in Western Polynesia. Until the end of 1971, Tuvalu, as part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, was administered by the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific through the office of a Resident Commissioner headquartered in Ocean Island and, after World War II, in Tarawa. From January 1, 1972 until October 1975, the Colony had its own governor. On October 1, 1975, following the outcome of a referendum, the Ellice Islands became the Territory of Tuvalu.

The ecology of the reef islands and atolls in the Tuvalu Group limits their agricultural use to the cultivation of coconut trees and a few root crops, chiefly pulaka and taro, in addition to the seasonally bearing breadfruit tree. Therefore, the inhabitants depend on fishing as a major source of food supply, supplemented by pork and poultry, which are consumed mainly on ceremonial occasions.

The arrival of the Christian missionaries of the London Missionary Society (from Samoa) in the 1860s weakened the traditional political structure of Tuvalu communities, which had been maintained by complex distinctions between noble and commoner rank. However, in spite of the British-introduced institutions of Island Court and Island Council and of a democratic electoral process, the



Old style houses on Kioa (top)
New-style houses on Kioa (bottom)

chiefs, in Vaitupu at least, continue to occupy positions of high prestige and, without legally recognized authority, to exert considerable influence on the administration of island affairs.

On the island the bilateral kindred, *kaainga* in anthropological parlance, constitutes the most inclusive class of relatives. The *kaainga* is a group of consanguineally linked individuals, a ramage, with whom a person can trace common kinship by a system of ambilineal descent reckoning. A conceptually patrilineal bias distinguishes a person's close relatives from his more distant relatives in this group, and specific contexts of interaction determine whether *kaainga* refers to his cognatic, bilateral, extended family, or a corporate land-holding unit, the *puikaainga*, or, in a more restricted sense, to members of his own household.

Each *puikaainga*, which may comprise several households, has its headman, *matai*, who functions as the manager or steward of its estate and subsidiary resources, and whose title, *mataaniu*, dignifies his role as its ceremonial representative in the community. Although a preponderant pattern of affiliation with one's father's *puikaainga* exists, the ambilineal descent system secures a person's optional affiliation with the natal *puikaainga* of his mother. This structural flexibility combined with affiliations created by various modes of fosterage and adoption was largely responsible for the messy land dispute that fell upon the colonial administration to resolve and which, years later, complicated the identification of proprietary rights in Kioa.

Kioa and Its Unsettled Settlement. The island of Kioa lies in Buca Bay, east of Vanua Levu, the second largest island in Fiji. A narrow strait of less than a mile separates Kioa from Natuvu, a copra estate on Vanua Levu, from where a 50-mile dirt road leads to Savusavu, the administrative and commercial center of Cakaudrove District.

When the first settlers landed on Kioa they found themselves on an island of about 7 square miles, more than three times the size of Vaitupu. The topography was quite unlike what they had known at home. They were accustomed to long sandy beaches fringing flat ground but they encountered a mountainous island along whose coastline mangrove forests alternated with rocky cliffs, leaving space for only a few beaches.

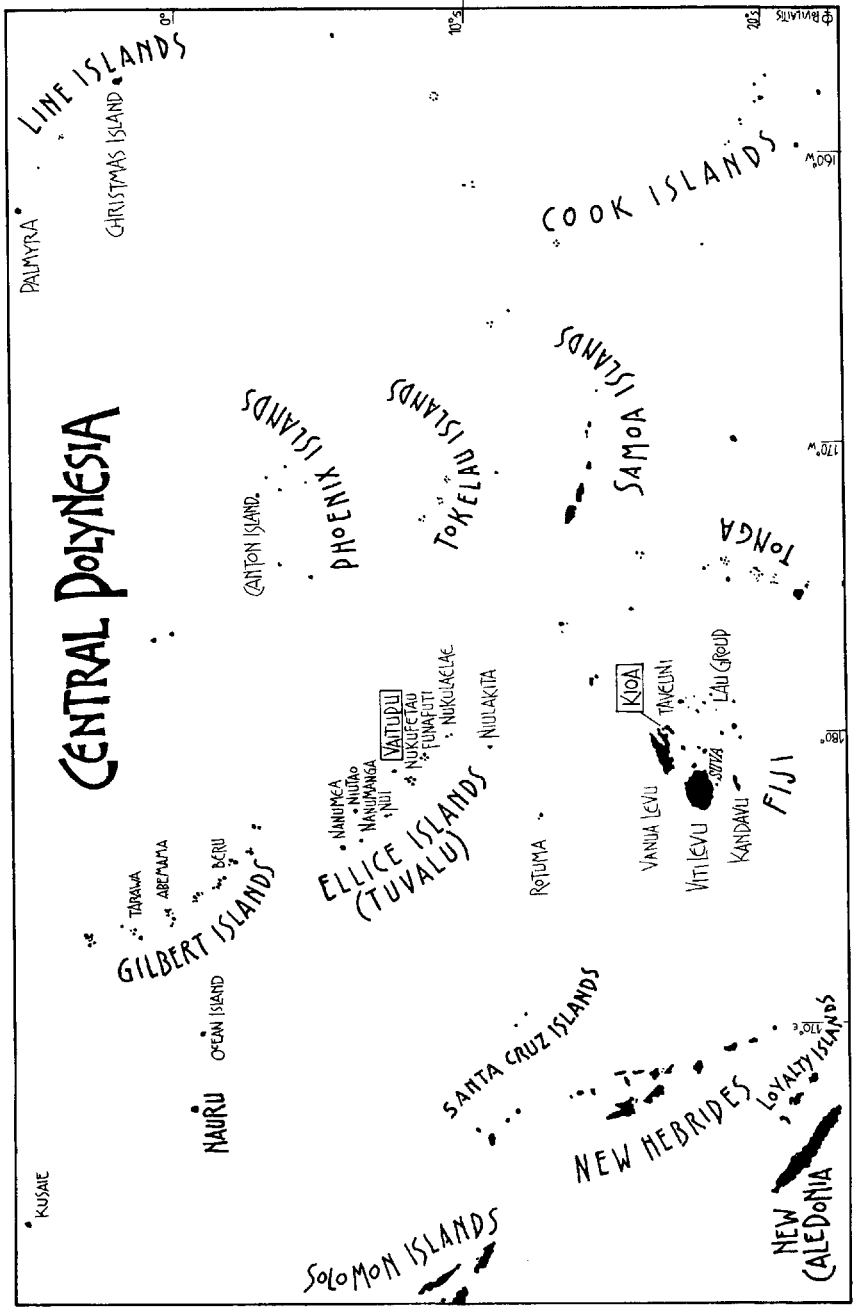
With the help of friendly villagers from nearby Fijian communities, the settlers began to plant gardens soon after their arrival. However, because fishing was far less productive than it had been in Vaitupu waters, they experienced a famine in late 1948 and early 1949, when their funds for buying flour and rice ran out.

The colonists also lacked material resources and prior knowledge of "big-island" ecology, and had to adapt to the anarchy they had imported. A series of headmen and variously composed island councils could not substitute for either the traditional authority of the chiefs and old men or the modern institutions of community government that existed in Vaitupu. The spirit of communal cooperation that had infused the earlier settlers with enthusiasm for their adventure gradually waned and gave way to factional enmities that paralyzed the development of Kioa for many years. In Neli's words, the Kioa people became like the drifting coconuts they had to gather from the sea to supplement their meager produce.

These internal economic and political problems were exacerbated by legal and administrative complications that resulted from the initial mistake of registering the title of Kioa in the name of the Governor of Fiji and from subsequent bureaucratic failures to recognize the implications of this mistake and to rectify it in time. Thus, the contradictions between customary rules of tenure and British law relating to freehold land contributed to the chaotic situation in which the Kioa colonists existed for so long.

It is now time to hear Neli. The edited text of my tapes follows closely Neli's actual words in order to preserve the flavor of his talk. I have confined my editing to errors in vocabulary and syntax. I have also deleted some digressions and details that are irrelevant to the story of Neli and Kioa and the Vaitupu colonists.

Neli Lifuka's Story



CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL DAYS IN VAITUPU

My adoptive mother told me that when I was three-months-old [Neli was born on May 12, 1909] my parents went to Samoa. They went together with a part-European whose name was Neli. This man had come to Vaitupu to build a church, and my father had helped him. When the church was finished, this man took my father to Samoa to learn more about carpentry work. They left me behind in Vaitupu. Very kind people, Kailopa and his wife, Luluta, took care of me. Luluta was a cousin to my father Lifuka [mother's sister's daughter].

I don't know how long my parents stayed in Samoa. I later heard that when they came back to Vaitupu my mother was very sick; she had T.B., or something. I was very young when she passed away.

I didn't know my own father; but one day, it was a Sunday, my adoptive mother, Luluta, gave me a new suit. It had a very nice color, and I had never seen such a suit in Vaitupu. My mother, Luluta, told me that my father Kailopa had bought it for me. But one of my sisters told me that it was from my real father, Lifuka. My mother, Luluta, did not want to speak about my real father. Maybe she thought I would change my mind and not love her and Kailopa any more. I didn't know then that my real father had married another woman and left Vaitupu to work for a company on Funafuti. When I went to my mother, Luluta, to tell her what my sister had said, she was very angry.

Well, one day my father Lifuka and my stepmother came to Vaitupu. They stayed with my stepmother's parents. I remember that I went to visit them one day, but I don't remember when they went away again.

My father had five brothers and two sisters. The oldest brother, Koloa, was married but he had no children. According to our old custom, Vaitupu custom, the people like a boy much more than they like a girl. I can't forget that till now. I remember that my uncle Koloa always carried me for three or four miles to the mission school and back to the village. My grandparents were living at the school, where they took care of the students. But things changed when my uncle married again, after his first wife had died, and he had his own son. He named him Favae [Favae Koloa was the dresser on Kioa in 1969] after the Samoan master of the mission school. The school belonged to the London Missionary Society and had six grades. We

learned to read and to write in the Samoan language; how to count, do additions and subtractions; and the Bible; a lot of Bible.

My father Kailopa made me get up every morning at six o'clock. He pulled the mat from under me and said, "Neli, wake up. Don't sleep like this. You can do some work for the family." Some days my father went fishing, and I went with him to learn how to fish in the lagoon from a canoe and how to tie the bait. But every morning I took my own fishing rod to fish by the edge of the lagoon. The day I brought my first fish home, my father said 'to me, "Neli, from now on you can bring me food. Until now I had to feed you."

Sometimes I went with other boys to catch birds in the bush, in the pandanus trees. We caught the birds as they were sitting on their eggs, and we cooked them in the bush or on the beach, like at a picnic. I couldn't climb as well as the others, some younger than myself. I hadn't practised enough. So, my job was to take off the feathers and clean the birds, or do the cooking. The reason, actually, why I didn't climb the trees was that my father had said that I shouldn't because it was very dangerous. But later, when I was in school, I did learn to climb trees.

Some days I stayed out late with the other boys. I knew my mother would be angry because I hadn't eaten properly all day long. Therefore, I looked for some seeds that swim in the ocean, and are carried onto the beaches after high seas which she used to scent her coconut oil, and brought them to her whenever I was late. My mother couldn't beat me, because these seeds are often very hard to find and she thought I had been looking for them all day. Another thing I brought home was a kind of stone that is very light and can float in the sea [pumice]. We don't have it in the Ellice Islands. It drifts there from faraway islands. My mother used it to scrub off the rust from her iron. In those days the women used irons which they heated with glowing coconut shells. My mother always wanted her iron to be very clean. She wanted everything to be very neat and clean, the house, the clothes, everything. So, when I brought my mother these stones I had a good excuse for being late, and she always changed her mind and was very happy.

With my sisters and other boys and girls I used to catch land crabs at night. We used torches made from coconut leaves then, because in those days we didn't have kerosene lamps. We collected the crabs in one basket, and in the end divided them among us.

I didn't have to work much at home. I just had to collect the coconuts that had fallen from the trees, or feed the pigs and chickens, or wash the dishes and clean up around the house. In those days the parents did all the work. But now it's different, even the small boys have to work in the gardens and clear the bush.

When I was about 14, the government started a school in the Ellice Islands. The British Commissioner for the Ellice Islands came to Vaitupu to select the students from our village. Seven boys from Vaitupu were taken to the new school on the small islet of Papaelise in Funafuti. There had been a mission school for girls which had been closed for ten years. Because only one building was left for the children to stay in, new houses had to be built. Therefore, my father, who had come back to Vaitupu with his new wife by that time, and other men from Vaitupu, including Kailopa, went to Papaelise to put up the buildings. My father Lifuka was the boss, and I asked him to take me along. I helped with the work.

The ship that had brought us to Papaelise came back a week later to bring the schoolmaster, Mr. Kennedy, and his wife and daughter. But there was no school yet for the boys, only physical exercises every morning. After six months Mr. Kennedy started his lessons under the coconut trees.

The work was very hard. You can make only four boards from one coconut tree, and we used only axes. The men were not paid for their labor; they received only their food from the government. After one year and a half our work was finished and we returned to Vaitupu. Later my father Lifuka and my stepmother and all the family returned to Papaelise, where my father then worked as a carpenter for the government. With us was Kaisami, an adopted son of my father Lifuka and my stepmother, Toata. He and I were living at the school, but we both didn't take any lessons, we just had to do the exercises in the morning.

After one year Mr. Kennedy decided to close the school because the people of Funafuti couldn't provide enough food for the children. The government gave the children European food, rice, biscuits, flour, three days a week, and the uniforms, a *sulu* and a singlet. But on the other days the people had to provide them with food.

When my father heard that Mr. Kennedy wanted to close the school, he asked him to take the school to Vaitupu. There was a

government boat, the "Pioneer," in Funafuti, which had a wireless. We took a canoe and sailed over to the "Pioneer," so that Mr. Kennedy could talk with the Resident Commissioner on Ocean Island about my father's idea. The Resident Commissioner told Mr. Kennedy to go to Vaitupu and discuss the plan with the people there. So Mr. Kennedy and my father went to Vaitupu on the "Pioneer." The people of Vaitupu agreed to rebuild the school on their island.

Mr. Kennedy went on to Ocean Island to arrange everything with the Resident Commissioner. Then the "Pioneer" came back to Funafuti to pick up the children and take them to Vaitupu. My father and I stayed behind to pull down Mr. Kennedy's house to save the timber for his new house in Vaitupu. We didn't have to take the house for schoolchildren down, because there were plenty of coconut trees on Vaitupu. We had to wait for six months before another ship came to take us back to Vaitupu with the timber for Mr. Kennedy's house.

It took us two or three years to build the new school, the dormitories, a big schoolhouse, the house for Mr. Kennedy, and other houses for the staff, the cook, the gardeners, the fishermen, the storekeeper, the policeman, the dresser, and the carpenter, my father. [The school opened in 1924 and was closed in 1953, when the facilities of the King George V boarding school in Tarawa were expanded.]

The people of Vaitupu did everything for the school. Mr. Kennedy could even agree with the Resident Commissioner to cut out the three days of government food. Therefore, Mr. Kennedy allowed more Vaitupu boys to go to the school than from the other islands. That's why most of the educated Ellice Islanders are from Vaitupu and they hold most of the high positions in the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, or with companies. The Vaitupu people saw early what civilization meant, but the people on the other islands did not; they saw no change. I can't blame the people of the other islands for that, because they were not as rich as the people of Vaitupu, which is the largest island in the Ellice Group. Now every island has a primary school, and a secondary school is in Tarawa, in the Gilbert Islands.

Mr. Kennedy was a very tough man. In his teaching he was all right, but outside the classroom he was a hard man. One day when we had finished school in the morning and went outside, one boy

yawned very loud. Mr. Kennedy wanted to know who had done that. Because we didn't tell him, he wanted to punish us all, which meant that we couldn't leave the school for one month to visit our parents in the village. So I put up my hand and said, "I did it," although I hadn't done it. I later found out that it was the smallest boy in the school who had yawned. Mr. Kennedy took a cricket bat, the biggest one in the school, and beat me so hard I fell to the ground. Even today everybody remembers that. For one week I couldn't go to school. I couldn't sit down and had to stay with the dresser in the little hospital of the school. It was a very hard life in those days. If a boy walked slowly, Mr. Kennedy called him and boxed him. That's how we learned discipline. Punishment for going to the village without permission was a dozen with the cricket bat.

The reason I put up my hand was that I didn't want the boys to be punished so hard. It was November, and on November the 25th we always celebrated the day when the people of Vaitupu had paid off their debts. They once had debts with a German trader from Samoa. This man brought cargo like cloth, knives, and biscuits on his ship. When he had put all the things down in the village, he showed the people a paper about the money, but in those days very few Vaitupu people could read. The people were supposed to make copra, but they didn't know how to do the work in the proper way then. There was an agent living on the island who had to take care of the copra for the company. He was an old man and gave the people whatever they wanted from the store and never counted the coconuts that the people said they had brought. [Copra, dried coconut meat, is still the main, often only source of revenue on many Pacific islands.] So after one year, when the ship came back from Samoa, there was not enough copra to pay for the cargo and no money was there either. Therefore, the people of Vaitupu had big debts, 3,000 *tala* [Chilean dollars], and the German man from Samoa said, "I give you six months to get the copra; if you don't, I'll take your island." [At that time Chilean dollars were the most widely used currency in the Pacific.]

The people began to work very hard, day and night, day and night. They wrote letters to all the other islands in the Ellice Group to ask for help, but only Funafuti sent some money—less than 100 *tala*.¹

One day some boys had gone fishing near the village, and afterwards visited their parents there. Mr. Kennedy was away in Funafuti at that time, but my father Lifuka told Mrs. Kennedy about it. Be-

cause the boys were afraid of the cricket bat, they wanted to run away before Mr. Kennedy came back. I was in the hospital at that time with some stomach pain and I didn't know anything about what the boys had done. However, in the middle of the night I heard someone call my name. I went outside and saw it was Kaisami, who told me that they wanted me to run away with them to another island. I agreed and went over to the house of the policeman and took his overcoat and a big knife I thought we needed for the trip. When we met the other boys, they wanted to discuss the matter first, but I told them that we had no time to waste. We took the big canoe from the school and paddled to the village, where we stole some things like dried coconut from my father Kailopa's house. We also collected some fishing line and other things and took everything to my father's [Kailopa's] canoe. I had to do most of the work myself; the others just looked on because they were very frightened. They were puzzled about me. Although I couldn't climb trees, I had made all the preparations. None of the four boys said anything when I told them, "I am your captain."

When we had loaded the canoe, we paddled away from the island. We left about four o'clock in the morning and paddled hard until midday so that nobody could catch up with us. Then we drifted for a while, then paddled again, always moving southward for five days, drifting with the current.

Soon the boys started talking about their parents. I got mad and told them to shut up. I talked like this because we had to think about our future, not about the village we left behind. I didn't want them to give up. After four days we saw a ship at night. We paddled very hard to reach it, thinking that it might take us to Samoa or to America. But then we saw that the ship was the "Pioneer," which we believed was coming from Vaitupu, because Mr. Kennedy was supposed to have returned from Funafuti by that time. That night the sea was very calm and we could tell that we were close to an island; but we couldn't see any land yet. In the morning we saw the island and also two canoes. When the men saw us they fooled us and didn't do anything. The island was Vaitupu, and we had not recognized it. Anyway, these men knew who we were and let us come close. They even hid their faces by pulling their hats down. When we came up to them, we saw that they cried. They asked us to change our minds and come back home. But I said to the other boys, "Never mind these old men, I want to know what *you* think." They said they wanted to go ashore, so I agreed.

That was a big day in Vaitupu, The people had a meeting with the chiefs in the *maneapa* [village meeting hall]. Everybody cried like when someone had died. Back at the school Mr. Kennedy wanted to know which of us had first talked about what we had done. We said we did it together, but Mr. Kennedy called me out and made me stand by myself. After one hour, Mr. Kennedy came back and made me a house leader or something like that. He didn't put me down, he gave me a promotion because the boys couldn't have run away without me. The other four boys were kicked out of the school then. I was kicked out the next year.

The following day my father Kailopa came to Mr. Kennedy and asked him if he could take me to the village to have a feast with the family. Mr. Kennedy got very angry that my father wanted to do that for me. My father Kailopa said that he wanted to have a big feast for his son who was lost and had returned, but Mr. Kennedy did not allow me to go to the village.

My father Lifuka was very ashamed of what he had done. Nobody liked him for that, and he was afraid to meet me.

One Sunday we had an inspection. My singlet had a very small hole, and when Mr. Kennedy saw that, he hit me. My nose bled, my lips were broken, and my eyes were swollen. For four or five hours I had to march up and down a path, up and down in the hot sun, one half mile each way, with the policeman watching. In the end Mr. Kennedy asked me whether I wanted to stay in school or not. I said that I wanted to get out. The reason that I had a hole in my singlet was that I had to collect all the laundry on Saturdays from the boys in my house and give it to a woman who did our clothes. I saw that she had very much to do because some of the boys in my house had big holes in their singlets. Therefore, I told her to leave mine undone if she didn't have the time. It now looks to me that I didn't get an education because of a tiny hole in my singlet.²

EARLY TRAVELS

For six months I stayed with my father Kailopa, working for the household. Then a ship came from Ocean Island to recruit laborers for the phosphate mines. I went together with another boy, Sakua. The other boys couldn't go because they had already signed a contract with Burns Philp [a trading company] to work in the Phoenix Islands.

Nobody wanted to go from the other Ellice Islands. Therefore, when we came to Nanumea, the last island in the Ellice Group, the recruitment officer told us to stay behind in Nanumea because they would not send another boat to Vaitupu for perhaps ten years. I didn't like that idea and told him that we could live away from our parents, that we were no girls and wanted to go on.

The people from the southern Gilberts didn't want to sign work contracts either. The reason was this: they wanted the wages to go up which in those days were very low, only two pounds a month. But eight shillings was a bonus or something, which meant that if you came late for work or did something wrong, they would give you only one pound and twelve shillings. In Vaitupu we didn't know anything about that matter because there had not been any recruiting in Vaitupu before, only from the other Ellice Islands.

However, we got some more people in the middle and northern Gilberts. We arrived at Ocean Island at night and saw many lights. We thought, "Oh, what a nice island." When we went ashore in the morning, we saw something different. We had never seen such a terrible place. It was very, very hot.

I was working on a cargo boat that took the phosphate from the jetty to the ship. It was a terrible job. My whole body was always covered with dust. My nose filled up with dust in no time. Even my eyes filled with dust. It was really a very hard job.

After I had worked on that boat for about one month, the European overseer on the ship, the "Nauru Chief," a steamer, called out to me to come up on deck. He asked me to take over a job at the winch because the boy doing this work was sick. That job I had for one year, until the captain wanted me as a sailor.

One day the officer who watched over my work came to me and asked whether I knew anything about the engine. I said I knew very little about it. But he took me to the engine room and showed me the dynamo. He asked me what I knew about the dynamo. Some

things I knew, some I didn't. Still, I was very lucky, because the chief engineer agreed to have me work in the engine room.

I worked on the main engine as a greaser for about a year. Then I got another job, also on the engine, but a different one. A European had that place before me. It was a difficult job because I had to watch the engine all the time, watching those rods go up and down, up and down. I could never leave and talk with my friends. If I had to go to the toilet, the engineer in charge had to come and take over. I stayed on this job till I left the ship in 1931. I got good wages, about four pounds a month, and sixpence an hour for overtime. So I could make more than 20 pounds a month. Every day I worked, Saturday and Sunday, too.

Most of our trips were to Melbourne. From there we took general cargo and fresh meat to Nauru and Ocean Island. Sometimes we went to Sydney.

When I first came to Australia, in 1928, I saw the ferry boats in Sydney going back and forth, back and forth. All the people were rushing to their jobs and I told myself, "Look at the people, how they rush, rush, rush to their jobs." I shook my head about the people in the streets. They walked like cars: you keep to your side, I keep to my side. That was something.

In those days I didn't drink, not even beer; I didn't like it. But my friends from the Gilberts, they drank. Not much, just a beer or two. But one day, in Newcastle, I went with my friends and the steward, a European, to a bar. I had lemonade. But they had put whiskey in it. I didn't know, because I didn't know the taste of whiskey. However, I smelled something, so I refused to drink, and poured my glass in the sink. I didn't go out with them any more.

Even during the war, when I was working for the Americans in Funafuti, I never drank any whiskey. I just took care of the drunken people, because I was a quartermaster then. But I had a beer once in a while with my best friend, Penitala Teo, who had been in school with me. Only later, after the war, when I was made a magistrate in Vaitupu, and the District Commissioner asked me to have a whiskey with him, did I begin to drink. But then I was already old enough to know how to behave myself.

The fourth engineer of the "Nauru Chief" liked me very much. He is the one who helped me learn more English. He gave me newspapers to read and gave me paper and pencil to practice my writing.

When I didn't know a word, I asked him, and he explained it to me. He was a very nice man. He was already very old, maybe sixty, but he still worked because he wanted his son to finish school. His son wanted to be a master of a ship. The captain was very friendly, too.

One day when we had anchored at Ocean Island, there was a new boat, the "Nei Nimanoa." It was the first government ship of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. That day someone brought a letter to the captain of my ship from the Resident Commissioner asking whether the two Ellice boys were still working on his ship. He wanted us to go back to our island to see our families. My friend had been on the ship for only one trip. Then he got sick and stayed on Ocean Island. The captain called us both to tell us that we must go back to the Ellice Islands because we had been away from home for three years. A week later the "Nei Nimanoa" took us to Tarawa.

As soon as Ocean Island disappeared from our view, the captain wanted to see me. He had a letter from the Resident Commissioner that he was supposed to open only after we had left Ocean Island. The letter said that he could take me and the other Ellice boy for his crew. Both of us agreed. The captain asked what my job had been. When I said I had been a greaser, he asked me if I wanted to have the same job on his ship, and I said "yes." That time all the sailors were Ellice boys, but in the engine room there were two Gilbertese and two Fijians. Only four boys could work in the engine room. When we got to Tarawa, the captain kicked one of the Gilbert boys out and put me in his place.

My first trip on the "Nei Nimanoa" was to Fiji, but first we sailed to an island in the southern Gilberts, where the District Commissioner had to fix a murder case. Then we came to Vaitupu. All that time I had maybe two letters from my family; I wrote every month to say everything was O.K. Their letters went from Vaitupu to Fiji by ship and then to Melbourne to the B.P. office [British Phosphate Commission]. And my letters went first to Fiji and then to Vaitupu.

We arrived at Vaitupu early morning on a Sunday. Nobody knew that my friend and I were on that ship. When the government canoe came out to the ship, we were the first to go ashore. Because it was Sunday, all of the people of Vaitupu were on the beach. My father Lifuka, too. He wanted to take me to his house. But I first went to see my father Kailopa. He was so happy to see me again. I gave him the 100 pounds I had saved and said, "This is your money,

there." He asked me what my plans were, and I told him that I was going to work on that new ship. He didn't like that idea but when I told him that I would come to Vaitupu every couple of months, he agreed. You know what my father Kailopa did with the money? He gave all of it to the London Missionary Society, as far as I know.

I left Vaitupu the same day, but my friend stayed behind. We went to Funafuti, stayed there for one week, and then sailed to Fiji. It was the first time I saw Suva [the capital city of Fiji]. We stayed there for three months while the ship was in overhaul. The city was not such a big thing to me because I had been in Australia. But two things did surprise me in Suva: the big taro I saw in the market and the schoolchildren; everywhere I saw schoolchildren. I asked the people how they got such big taro, and they told me it was because of the soil. All the other foods, too, were bigger than anything we had in the Ellice Islands. I thought to myself, "These people are just like us, but look what they can do!" And I thought that back in Vaitupu not all children went to school to get an education. And I thought much about that.

On weekends, I went out to Nasese [a village near Suva] where I saw very big taros in the people's gardens. That's when I first thought that Fiji must be a very rich island and a good place to live.

When we left Suva, we ran into a bad hurricane and almost everybody was seasick. I had to stay at the engine all the time because the other boy was sick. Even the captain couldn't walk; he just moved around on his bottom. I had to bring him the compass from the lifeboat to watch, because he couldn't stand up to see the ship's compass. He was too bloody old.

When we got back to Vaitupu, I ran away from the ship. I was fed up with the two pounds ten a month. I didn't have any money to save. You bought your clothes, and gifts for your family, and nothing was left. Also, they had only two watches for the engine room. This meant that you worked for four hours, then had to wait to cool off for half an hour before taking a shower, then you tried to sleep. But maybe you couldn't sleep for a while. At least they could have made three watches. They sent a policeman after me, but I refused to go back.

MARRIAGE AND A SOJOURN IN VAITUPU

The year I left the ship, in 1933, I got married. My father Lifuka and my sisters had already decided on a wife for me; but the girl didn't agree. Anyway, a friend of mine told me about someone else, and that she was a very good girl. We went to talk with her mother because her father [one of the six chiefs of Vaitupu] had already passed away. She agreed and her daughter agreed, too. The law said that we had to wait three months before we could get married. We stayed with my father Kailopa, and I worked in the gardens and cut copra. During the time I stayed in Vaitupu I was one of the four laborers working on the boat passage. The problem was that when the sea was rough, it was very difficult for a boat to get through the reef. Mr. Kennedy, who was a district officer in Funafuti then, supervised our work. It was very hard work, diving down to make holes with a crowbar and to fix the dynamite in the holes. It took us about three months to finish the job. Then Mr. Kennedy took us to Nui, one of the Ellice Islands, and we blasted the passage free within two months. The people of Nui were very kind to us. They gave us all the food we needed, because we had no government rations, and killed two pigs for us every Sunday. The people of Nui are very smart. They know how to grow the biggest taro and *pulaka*. I have heard that a long time ago the Gilbert people sailed to Nui and killed all the men and married the women of the island. Even today the Nui people are the only ones in the Ellice group who speak Gilbertese. Actually they speak half-Ellice, half-Gilbertese when they talk. They know more than the other Ellice people about planting and also about making toddy. But the Nui people are also mean. They didn't teach the other Ellice islands how they do it. Sure, if somebody asked them, they would tell him. However, the real trick they wouldn't give away. That's the custom.

We mix toddy with food, all kinds of food. The women boil it; otherwise it will get sour. One gets *kamangi*, something like beer, if one lets it sit for three or four days. But boiled it is some kind of molasses, which one can store in bottles for a long time.

One day, when I was back in Vaitupu, the "John Williams," the boat of the London Missionary Society, came to Vaitupu. One of my uncles, Lifuka's brother, asked me to accompany the two sons of another uncle of mine, who lived in Samoa and was married there, on their way home. But there was no place for me on the ship. So I went to the captain and asked him for a job. My chief mate on the

“Nei Nimanoa” and this captain knew each other from a trip they had taken together a long time before. And I had met the captain once with my chief mate in Beru [Gilbert Islands]. He remembered me and gave me a job as a sailor.

We first went to the Tokelau Islands, then to Pago Pago, then to Apia. In Apia I met my stepsister, a daughter of Lifuka and his second wife. From Apia we went to Suva, where we stayed for four months for an overhaul. I got sick there, trouble with my legs, and had to stay in the hospital for three or four weeks.

From Suva we went back to the Ellice Islands, first to Funafuti. I had a quarrel with the chief mate because he made me work one day even after I had had a night watch. When I met Mr. Kennedy and told him about the chief mate, he was angry and agreed that I should leave the ship. So I asked the captain to let me stay in Funafuti. After about three months the B.P. ship arrived from Vaitupu with many people, including my wife, to help build Mr. Kennedy's house.

My wife had a pain in her stomach. I took her to the doctor who put her in the hospital. Therefore, we had to stay behind when the house was finished and the other people from Vaitupu went back home.

One day the “Nei Nimanoa” arrived. They asked me to work on the ship again, but I refused because the wages were still the same. The captain was a smart man, however. He wrote a letter to Mr. Kennedy, who wanted to tour the Ellice Islands with the government doctor, to tell him that he couldn't make the tour because he didn't have enough crew. Mr. Kennedy sent a policeman to fetch me, but I told him why I did not want to work on the ship. He said, “Look here, my boy, there is a law, a British law, that a ship can't sail without enough crew. Therefore you must help us. If you don't go, we can't go on our tour.” So I agreed to work in the engine room of that ship again just for one trip.

The tour lasted two weeks and when we were back in Funafuti my wife left the hospital, and the ship took us back to Vaitupu.

In Vaitupu my wife and I worked at the government school. We took the place of the caretaker and his wife who had to go to Funafuti because the woman was sick. I kept the job until the old caretaker came back, but when, later, the cook of the school got very sick, the schoolmaster asked me to take over. It was a big change for

the school boys. The school had changed from the days when I was a student there. Now there was plenty of food, and the boys didn't have to work so much outside the school.

My job wasn't bad but I didn't like to work in the gardens and in the kitchen. I wanted to be on a ship again. In those days the idea was to go away, to see Fiji and Ocean Island. Others looked at you as if you were a *matai* [head of a land-holding extended family group]. And besides, nobody told us how to save our money. There were no savings banks in the colony then. Not the government, nor the pastor ever explained to us how to save money. Our bank in those days was the London Missionary Society, but we didn't get any money back from this bank, ever! The natives in the Ellice Islands spent all their money on the church. The custom was that when the "John Williams" came from Samoa with 40 or 50 people to tour the Ellice Islands, our people had to look after these strangers for three or four days. Sometimes the children didn't get enough food because the families had to prepare food for all these visitors, including two European pastors.

One day, when our club [one of several organized to do communal works] had to help prepare food for the mission boat, a small boy said, "Why do we do this for the Samoans?" That made me think, but I kept quiet for a long time. I thought about the church. I thought that we couldn't use the church for our future. Those Samoans came to us like gods. From that time on, I didn't like the church. I didn't want my people to go on like this. I wanted to stop all this. I wished I had been a big man then to stop all this nonsense.³



WORK IN THE B.P.C. HOSPITAL ON OCEAN ISLAND

In 1936 Ocean Island was opened again for laborers from the Ellice Islands. When the recruiting ship came to Vaitupu, I signed on. The ship was much better than the "Nauru Chief." The captain and the recruiting officer were very happy to see me. They wanted me and my wife and our son to stay in a cabin, but I said that I had to stay with my people on deck. We had very good food, as much as we could eat: meat, rice, and potatoes; sometimes fish.

Only three islands from the Ellice Group had sent recruits: Niutao, Nanumea, and Vaitupu. The ship arrived on a Saturday. It always arrived at Ocean Island on a Saturday so that the people could rest for one day. On Monday morning we went to the meeting hall to get our assignments. First they asked who had been on Ocean Island before. All the people from Niutao and Nanumea, but nobody from Vaitupu, stood up. Then they asked who knew how to work on the winch. Again nobody from Vaitupu stood up. The Vaitupu boys whispered, "Hey, Neli, you, you get up." But I didn't. They were angry with me because they didn't want to have somebody from the other islands to be their leader.

At last they said, "All people stand up who want to work on the boats." I was the first to stand up. Then everybody from Vaitupu stood up. I knew that the last people assigned to work have to do the hardest job: on the boats. That job was also dangerous; many people got killed by the heavy baskets. Therefore, I had decided to teach the Vaitupu people myself how to handle the basket.

There were two shifts on the boats: A Gilbertese shift and an Ellice shift. We had the night shift, from four o'clock in the afternoon to midnight. I explained to the Vaitupu boys how to work on the chute and how to place and move the baskets. Each basket weighed one ton, and if it wasn't placed the right way, the boat could capsize. Therefore, you had to be very careful and put the baskets in the proper place and use the chute the right way. The Polynesians are careless people, they never think about what they are doing. It's the custom. That's why I had to show my people how to work properly, not to make mistakes. Well, they knew the native ways, but of civilization they didn't know much yet.

The third night the overseer on the ship called me. He wanted me on the winch because he had heard that I had worked on that job before. I agreed because by then the Vaitupu boys knew how to do their work. They had learned very fast; some worked better than I.

The next morning the manager of the B.P. office wanted to see me. I went over to his office, and he asked me whether I knew anything about the work of a dresser. I said I didn't. But he said, "Never mind, you take this letter to the doctor in the hospital." So I went to the hospital and gave the letter to the doctor. He opened it and said, "Very good, very good!" Then he asked me, "Do you know anything about the work of a dresser?" I said, "I am sorry, doctor, I don't know anything about it." He asked, "Do you know anything about a thermometer?" I said, "I am sorry, doctor, I don't know anything about thermometers." He replied, "Well, anyway, from now on you will learn how to take temperature."

He called somebody, a Banaban man, and told him to teach me everything about taking temperature and other things a dresser must do. He was a very good man and taught me my new job within a week. He wanted to resign right away, but I asked him to stay on for another month to teach me more. The hospital wanted me for that job because the Ellice people couldn't understand Gilbertese. They didn't know how to talk to the doctor either. Because I knew Gilbertese and some English, I could translate both the Gilbert and the Ellice peoples' talk for the doctor. After one month, I took the Banaban's place, but only for the Ellice patients. Another man, a Gilbertese who had worked in the European hospital for many years, took the job for the Gilbertese. He was higher than me, got more wages.

I had been at the hospital for one year, when the doctor went over to the European hospital and a new doctor took over. He was a nice man, still very young. He changed everything. Before, the patients just got aspirin and iodine, never mind what they had. But this new doctor worked differently and used different medicines. He looked at the charts and talked with the patients a long time.

There was one big trouble on Ocean Island: the B.P. Commission didn't want any European to be friends with us. They didn't want the Europeans to mix with the natives. If a European visited the house of a native, he could be dismissed.

I only now understand the reason for this. In those days I didn't take much notice, even when Mr. Kennedy talked to me about the problem. Only much later did I think about it. I then realized that if the natives knew enough about the B.P.C., they wouldn't work for the company. They would know it's their land and their phosphate.⁴

However, in those days we were still not educated enough to understand our rights. As long as we had a job, why complain? But some of the Europeans kept telling their friends among the natives that they should get more wages. That's why the laborers had a big strike after the war. They didn't work for three or four months.

The Ellice people working on Ocean Island in the 1930s wanted to have an organization. Nobody should spoil the name of the Ellice Islands with the B.P.C. We had meetings every month to discuss how best to do our jobs. Pastor Lusia was the chairman, and I was the secretary. One day there was a big shot from Fiji, the Secretary of State [Western Pacific High Commission]. We wanted to see him because we wanted Mr. Kennedy to go back to the Ellice Islands.

Mr. Kennedy was in Ocean Island then. He had come back from his holiday in England. So I wrote a letter to Mr. Wood, who was in charge of the native laborers. We had to ask permission to see anybody from the government. Mr. Wood never replied to my letter. So we couldn't see the man from Fiji. I made up my mind to make a little trouble to show the B.P.C. what they had done. I wrote another letter to Mr. Wood to tell him that the Ellice people were going to strike. Half an hour after I had sent a boy with the letter to Mr. Wood, I heard a car come to the clinic. It was Mr. Wood. He wanted to know what I meant by that letter. I said that I was very sorry, but that the Ellice people would stop working because of what he had done to them. He told me that the manager wanted to see me.

At that time the Ellice people were working on the day shift. So when I went to see the manager, I saw the old men from the Ellice Islands coming from their work. They had heard about some trouble. Because I hadn't discussed my letter with anybody, I told them to say that they didn't know anything about anything. One old man from Nanumea said that I should tell them what was the right thing to do. But I told them again to say to every question, "I don't know; I don't know." Well, we went to the office of the manager. Mr. Wood was there and two old men from each of the three Ellice Islands who had laborers on Ocean Island. One of the Gilbertese who had been in the Vaitupu school was the interpreter. The manager asked the old men about the strike. They replied they didn't know anything about that. So the manager asked me why I had written the letter. I said that I was the boss of all the Ellice people on Ocean Island. He asked, "How come you are the boss?" I said, "Ask them." So he asked the old men, "Is it true that Neli is your boss?" They

said they didn't know. So the manager said, "You see, how come you are the boss?" I replied, "Ask them whether the Ellice people have held meetings every month to decide how to deal with the company." He did; and they said that the pastor was the chairman and I was the secretary, and I added that I took the pastor's place whenever he was busy.

Finally, the manager asked me what the matter was. When I had explained the problem, the manager asked Mr. Wood why he had not told him anything. When Mr. Wood said that he had shown him the letter, the manager told him that it was his duty to remind him every day of such an important matter. He got angry at Mr. Wood and the two had a big argument. I told the manager that we were angry not because we didn't get permission to see the man from Fiji, but because we didn't get an answer at all. The manager promised that he could fix everything, but I told him he couldn't and that things with the B.P.C. looked to me like a fish without a tail. He didn't understand me. So I explained that a fish without a tail can't swim properly, keep his direction; that the company was the fish and the Ellice people the tail. But I told him not to worry; the Ellice people would continue their work. He thanked me and said that he would discuss the fish with me in the future, invite me to his house.

Later the old men told me that I should keep speaking for them. They were old men, much older than I, and according to our custom they should have been the ones to speak up.

I liked my work in the hospital. One day the new doctor said that it was because of my good work that the situation had become better; one week we had no patients at all. So, one morning, the doctor asked me whether I didn't have any friends on the outside, because I was always in the hospital even when I was not on duty. I told him that I had many friends in the village, in the police; but that I liked my patients. You know what he did? He gave me a week off. He told me that I had to stay out of the hospital for one whole week. I went with my wife to spend a week with my wife's brother; he was in the police. But first I went to the two patients who were very sick and told them that I was to be away for one week. However, I kept thinking about them, and I went back Saturday afternoon, when the doctor had left, to visit them. A nurse had seen me and reported me to the doctor. When I returned to work, the doctor came to see me. He said that he had never seen a native work so hard on his duty. The doctor was a good friend, really.

The doctor had a contract for two years. The company did not renew his contract because he had been too friendly with the natives. The manager thought he was too kind with the natives. He always talked with them on the road. Before the doctor left, I had gotten a new job in the new infant welfare clinic, and he taught me everything I had to know. Many children died in those days. Also my child, the one born on Vaitupu, passed away shortly after we got to Ocean Island. Our first child had passed away in Vaitupu during a big epidemic, when 300 children in the islands died within a month. That's when the Colony decided to build the clinic.

Since there were 60 Vaitupians working on two-year contracts on Ocean Island then, I had the idea of saving some of our wages for the community. The boys from Vaitupu agreed to save five pounds the first year and five pounds the second year. But in the end they bought flour and other things to take back to Vaitupu. That was the custom. I had proposed that we should save the money in a bank, so that we would get 3 percent a year interest. I had a big argument with the older men, but they did not listen. The boys liked my idea, but they couldn't do anything against the old men.

I stayed behind when they left, and signed another two-year contract. When the ship came back with the new recruits from Vaitupu, one bloody old man gave me a letter from my father Kailopa. He asked me to collect 1,500 pounds for the church, because they wanted to separate from the church in Samoa. I liked that idea because the Samoans were pushing the Ellice people too much, and I accepted the job to organize the collection. The London Missionary Society had said that we wouldn't have our own foundation if we didn't have money.

Only 23 laborers had come this time, but eight from the first group stayed on, myself included. There were also six Vaitupu boys with the police in Ocean Island. So we were almost 40. We all met to decide on the shares and agreed that everybody should save 25 pounds. After six months I called a meeting to find out about their savings. We had bad luck. The man who was to look after the money and keep the records had less money than he was supposed to have. So I decided to take on the job myself; even the old man agreed. By the end of the contract period we had the funds we needed.

But there was a big problem. The war in Europe had broken out and the government wouldn't allow us to take our money in the B.P.C. bank to Vaitupu. The boys were mad because they wanted to

have the money. I talked with the treasurer of the colony, and he told me that he would send the money to the L.M.S. in England and give me a book to show that we had the money in a bank.

Between 1938 and 1940, a big shot in the London Missionary Society from England visited the Ellice Islands and he heard that the Vaitupu people had already started a collection for that new church. When he came to Ocean Island he called a meeting of all the Ellice people working there. He told us that he had never seen poorer people in the world than the people of the Ellice Islands, and that he couldn't understand how we had sent money year in, year out, to the London Missionary Society. "You need only have supported the pastor," he said. "Remember there are many churches of the London Missionary Society around the world. You should not support people in other countries, but look after yourselves. Carry on and save your wages so that you can have your own church." Then I knew that the old Samoan pastor had been a crook.

We got our money back only after the war. The treasurer of the colony had explained to me that we would get more money because of the interest. When after the war a churchman from Samoa came to Vaitupu, I told our deacon, who had the book, to ask him about the interest. You know what? The silly fool, our deacon, had agreed to give also the interest to the fund for the Ellice Islands church, not just the 1,500 pounds, and the Vaitupu people supported him. They did not listen to me at the meeting. They reckoned that the money belonged to God. As I said before, the Bank of the Ellice Islands was the London Missionary Society.

In 1939 my son was born. He was named Lotofenua, which means "a man who loves, or works hard for, his people." The Ellice pastor on Ocean Island picked his name.

About Loto, my wife and I had a problem. My wife wanted her brother to adopt Loto. It's the custom, but this is the way in which the matter came up. My wife believed in native medicine, that some people can make others sick. One day, my wife went to visit a friend with some other women. When they passed the house of a Nanumea woman, who was very clever about native medicine, that woman called them in. She explained to my wife that she would have no child to live from then on because someone had put some of that medicine in her. My poor wife, she believed that. The woman brought a big tub with water, put something in it, and made my wife take a bath. Afterwards she had to put on a new dress. The woman

also prepared a bottle which had the power to keep away all those things other people had done to my wife. In the bottle were some leaves in oil. My wife had to rub her body with the oil every night. She had to keep the bottle in a box, nothing else was inside that box.

My wife explained all that to me when she came back home. She was very happy about the medicine. I didn't say anything. Next Sunday, my wife prepared to go to church. I didn't because I had an idea. When my wife asked whether I was not going to church, I said, "No; what about you, are you going?" She answered, "Yes." I said, "No, I don't think so. We now have got our god inside the box, we don't have to go to the church any more." That's what I told her. Since she had a god in the box, why go to church? My wife cried and said that God gave the people all those things. But I refused to go to church and told her that I was really too ashamed to go because we had our own god in the box. She went alone.

When she came back, she cried and cried. She didn't like what I had said. I was the boss in the family and I simply told her that I wanted that bottle out of the house right away. She kept arguing, but I told her to go back to that Nanumea woman and have her pick up the bottle, if she was afraid to handle it herself. She went and when she came back, she didn't talk to me. That evening two men came to our house to pick up the bottle. One of them opened it and drank it empty. He said that he had to do that because if he didn't something bad would happen to us. I was getting hot inside and just said, "Thank you very much, I think it's time to sleep. Good-bye!" So they left. My wife cried and cried.

When Loto was born, my wife's brother came with his wife to talk to me about adopting my son. I refused. I had been adopted myself by Kailopa, and I thought that was a bad custom. I wanted to keep my child. But the wife of my brother-in-law was a relative of mine, not a close one though. My grandfather had some Tokelauan blood and this woman was from Tokelau. I knew her from Vaitupu. She had been a schoolmistress in Samoa and she was good with children. Therefore I agreed that she could look after our child but not actually adopt him.⁵

When we prepared to go back to Vaitupu, I wanted to take Loto with me. But my wife had already agreed to his adoption. I stopped my talk, because according to our custom I couldn't refuse anything my brother-in-law wanted. But I talked to my wife about that. She said, "You know, if we keep the child, maybe he will die."

It was the same stupid belief again, and I told her that I didn't agree if that was the reason. However, when the wife of my brother-in-law came again, I did agree to Loto's adoption because she knew how to bring up children.

The time Mr. Kennedy was staying on Ocean Island on his way back from England, he received a telegram that he should go to the Solomon Islands. Mr. Kennedy refused to go there because he wanted to know why he had to leave the Ellice Islands. He found out from the Resident Commissioner that the people of the Ellice Islands didn't want him any more because he was too tough. There were also stories about girls, but I can't say much about that because I never saw anything with my own eyes.

Mr. Kennedy always talked with me when he was on Ocean Island. He liked me, I suppose. One day he told me that I should accompany him to the Ellice in a canoe. I think it was mostly talk, but even the Ellice pastor on Ocean Island agreed to this plan. The pastor talked to me about that. He said, "Look here, Neli. This is an important matter. Everybody does the same thing, you do the same thing, I do the same thing. But we have to weigh a person's deeds on a scale. We must see what the whole person is worth. Before Mr. Kennedy came, the Ellice Islands were the lowest in this world. Now, because of Mr. Kennedy's work, they are ahead of the Gilberts. Why compare this work with something everybody does? What everybody does is nothing."

I was very sorry that the Ellice people never saw it that way. All the jobs the Ellice boys had in the colony, they got because of Mr. Kennedy's work. Anyway, Mr. Kennedy was transferred to the Solomon Islands. Before he left, I had a talk with him one night. He told me, "Neli, look here, my boy"—that's what he always called me, "my boy"—"I think you should leave Ocean Island. You must go back home, you must go back to Vaitupu. Before too long the Japanese will come to Ocean Island. Remember I told you about that already in school? In the next world war you will see soldiers, warships, and airplanes on the beaches of these islands here. You had better go back to Vaitupu. It's better for you to die there because the Japanese will come to the Ellice Islands, too. At least you will die in your homeland."

That's what he said, and it made me think and I talked to my wife, who didn't like the idea. The next day, Mr. Kennedy asked me whether I had changed my mind about staying on Ocean Island, but

I had not. Yet, I kept thinking, and do you know what we did? My wife and I prayed to God to give us the answer, to tell us what to do.

A few days later, when I came back from the hospital, my wife looked very sad. I asked her what the matter was, and she said that she wished she could see her mother. That was the answer. I went to Mr. Kennedy right away to tell him that I had changed my mind, and that we were going back to Vaitupu. He shook my hand and said, "Thank you, my boy, that you have taken my advice. You should know that you are one of the very important men for your island. You must know that." Then he went to his chest and brought three bottles of beer for us to drink. He asked me to persuade the other Ellice people on Ocean Island to go back home and not to sign on again. But nobody listened to me, though half of the Ellice laborers wanted to go home anyway.

I left for Vaitupu with my wife and my baby daughter, Tusinela, on the first day of September 1940. We arrived at Vaitupu on the 10th because the ship went to many other islands first. The community had a big feast for the people who returned from Ocean Island. It lasted for one week; every family killed one pig.

The women who came back with us told the people that I knew something about birth. I had learned that from the doctor; whenever a woman didn't come to the hospital in time, I went to her house to deliver the baby. I have delivered perhaps a hundred babies in my life, including the children of my younger daughter, Luluta.

One night, somebody came to take me to his house, where some women were helping his wife to give birth. They had done something wrong; they had tried to force the woman to push the child out. But it wasn't the time yet. Anyway, I helped them and the child was born properly. From that time on I was always called when there was a problem about birth.

The natives don't know how to wait for the birth to work by itself. They always want to force the mother too early. They don't know that if you wait for nine months, the child will come out by itself. I also helped caring for the sick people on Vaitupu because the dresser didn't know many things I had learned.

WAR YEARS IN FUNAFUTI

One day, in 1941, we received a telegram that the Japanese had dropped bombs on Ocean Island [within two days after Pearl Harbor]. A few months later we saw airplanes for the first time, and soon afterwards we received another telegram from Colonel Fox-Strangways, the Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. It was an order to dig foxholes. Later, Mr. Fox-Strangways came to Vaitupu with his people to show us how to dig foxholes and how to fall down if any bombs were dropped on the village.

We knew about the war from the wireless. The wireless also had the BBC news, so we could hear what was going on. Our magistrate, Peni, organized everything. He asked the people to build three canoes, each for ten men. These canoes had to be out on the sea day and night to watch out for ships and planes. If they saw anything they would come back to the island and the magistrate could call Funafuti on the wireless. That's what we did.

I built a house in the bush on the east side of the village because I had been appointed to watch the sea from there. After a few months we saw planes flying very low. They had big stars on their wings. Colonel Fox-Strangways had given us photographs of all the planes; so we knew that those were American planes. From that time we forgot about watching, because the Americans had come to take over the job. We moved back to the village then.

One day a ship came to Vaitupu with the Resident Commissioner for the Ellice Islands. The ship came from Nui, it was recruiting people for work in Funafuti, Canton, Palmyra, and Christmas Islands. People for Funafuti, Canton, and Palmyra were to help the Americans, and the people for Christmas Island were to cut copra. Because the Gilbert Islands were occupied by the Japanese, no workers from there could go to Christmas Island.

Eighty of us wanted to go, but the doctor who had come with the ship allowed only 61 to go. When the ship had left for Funafuti, the District Commissioner came up to me and said that he wanted to talk to me. I knew the commissioner because I had treated a wound on his leg when I was working in the hospital on Ocean Island. At first he didn't recognize me, but then he remembered.

We went to his cabin, and he told me that he wanted me to select the men for the islands: who was to go to Funafuti, who to

Canton, who to Palmyra, and who to Christmas Island. He asked me, "Which island do you want to go to?" I said, "I want to go to Palmyra, Sir." I wanted to go to that island because I had never been there. But he didn't let me go to Palmyra, because it was an American island and he wanted me to be on Funafuti or Christmas Island, because they were British.

So I selected the men for the islands: 12 of us for Funafuti, 12 for Canton, 12 for Palmyra, and the rest for Christmas Island, where most were needed. I put those who had been in school on Funafuti, Palmyra, and Canton because you don't need much education for cutting copra.

In the lagoon of Funafuti there were many, many ships, American warships. I had never seen such ships. The first thing they did in Funafuti was to assign a foxhole to everybody, because a week before the first person had been killed by a Japanese bomb. But after that nobody else was killed. The ship left with the people going to Christmas Island, all the others stayed in Funafuti.

We went around the island to look at all the trucks and big machines. I had seen trucks on Ocean Island but nothing like that. And all the time the planes were taking off and landing from the airfield the Americans had built. We had no idea about war. We thought that only some people would come to the islands to fight and then go back to America, or Germany, or England. But the real war looked different: from one end of the island to the other there were landing boats, big guns, boxes, trucks, cargo, foodstuff. That made me think that a war is a very difficult thing.

One night we saw a movie; everybody came to see the movie, also the sailors from the ships. Suddenly somebody came with a report that Japanese planes were coming. It was full moon; the Japanese always attacked at night. We ran to our foxholes, but some of us couldn't get in because the sailors from the ships got there before us. The commissioner threw them all out and made them dig their own foxholes by the beach. Soon we heard the planes. We were very scared. My heart was beating, but I didn't know what to do. The boys asked me to say a prayer. I said, "I can't; I don't know what to say. What about you making your own prayer?" I wanted to pee, but I said to myself, "No—I can't do that here." I wanted to shit, but I couldn't do that there either. But then when the bombs fell I don't know how it happened—I was shitting. All the boys were shitting. We heard the guns, and we thought, "Ah, very good." But the planes

kept coming back. The whole island was shaking, because it's a very small island. We didn't talk for a very long time. After one hour we heard the siren. That meant the attack was over. Nobody could sleep. Everybody thought about his family. I thought about my wife and the children and that they were maybe facing some hard life now.

Next morning we had our breakfast with the Americans. We always ate together, we had the same food. We mixed like that with the Americans.

A week later the boys for Palmyra took off, and a month later the boys for Canton left. There were about a hundred natives working for the Americans on Funafuti. We were called "casual labor." We had to unload the cargo from the ships. It was hard work but the Americans looked after us very well. The only trouble was with the British. They didn't want the Americans to give us the wages they wanted to pay. We got seven dollars and fifty cents a month, that is three pounds and fifteen shillings. I was the paymaster for all the natives, because I knew about that.

The American quartermaster told me about the trouble with the British. He showed me a paper which said that we should get 70 dollars a month. So he said that we should keep the money for us that was left over when I had paid the laborers but keep quiet about it. There was always more than I needed to pay the laborers.

After some time we were no longer scared about the bombing. When we heard the siren, we just went to our foxholes but didn't go down until they started dropping bombs. We watched the planes and swore at them.

We wrote letters to our families and sent them things. The Americans were very kind to us. They used their dive bombers to drop our mail and parcels at Vaitupu and the other Ellice Islands. Of course we didn't hear from our families, because the mission boat and the government boat didn't go around the islands any more. Sometimes the PT boats would take some officers to Vaitupu for the weekend and they would bring letters back. I received maybe two or three letters from my family while I was on Funafuti.

The Americans were really very good to us. Whenever the boys wanted something I went to Colonel Hicks and asked him, and he always said, "O.K., you can have it." That's why we worked very hard, even on Sundays. The boys didn't want to work on Sunday, but I told them, "This is wartime, mind you! In wartime you work,

day and night, hurricane time or not, until the job is done. So forget about Sunday until you are back in Vaitupu." When I explained that, they agreed to work also on Sunday.

I was working in the quartermaster's office. One day the Colonel told me that I had to give out the goods from the store. Often the Americans had gone to the store with one of our men to pick up an order but they had just taken what they wanted. The first time I went there with a list of things I had to give out, two of the men started taking cases with boots and shirts from the store and loading them on their jeep. I told them to put the cases back. They swore at me. I just laughed at them. I said, "I know I am a native, but I do what my boss tells me to do." They did put the cases back.

Later the sergeant told me to be careful, because that batallion was made up of bushmen. He said that few of them had any education and that I must watch out. He liked me a lot, I think. After that a corporal came with me every time.

We had been on Funafuti for many months when we heard that the Americans had received a message that the Japanese wanted to be in Funafuti by Christmas. In November we had a big attack. It lasted all night. The Japanese planes flew very low. They dropped bombs and used their guns. Next morning the air base was very damaged. We worked very hard to level the ground and to clear up the mess.

Then one day the Colonel took me out to the far end of the island in his jeep. He let me look through his binoculars and I saw many, many ships sailing north. The Colonel said that they were American ships going to attack Tarawa. Next morning the whole beach was crowded with Americans. They were the marines who were going to attack Tarawa. They stayed for maybe three days. The Japanese bombers never came back to Funafuti. We couldn't sleep for two weeks then, because the American planes took off and landed day and night, day and night, on the Funafuti airfield. Some planes came back with one wing half broken off or with part of the tail gone. That was something; that was what the war was like.

After maybe three weeks we received a message that the Americans had landed in Tarawa [November 1943]. Everybody was happy and shouting. That was the time when the Colonel told me to open the store and give the marines everything they wanted.

After the Americans had taken Tarawa, other marines came from the United States. They were all Negroes, only the captain was

a European. They were all right, these people, but something was different for us then. I learned that myself. They were like natives, and maybe it was too hard for them to be kind to other natives, I mean to us Ellice people. Maybe they thought, "We have the same skin, but we are from America." Anyway, they treated us differently. They always said bad things about the [white] Americans, and that they would get back at them sometime in the future. They reckoned that they were not treated like the European Americans.

I think they were wrong because they were educated by the Europeans; they didn't know anything by themselves. How can I go against a person who teaches me things? That's bad. The Negroes were natives just like us, but they always talked smart. Well, I don't know; they just weren't like the Europeans.

After the Americans had taken Tarawa, the commissioner made a list of all the Ellice people who had been on Ocean Island before the war. When the Japanese came to Ocean Island they sent many people to other islands, some to Nauru, some to the Marshall Islands, and some to Tarawa. I heard that Penitala was in Tarawa, and so I wrote him a letter, which a good friend, an American chief engineer in the air force, on a B-24, took to Tarawa. After about three days I received a letter from Penitala. He wrote all the names of the Ellice people who were there. My son, Loto, who had been adopted, as I told you, was there, too. I was happy to hear that he was all right.

My house was very close to the airport. One night, my friend came to my house. He and his friends had just landed their plane and they were hungry and needed some food. Their own camp was about ten miles away from the airport, and sometimes they couldn't get any food when they came late. So I went over to the house of the cook of the navy, who was my friend, and I got them some dinner. After they had finished eating, they told me to go and get two bags that they had brought. I went to get the bags and when I opened them I saw two Japanese heads inside. The heads smelled badly. They said, "That's our souvenir, Neli," and they laughed.

We talked and yarned for a long time, and then they asked me for something to drink. I said, "I am very sorry, but I don't have anything." You know what they did? They had a bottle of shaving lotion and they wanted to use that. Then I remembered that I had a bottle of whiskey in my box. I had forgotten about it. A sailor had left it for me one day, when I wasn't at home. But I never drank, you

know. I gave it to them and they finished it. In the morning they shot bullets into the heads of the Japanese soldiers.

A while later we moved into the quarters where the American air force had been. About that time I was appointed sergeant of the labor corps on Funafuti by the Resident Commissioner in Tarawa. The boys from all the Ellice Islands signed up except the boys from Nukulaelae. They didn't want to work or something. I found out that my job was to be working in the office, so I refused. I told Mr. Burn, "I can't organize the work outside when I sit in a chair. I don't want to be the sergeant major. That's a storekeeper. I want to be a senior sergeant and work outside with the boys."

We were now back under the British administration, but still working for the Americans. I went to one of the English—he was the treasurer—to tell him about that job. He talked with Mr. Burn, and next morning they sent a telegram to Tarawa about my transfer. They put Noa in my position. Noa was so fat he couldn't even walk.

There were only 200 of us in the labor corps on Funafuti. We worked very hard on cleaning up the island. We cleaned up all the rubbish from the war. The problem was the drivers of our truck. That was the only job done by an American. They always wanted us to stop working on time. Sometimes we had just 15 minutes or half an hour more to work to finish a job. So I got angry with the drivers. I told them to take off. We would first finish our job and then walk back for our dinner. I didn't like to deal with people like that.

We also loaded and unloaded cargo from the ships because there were still many Americans on the island. I could organize the work with the barges because I had learned all about that on Ocean Island. Even the Americans called me "Sarge." Of course, they also called me by my native name, but when they saw me organize the work, they called me "Sarge." The American captain showed me his reports; my company—we were the G-company—was always the best.

One time I was very sick and the captain allowed me to go on a holiday to Vaitupu. They took me there by a small LCT boat. I stayed at home for about one month. I stayed so long because no PT boat came to pick me up earlier. So I was stuck there until the government boat came with the doctor. That was the first tour of the Ellice Islands by a doctor after the war. The doctor didn't want to take me, because there was not enough space on the boat. So I asked my two halfbrothers to take me to the ship in their canoe.

The chief mate saw me in the canoe. He asked me to come on the ship. I explained my situation and the chief mate went to talk to the captain. I heard them talk in the captain's cabin. The chief mate was very angry because at first the captain didn't want to take me to Funafuti. But in the end I could go. I was very happy about that because I wanted to go back to my duty with the labor corps.

First we went to Nui. The doctor took me ashore because I could speak English and because I knew about the medical work. We went to the other islands, too, and I helped the doctor. I also told the people on the islands about the war. On every island I talked about what we had been doing in Funafuti during the war. In every village we visited many women knew me. They showed me the children born on Ocean Island when I was working in the clinic there.

One day when I was working with my gang on the point of Funafuti Island, the American captain drove up to us. He called me aside and said, "Neli, I am very proud for you about what I heard. The Commissioner wants you to go to Vaitupu to be the magistrate." In those days Vaitupu was the dirtiest island in the whole Ellice Group. The magistrate had not done a good job. But I knew that the people must agree on their magistrate.

In the evening I had to see the District Officer. I explained that the Vaitupu people had to agree, but he said that the government appointed the magistrates. So, next week the "Kiakia" took me to Vaitupu. I was not supposed to say anything to the people until the District Officer would come to Vaitupu himself.

That was in June 1945 and the war was not finished yet. So the people asked me why I had come back. I told them that maybe I was too old to work. The word spread around that I had been sacked. After about one week, when I passed by the house of the government scribe, he called me in. First we talked and yarned. Then he told me that he knew why I had come back. I asked him, "How do you know?" And he said, "Well, when the District Officer was here, he told me that he was going to change all people in the native government except maybe myself. He also said that he was sending one Vaitupuan from Funafuti to be the new magistrate. So, when I heard that you had come back, I knew why." I told him not to let anybody know, and he promised to keep quiet.

MAGISTRATE IN VAITUPU

One week later the government ship arrived. The new District Officer, Mr. Hill, and the Assistant District Officer, Penitala, and also the officers from the ship came ashore. We went to the courthouse, the government station, and they showed me the list of the members of the new native government on Vaitupu. I was supposed to pick my own policemen. Then we went to the *maneapa*, where all the Vaitupu people had come together. Mr. Hill and Penitala told them about the new island government and that I was to be their magistrate.

Then we went back to the government station and made a list of the things we needed on the island: shovels, knives, and other tools like that. Mr. Hill gave me very good advice. He said, "Neli, before I leave you I am going to tell you something. You know the Bible? What Jesus Christ said?—If you knock at a door once, nobody comes to open it for you. If you knock at a door so many times, somebody will open it for you. Government is the same thing. If you are afraid to knock, the job is not good for you."

Mr. Hill didn't stay in the Colony very long; he went back to New Zealand. But he sent all those things we needed with the next ship so we could start our job.

I know the old men didn't like that I was the magistrate. I looked too young or something for the job. But I could deal with them. The first job we did was to build a jetty with two latrines, one for the women and one for the men.

We built these jetties so that the people wouldn't use the beach. That was very important because the medical officer had written a very bad report about Vaitupu.⁶ Yes, Vaitupu was the worst, the dirtiest, island of the Ellice Group at the end of the war, but it had been the best in the Colony before the war. What the medical officer didn't know was that all the educated people from Vaitupu had jobs in the government and were living on other islands during the war. Anyway, in my first year as a magistrate, I had to deal with this problem. Therefore, I had many cases to handle in order to clean up our island. I had to let the people know that the government had the power to enforce the health ordinances.⁷

My next project was to build a government station. Before there was only one government house, where the prisoners were kept. Well, actually there were two houses for prisoners, one for the women and

one for the men. We built several new houses: one for the magistrate, one for the chief of *kaupule* [executive head of island council], one for the chief policeman, one for the scribe, one for the wireless operator, and one courthouse. We finished the work in six months.

I worked with the young men and the young women, because they supported me. But I always talked with the old men, so that they knew what we were doing. My assistant was much older than I. According to the custom I dealt with the old men through him, but I realized that this custom was a waste of time. All customs were a waste. The custom of marriage and the custom of birth. For example, when a child was born, the families of the father and of the mother prepared food for everybody. It was like a competition between the families. Every side wanted to show that they can give more than the other. The same happened with marriage. Each side wanted to do better than the other.⁸ One time I discussed this with the government council. I wanted to limit the number of pigs killed. They agreed, but it didn't work out.

The trouble was that the people just followed the custom. They knew by themselves that the custom was bad, but they did it anyway. So we had a big meeting in the *maneapa*. Maybe three-quarters of the community wanted to change the custom. But the pastor didn't agree. I told the people that the pastor was wrong, that I, as their magistrate, had a poor house, but the pastor could feed any number of people any time. I asked the people, "Why don't we give the pastor a plot of land and he can make his own garden?" The people didn't like this idea. They all understood what I said, but they were afraid of the church. They thought that God might not like them if they didn't feed the pastor and give him anything he wanted. Every day another family had to feed the pastor. That's what the old men had decided a long time ago. The people even collected money to pay wages to the pastor. There was no limit to his wages! Whatever a family wanted to give he got. I figured that the pastor would make about 1,000 pounds a year including the food. Nobody else made even 200 pounds. I asked the people, "Why should we make the pastor rich?" Our high chief by custom was a poor man; he couldn't keep even one extra person in his house.

Some people liked my ideas, but most didn't. Some people didn't like what I said at all. They were the people who visited the pastor in his house and ate there and who told others that they

should bring food to him. They wanted the pastor to be like a king. That was part of the custom. I was fighting against that.⁹

Except for the problem with the pastor everything was going all right. I tried to work with the Island Council. But in those days the Council was not very powerful. Today it is different. Whatever the Council decides, the people do. The young men supported me most. And I taught them the *taralala* [a Fijian version of European ball-room dancing] which I had learned in Suva. But, again, the church didn't like that, because in the *taralala* boys and girls dance together. Why not? It makes them happy. I didn't stop the *fatele* [Tuvalu-style dancing], I just wanted to mix the customs—Fijian, European, Gilbert, and our own Ellice customs.

The law was that everybody had to work 52 days a year for the community—that is, one day a week. But the boys wanted to help me in my work and so they worked on a job for many days until it was finished.

One day my chief of police came to me to say that he had a prisoner in the jail. He had been caught being drunk from *kamangi*. I asked the chief of police if the boy had done something wrong, if he had made trouble for anybody. He hadn't done anything. So I told the chief of police to call all his policemen together. The policeman who had caught the boy was actually on the police force of the Colony in Ocean Island. He was from Vaitupu and was on home leave at that time. I asked him how he had a right to arrest people on my island. He said that he had been told to show the people on Vaitupu the proper law. I told him that he had no business on Vaitupu except when I or my chief of police would ask him about something. Then I asked my own policemen why they kept a boy who had done nothing to harm anybody in jail. "You know, what's your duty?" I asked them. "To keep the peace in the island, nothing else! If somebody is drunk, give him a warning. If he is drunk again, give him another warning. The third time you bring him to court, and the court will give him a lesson. You are not to treat your brothers like slaves or something; look after them—that's your job. I am not like the other magistrates before me. You don't make yourselves a good name like that. No! I hate the police too much for that to work."

I ordered the chief of police to let the boy out of jail. I knew, of course, that the law, the Native Regulations, did not allow people to drink toddy. But I didn't like that law. Mind you, I didn't drink

myself, but I thought that if somebody doesn't do anything wrong to other people, he shouldn't be punished.

A few months later, I received a letter from Penitala, the Assistant District Officer in Funafuti. He asked me what sort of people I allowed to go to Funafuti. In those days everybody had to have my permission as a magistrate to go to Funafuti, and some of the people I had allowed to go had said bad things about me. With the next boat, Mr. Lake, the District Officer in Funafuti, came to Vaitupu. He asked me to call a meeting of my staff in the courthouse. When all had arrived, Mr. Lake asked me about the boy I had let out of jail. He wanted to know why I hadn't punished him. I told him that I wouldn't punish anybody who had done no harm to others. He said that I must enforce the law; and I told him that the law was for people who cause trouble. "Who made that silly law about toddy?" I asked him. He kept telling me the regulation, but I said that I didn't care about such a law, that it wasn't good for Vaitupu.

The D.O. asked me who had taught me what the law was supposed to be. I told him, "Sir, I have seen many places; I have been in Australia; I have been in Fiji; and I have seen many things with my own eyes. Police take people to jail if they cause trouble. Not for nothing. Why should I put my people in jail for nothing? If it is a British law, you can put him in jail; I will not."

We were talking in English so the people of my staff didn't understand much of what we said. He asked me to send them away, and then we had a private discussion, just the two of us. He wanted to know how I had learned to think this way. I explained to him that the chief duty of the native government was to keep peace, and that was what I tried to do. You know what he said? He said, "Your people are lucky to have you as their magistrate. This law, I know very well, was prepared by the High Commissioner for the Gilbert Islands, not for you."

I knew that the Gilbertese were wild people, and there were killings in their islands. But nobody was killed in Vaitupu for as long as I can remember. In the end the D.O. told me to forget about the case and to tell my staff that he would take care of it next time he came.

A few weeks later I went to Funafuti to visit the D.O. on a ship that had come to Vaitupu. I wasn't allowed to leave the island without permission from the Commissioner. So Mr. Lake first asked me whether I had permission to be on Funafuti. I said I hadn't asked for

permission because I meant to stay only for one week. He shook his head and asked me what I wanted. I told him that I needed timber, nails, and cement for a building project. He sent me to the caretaker of the supplies. He was a Vaitupuan, and he gave me all the things I wanted.

I didn't tell the D.O. that I needed the material to build a house for a doctor. There were only two doctors in the Colony, one in Tarawa, and one on Funafuti. But Vaitupu had almost 1,000 people, including the children from the other Ellice Islands at the mission school and at the government school. So I thought it would help the government make up its mind about a doctor for Vaitupu if we had a good house for him.

When we had finished the house I sent a telegram straight away to the Chief Medical Officer to ask for a permanent doctor for Vaitupu. I didn't receive any reply, but after two weeks a ship came to Vaitupu with Seanoa, who was sent to be our doctor. He told me that the D.O. in Funafuti was very mad at me because I had arranged everything myself without asking him.

I knew the captain of the ship very well, because some time ago I had sent two of my policemen to Funafuti with his ship to get barbed wire for a fence around the government station. When he asked me to pay for the fare, I told him that the government was paying. But he said that the D.O.'s office in Funafuti had refused. I just signed the papers. Later the District Officer told me that I would get into big trouble with the government in Tarawa. I told him that we would have had to wait for the material for many months if I had requested it the way I was supposed to. Anyway, I never heard from Tarawa. You see, if you don't try to do yourself what you think is right, nothing will ever happen.

I had another problem with the colonial government. We needed a big *puka* tree to build a government canoe. The government allowed only five pounds to be spent on a canoe, but the tree was worth much more. Therefore, I gave the owner of the tree eight pounds. He was a poor man, and the government had plenty of money. The extra three pounds I took from the account for the upkeep of the station, because nothing had to be done on the station that year.

When the D.O. from Funafuti checked my books on his next visit, he got wild and he asked me to get the three pounds back from the owner of the tree or pay it back from my own money. I told him

that he couldn't make that decision, and that I would wait for the treasurer's office in Tarawa to order me what to do. Nothing ever happened in this matter.

Another day, the D.O. came on a special visit to Vaitupu. I didn't know that he planned to come, because we had received no message about it on the wireless. He brought with him a big case, with locks and ropes tied around it. He had it carried to my house and told me that he had a job for me to do. The job was to count the money inside the case. I did that; it was all in small coins. It was 400 pounds. Then the D.O. told me that the money was fines collected by the magistrate in the island of Nukufetau during six months. He had come to Vaitupu just to show me how much people on other Ellice Islands had to pay in fines, and he wanted to let me know that as far as he was concerned any magistrate who punished people like that didn't know how to do his job. That was a good District Officer. He asked me why other magistrates didn't know the meaning of *polopoloki*.

Some time before that visit another D.O. had seen my court book. He didn't know the Ellice language, so he asked me what *polopoloki* meant. I said, "That means a warning." He asked me, "You are giving a warning to people in court, you don't fine them?" I said, "No; I know what I am doing. Most people get into trouble by mistake; they don't think hard enough before. I know my people; some break the law, yes, but most just make a mistake. And I know who is a good person and who is a bad one. So, therefore, I don't punish the good people."

In this way Vaitupu came to be on the top of the Ellice Islands with the government. They liked the way we did things. We also produced a lot of copra while I was a magistrate. Every three or four months we had a hundred tons ready. The young men and women had worked very hard on community projects and I had to stop them. I told them that their families came first, then the community, because the family is the backbone of the community. Without a good family nobody can support the community. That's what I told them. Therefore, they did all good work in cutting copra for their families.

We cleaned up the island, because I extended the area to be kept clean of rubbish by one mile beyond the village boundary. I always asked the council first about such things but they always agreed with me. We then announced our decision at a meeting of the whole community.

I never considered a person in court as a relative; all people in court were just the same. That's the law. I remember one time, when I was sick, I asked my assistant, the chief of *kaupule*, to inform the people in the village of a decision we had made. The community had a meeting in the *maneapa*. Because I was not there, some people started to talk against me. The doctor, who came from the hospital to see me in my house, overheard them when he passed by the *maneapa*. He told me about that, because he was a good friend of mine.

The chief of *kaupule* was my uncle, my mother's brother. When he didn't come to see me after the meeting, I called him. His house was very close to mine. I asked him about the talk in the *maneapa*. At first he didn't want to say anything, but then he admitted that people had talked about me.

I had a whistle. When I blew it once, it meant that I wanted to see the chief of police. When I blew it twice, it meant all the policemen had to come. So I blew the whistle, and one policeman came right away to my house. I told him to tell all the *kaupule* to meet me in the courthouse. I put on my uniform, a black *sulu* and a white coat with a high collar and brass buttons with a crown, and went to the courthouse. We always wore the uniform for court business.

The chief of *kaupule* had given me the names of the persons who had talked about me. I had told the policemen to bring them to court, too. When all people were there, I read them the island regulation about people who disturb the work of the native government by talk. The punishment was up to six months in jail. The regulations were written in the Ellice language, so everybody could understand the words. I asked whether the regulation was clear to them.¹⁰ Everybody said, "yes." Then I questioned the men who had talked bad about me. The first man denied that he had said anything. The next man was my uncle, my father's [Lifuka's] brother. He admitted that he had talked about my job. The third man was Iele; he was a second cousin of my father. He also admitted that he had talked about my job but that he had not meant what he said. They all had complained that I didn't respect the old men and things like that. I put them all in jail for one month, but they didn't agree.

When the District Officer arrived on his next visit, my two uncles asked me to be allowed to talk to him. I agreed to that. The three men, who were still in jail, explained to the D.O. that they didn't agree with my decision. The D.O. asked them whether they wanted him to change the punishment. They said, "yes." So the D.O.

told them that his decision would be six months in jail, if they refused to agree with mine. That changed their minds. The D.O. told them that they were very lucky to have me as a magistrate, and that according to the law they should be in jail for six months.

One other time I put my cousin Favae Koloa [adoptive father's son] in jail for not speaking the truth in court. I would have done the same with my brother. Some of the cases I heard as a magistrate were very hard. The pastor used to beat the schoolchildren. One day, I heard that he had beaten a child so badly that he was bleeding. I sent a policeman to find out about the case and bring the father of the boy to me. I asked the man whether he agreed to the pastor's beating of his child. He said he didn't. Therefore, I sent a policeman to bring the pastor to court. I held a special hearing and fined him under the regulation forbidding people to beat a child. Not all people agreed with me because they thought it was the pastor's job to show the children the right way. Therefore, I explained to the people at a meeting that the old times when parents beat their children very badly were gone, that the laws of civilization did not allow this sort of thing.

Another time the pastor was ready to leave the island in a few days. He then heard the news that people were talking about him and a girl. So the pastor came to me to settle the matter before he left. That time the D.O. was visiting Vaitupu. We had already made plans for the following day to visit the two schools on the island. So when the pastor came to me, I told him that he should forget about it. The girl had already gone to Samoa, and the pastor was leaving the island for good, because we didn't want him to be our pastor any more. Not because of that girl, but because he poked his nose into our business: my job, the old men's things, the chiefs' duty, everywhere. But he wanted a hearing, a special court session, the following day.

I agreed to hold a court at nine o'clock the following day. So the next morning we had the hearing. I had sent for the girl who had spread the news, and I asked her whether it was true that she had been talking like that about the pastor. I asked her, "Did you see what you have been talking about?" She said she hadn't but her friend had told her what the pastor had tried to do with her, and that she had seen her friend coming from the pastor's house one day with two pound-notes and that she had gone with her to the store to buy powder and perfume with the money. She said the pastor had also tried to give her money, but she had refused to accept it.

The pastor denied everything, and we couldn't prove anything. I asked the pastor again to forget about the matter, because we couldn't bring the girl from Samoa to be a witness. But the pastor didn't agree. I got angry and sent a policeman to go to the storekeeper to ask him to bring his books. I asked the storekeeper whether he remembered if that girl had bought powder and perfume for two pounds in his store about such and such time. He said he believed that was so. When he looked through his books he found that the girl had bought powder for one pound and also perfume for one pound.

Still the pastor denied that he had given the money to the girl. Well, I couldn't do anything more. We had already talked for three hours, and I told everybody to go and have lunch. After lunch everybody came back to the courthouse. I had a talk with the pastor with the members of my council present. I tried to make him understand that he had to forget about the matter, and that we would not talk about it any more because there was no proof.

He disagreed; he just wanted the girl who had talked about him punished. I told the pastor, "O.K., look here, if you want me to punish the girl for having spread wrong news about you, I will do that. But she only talked about what her friend had told her. How can I punish her for that?" But the pastor kept arguing and arguing and arguing. I have never seen a person like that, never! I sent him outside to think about the whole thing. We waited and waited. When he came back, he said he didn't agree.

Then I asked my staff what they thought about the case, and they agreed with me. At that point he started shouting, so I read him the regulations which forbid people to talk loud in court and set fines or a jail sentence for that. Well, we couldn't finish this case really. I talked with my staff again without the pastor. We agreed to treat him according to our custom when the ship arrives to take him to Samoa with everybody going down to the beach with him, if he agreed that we couldn't settle the matter his way. To that the pastor finally agreed. It was six o'clock.

In the meantime the District Officer had visited the schools without me. When he returned he wanted to know why it had taken us so long in court. I explained everything to him. The D.O. said I should have put the pastor in jail for six months for "obstructing justice" or something like that. But I told the D.O. that even if the pastor was a bad man, he had left his home in Samoa to work for us

for so many years and that we must treat him according to our custom. What would have been the use of punishing the pastor? He was not a Vaitupuan; he was a Samoan and he was going home anyway. You know what the D.O. said? He said, "Neli, thank you. I am too young to understand your ways. You just carry on your work."

In one case the father of a girl complained about a boy who had been with his daughter for the night. That was a custom in the old days: a boy would secretly come to the house of his sweetheart and sleep there, just talk and sleep—nothing else. But according to the law that was wrong.¹¹ Therefore, I had to have a hearing about this, and even though the girl had invited the boy to come to the house, I had to put him in jail for two weeks.

When the D.O. looked at the book, he said that according to the law I should have put the boy in jail for one month. The D.O. said that I always made my own laws, which he would not allow.

I told him that I cared about the life of my people more than about the law. How could I put a person in jail for long? Who would work in his garden? How could the poor people afford to pay the full fines? Where would they get the money? "You can put me out of my job," I told him, "if you think that the people on Vaitupu are bad people. But if Vaitupu is a good island, why do you interfere with my opinion about how to deal with my people?"

Another time I had an argument with the D.O. when he had come to look at my books and to collect the fines and land tax, and the fees for bicycle and dog licenses. I asked him why the government collected all that money from us, because we had built the roads for the bicycles ourselves. I told him that I agreed with the government collecting the money for fines and the land tax, because from this money the government helped us with our school and in other ways. But the money from the licenses should be left for the island to use, maybe to hire people to look after the roads. The D.O. asked me where I got this idea, and I told him that it was my own, and that it wasn't right for the government to take the money from the licenses. The D.O. agreed with me, but the law wasn't changed until after I had left my job.

We had a regular court session on the first Wednesday of every month. The chief of police wrote down every case we had to hear. Before the court opened he sent his policemen to tell all the people who had been caught breaking a law to come to court. Everybody

who wanted to come and listen could do that. The chief of police called the name of a person who had been reported by his policemen and read what he had done. The person first swore on the Bible to tell the truth. After that we talked about the case and listened to witnesses. I could ask questions but only the *kaupule* decided whether a person was guilty. If they found a person guilty, I made the sentence.

When there was a serious case we could hold a special court. But very few serious cases happened. Most of these were about adultery.

The problem with the other native magistrates in the Ellice Islands was that they did not understand the meaning of "not more than." When the law set a fine of not more than five pounds, they always took five pounds. I didn't do that, because I knew that I could make the fine one pound or two pounds, anything less than five pounds. The District Officer told me that the other magistrates did not understand the law the right way.

I took a sixpence fine from some person who had not kept his land in the village clean, not two shillings, because the rule said "not more than two shillings." So, one day the D.O. told me that the record book cost more than the fines recorded in it. I told him that the government had plenty of money to buy record books, but that my people were poor.

One time I got into big trouble with the D.O. At Christmas I had a little celebration with my staff in the court house. We were drinking tea which the girls who were in jail for "bad talk" [malicious gossip] had prepared. But I heard that some of the young men from the village who were outside were drinking tea mixed with toddy. I did not want any trouble in the village. Therefore, I asked them to come inside and have a good time because Christmas Eve was on the following day. But I told them that I would have to punish them for breaking the law if they made any trouble or disturbed the people. They didn't, they just had a good time and sang until five o'clock in the morning.

I was surprised when the D.O. brought the matter up on his next visit. Some old men had reported me. The D.O. asked me why I had broken the law again. I told him that as far as I knew the law about toddy did not apply to the British people but only to the natives, and that it was a bad law because the Vaitupu people would drink toddy anyway. "But," I said, "if a person makes trouble after he has been drinking his toddy, then I will send the police after him

and put him in jail." The D.O. didn't like my talk very much. He told me to take it easy, otherwise he would have to dismiss me from my position.

The jail was a native house. The walls were made of coconut leaves, and people could break out easily. Some escaped but the police always found them, because the island is very small. But most people just left the jail at night to visit their families and came back before morning. When I heard about that, I talked to the people who were in jail. I told them not to do that any more. If a man was married, he could ask the warden to take him to his wife at night to have a good time and then come back. That was against the regulations, of course. At night all prisoners had to be in jail. During the day they worked on the government station, cutting the grass, repairing the houses, and doing things like that.

One time the District Officer wanted prisoners to work on Funafuti. I didn't send anybody. The D.O. asked me about that, because all other islands had sent prisoners to Funafuti. I told the D.O. that my people were not slaves, and that I had agreed to be a magistrate in order to change such things.

The Vaitupu people were good people. Sure they sometimes broke an ordinance, but we all lived in peace. Nobody did something really bad. I would have been ashamed to make any person from Vaitupu work like a slave for the government and make him look like a bad man. The D.O. always agreed with me about what I did. He liked to talk with me about my work and what I was thinking.

On Sundays I always let the prisoners go home. I thought they would go to church so they could learn more about what they had done wrong. I made this rule myself, but later the government made a law to allow prisoners to be home on Sundays. I did things like that because I was the boss of my community. I did what I thought was right, never mind the European law.

THE SETTLEMENT OF KIOA

I met Mr. Kennedy again when I was a magistrate. After the war Mr. Kennedy was in charge of bringing the people back to their home islands from Nauru, Kusaie, and the Marshall Islands, where the Japanese had taken them. Some of these people were from Vaitupu. One day when I went to meet the ship with the Vaitupians, I met Mr. Kennedy. He took me to his cabin, because he wanted to talk with me about the money I had collected on Ocean Island. He asked me what I was going to do with that money. I answered, "Just what the people have decided to do. But I personally don't think that is a good idea. I would use the money for a hospital on the island and a good school."

Mr. Kennedy asked me where I was getting the money from to keep up the hospital and the school. He thought we should use that money to buy land in Fiji, freehold land in Fiji. That way we would get something for our hard work that could last forever. He had heard from a friend in Fiji, who was a lawyer, about an island that would be up for sale.

I explained to Mr. Kennedy that I couldn't decide that matter by myself and that we had to talk with the old men and the chiefs about it first. Because the ship was to stay at Vaitupu only for half an hour, I went to the captain to ask him to hold the ship until we could decide a very important matter. I knew the captain from the "Nauru Chief," and he recognized me, too. The captain agreed to stay until we could talk to the old men.

We had a long discussion with the old men, and in the end they all agreed to buy an island in Fiji.

We had money from our work for the Americans during the war. When I was in Funafuti, I saw that the Americans paid a lot of money for our mats and baskets; maybe two or three, sometimes five dollars. When I saw that, I made up my mind to collect all the money for the people in Vaitupu. I discussed this with Nika Taitai, who was the dresser in Funafuti for the native labor corps. So he and I and some other Vaitupu boys talked about making a collection. They all agreed to do that. We decided to collect from each person five Australian pounds for every six months. My job was to write a letter to our boys in Palmyra, Canton, and Christmas Island to tell them about the scheme. I got the same answer from every group. They all agreed, but the people working on Christmas Island wanted to increase the amount. They earned more money than we, cutting

copra on that island. After the Americans had taken Tarawa, I also sent a letter to the Vaitupu boys there. Most of them were working for the government. They also agreed to our plan.

Our treasurer, Mafalu, who worked in the British office in Funafuti, collected the money from the people in Funafuti and put it into the bank. The people on the other islands kept the money until later. Once when I was sick and in the hospital, the others decided to increase the amount from five to twelve pounds. Mafalu asked me whether I agreed to this and I did. In those days the people always asked me about such matters, because I knew about the Vaitupu boys on the other islands. I wrote many letters to them, and they wrote back to me about their work to help in the war.

There was some trouble. One day I received a letter from my wife and my sisters and other relatives in Vaitupu. They said in the letter that the people in Vaitupu didn't agree with my plan, that they didn't like me to be a boss over the boys. So I wrote a letter to my wife to tell her not to mind the talk.

You see, the Vaitupu people didn't know anything. They held a feast every day, because they thought that the war would come to their island and that would be the end of everything. Therefore, the people didn't like my taking the money away from their boys. They spoiled my name with their talk and my wife and relatives were ashamed of me.

Fortunately, when the war was over I went back to Vaitupu before the boys returned from their work on the islands. So I could collect the money from them when they came back to Vaitupu. Then I was already a magistrate. We gave the money to the District Officer to put into our account in the bank on Funafuti. Nobody ever faced me about the talk when I came back to Vaitupu. I explained my plan to the people at a meeting when I was back in Vaitupu after the war. After Mr. Kennedy and I had talked about buying an island in Fiji with the money we had collected, and when the old men had agreed to the idea, Mr. Kennedy suggested that we raise some more money. We had about 4,000 pounds, but we should have 5,000, Mr. Kennedy said. We had a big meeting in the *maneapa* to decide what to do with our money. Some of the old men wanted to use the money to have something to show like a hospital. That's the native way of thinking. The people want to see the result of their money right away. They don't think of the future.

According to the custom young men like me are not allowed to talk in meetings like that. As the magistrate I had the power to speak up and I explained what Mr. Kennedy had said. But I had no success no matter how hard I tried. Still we made no decision that day. Two weeks later we had another meeting. In the meantime I had gone to see the old men at home and explained to them how important it was to use our money in a wise way. Some of the old men liked the idea of buying an island. I talked with them so that they knew better how to explain it to the people.

So in the next meeting Gideon Nitz—he is part European [his grandfather was a German trader living on Vaitupu for many years]—and Tanielu, who kept the book for the money to the community, supported the idea. They did their best to make the people understand. Moeafu, who was the teacher in those days, also supported the plan about buying an island in Fiji. Finally one old man stood up and told the people to stop arguing about the matter and follow the men who knew better about such things. Everybody agreed then, and we started a collection right away, although in a few months' time the problem came up again. But I had already sent a letter to Funafuti to ask that the Commissioner buy an island for us.

One day, when I was working in the bush, I heard somebody call my name. It was the chief of police. He told me that the wireless operator had received a message and that I must reply immediately. I left all my tools behind and went to the village. The telegram was from the Commissioner. It said: "Please let me know how much money you have on hand." I didn't know the exact amount, but we had almost 5,000 pounds. So I sent the message that we had 5,000 pounds on hand.

At the time we brought the money to Vaitupu, the people gave each of us boys one pig and one big *pulaka*. So, therefore, by custom the money belonged to the community. This meant that each *mataaniu* [manager of a land-holding kin group] on the island had an equal share in the money when we wanted to use it to buy an island.

On the 16th of June 1946 at four o'clock P.M. Tarawa called Vaitupu on the wireless. The message read: "The magistrate of Vaitupu: I have bought an island in the Fiji group, named Kioa." The telegram said more than that, but I can remember only these important words. I was so happy I blew my whistle and the policemen ran

up to the station. I asked them to call everybody to the *maneapa*, from the old men to the smallest child who could walk.¹²

When the people had come together in the *maneapa*, I read the telegram to them. Everybody was happy. We had a big feast in the evening. We continued our dancing until six o'clock in the morning. Nobody got tired that night.

The telegram had said that I could go to Fiji with two or three old men to see our new island. We had a meeting to discuss who should be the old men to go to Fiji with me. The people elected Gideon Nitz and Launganiu. A month later a ship picked us up to go to Funafuti. We waited there a long time for a ship to go to Suva. But no ship was going to Fiji then and we returned to Vaitupu. A few weeks later another ship came to pick us up in Vaitupu.

When we arrived in Suva, nobody was there to meet us. So we waited on the wharf until dark. The captain was very kind. He gave us dinner and let us sleep aboard. Next morning my cousin Tofinga [adoptive mother Luluta's sister's son] came to see us. Tofinga worked for the government in Fiji. He was very angry with the immigration people. He had asked them to let him know right away that we had arrived, but they had forgotten about that. He took us to the quarters of the Western Pacific High Commission, where we could stay. Next morning Tofinga told us that the High Commissioner, Sir Alexander Grantham, wanted to see us the following day.

We had brought many handicrafts as gifts for the High Commissioner: six mats, six baskets, six fans, six small [toy] canoes, six of everything. I have never seen nicer mats made by my people than those we brought with us. The mats had woven writing, "Good luck to you," "Remember Vaitupu always," and other words like that. Tofinga was our interpreter. We talked for a while and then the High Commissioner asked me whether we were from Vaitupu. I said, "Yes, we are from Vaitupu." He answered, "No, I don't think so. Only natives live on Vaitupu, and you are like Europeans."

Then he made a very good speech. He said, "When I heard from the Resident Commissioner, Mr. Maude, that you wanted to buy an island in Fiji, I didn't believe it. But when I asked Mr. Maude about it a few days later, he told me that Mr. Kennedy had told him that the Vaitupu people had the money to buy an island. I still didn't believe it, because you are Polynesian people. And the only thing Polynesian people know is how to be happy. You are the happiest people in the

world. But doing something for their future? No, they don't know how to do that. Therefore, I didn't believe that you people could have saved enough money to buy an island. But when I read in the *Fiji Times* that one island, Kioa, was for sale, I sent a telegram to Mr. Maude, your Resident Commissioner, to find out from the magistrate in Vaitupu how much money he had in his hands. Within twelve hours I received the answer: 5,000 pounds in Australian currency. I didn't believe it. I sent another telegram to Tarawa to find out from the District Officer in Funafuti whether it was true that the Vaitupu people had so much money. When I received the answer, I shook my head. That's why I want to see what kind of people you are. How can you do such a big thing? All the other islands in the Colony think that the government is a father who has to feed them with a spoon. Vaitupu is the only one of my 'sons' who did something big for itself. Therefore, I decided to help you."

When he had finished I thanked him for his speech, and then gave him our gifts. He called his wife to see what we had brought. They were very happy.

The next day we paid a visit to Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna [Secretary of Fijian Affairs]. We had brought gifts for him, too. Ratu Sukuna knew already about us. [Ratu is the title of a Fijian chief.] He told us that he had not wanted to allow freehold land in Fiji to be sold to outside people. But when Mr. Kennedy told him about us Vaitupu people, he agreed to the idea that we would buy the island of Kioa. I thanked him for his words, and I told him that I knew that the land did not belong to the High Commissioner but to the people of Fiji.

The High Commissioner had told his secretary Mr. Vaskess, to prepare everything for our trip. Mr. Vaskess was a very tough man; he couldn't smile. He never smiled, but he liked Fiji very much.

We went by ship to Rabi [an island near Kioa settled by the Banabans, the indigenous population of Ocean Island]. Mr. Holland [former teacher in the Gilbert Islands, then Administrative Officer for the Rabi people] was waiting for us at the jetty. We were a party of six because other Vaitupu people who were in Suva then had joined us. They were Mafalu, and his brother Levolo and his wife. After we had stayed on Rabi for two weeks, we went to Kioa by the launch belonging to Mr. Lyons [a planter on the island of Taveuni who held a lease to Kioa before its sale]. Mr. Holland and about 30 Banabans accompanied us.

Mr. Holland showed us the island: the stream, the old plantation at Naba, and the swamp where we could grow *pulaka* on the north side of the island. Then Mr. Holland, Mafalu, and I crossed the island on foot to the other side to Salia, where the beach is. There had also been a plantation one time. When we had returned to the launch, everybody except the six of us went back to Rabi.

Mr. Lyons left us a punt to use. So the second day, Levolo and his wife and the old man, Gideon Nitz, could take this boat around to the other side. Mafalu, Launganiu, and I walked across to Salia and all along the southern side to the point, where one can see Rabi, and back again to Salia.

We were all very happy about our new island. On November 25th we had a celebration. That is a special holiday for the Vaitupu people. It's the biggest day for us.

After about a week a launch came to pick us up again. We went to Mr. Lyons' estate to spend the night there. The next morning we returned to Rabi. Mr. Holland wrote a report for us to tell the government that we liked Kioa very much. Two weeks later a ship came to take us back to Suva, where we stayed in the same place as before.

When I saw Mr. Vaskess the next day I gave him the report that Mr. Holland had written. We stayed in Suva for almost seven months, because there was no transport for us. We ate in Tofinga's house all that time. Finally the High Commissioner sent a telegram to the Resident Commissioner in Tarawa to send a ship to pick us up.

We had a big feast in Vaitupu, according to the custom. We had to tell the people about our trip and everything about Kioa. Gideon Nitz spoke first, then Launganiu. When I stood up, I told the people that they had to discuss practical things, how to send people to Kioa to work on our new island.

The High Commissioner had told us that 250 people from Vaitupu could go to Kioa over ten years. Our idea was that some people from Vaitupu would go to Kioa to plant coconut trees and to make gardens and to come back after two or three years. Then another group would go and work there for some time. Then another group and so on. We thought that the government meant that no more than 250 people should be on Kioa at any time. We didn't know about immigration and things like that.

I asked the people in Vaitupu to collect 1,000 pounds for the development of Kioa every year, but the people of Vaitupu didn't accept my idea. They told me that they were fed up with raising money for Kioa. They again brought up the old argument that we had before we bought Kioa. They asked me how long they had to wait until they received anything from that island. They refused to change their minds, although the boys could have gone to make money on Ocean Island.

The first group that was to go to Kioa included 50 people. But we had a big problem. Our wireless had broken down so that we didn't know the day when the ship arrived to pick the people up. Therefore, we were not prepared and the captain did not agree to stay long enough. What kind of man was he?! I had a big row with the captain. He finally gave us four hours to get the people ready. Only the 30 or so people who could prepare everything in such a short time went with that ship.

That captain, he almost had me killed. When I came back to the ship in the government canoe the second time, I wanted to bring two sacks of flour, one sack of sugar, and one sack of rice for the people going to Kioa. They had to have food when they got there. As soon as I had gotten aboard, the ship started moving. The four bags were still in the canoe. I jumped into the water. Because we had no time to push the canoe away from the ship, it was hit by the propeller and the four sacks sank into the sea. I climbed into one of the canoes that were around the ship and cursed the captain.

A few days later I received a telegram from the District Officer in Funafuti. He asked me to make a report about the matter. Two days later the D.O. came to Vaitupu, and I explained everything the captain had done. I later heard that he got sacked and fined 100 pounds.

That was the first wave of our people to go to Kioa. We sent three more groups afterwards. For the second wave I asked Nika, who was our dresser then, to go to Kioa to be the leader on the island. Nika could talk very good English, not bad English like myself. When I told the people in the *maneapa* that Nika would go, everybody agreed. Few people wanted to go to Kioa in those days. Today the Vaitupu people are angry about the situation, but earlier nobody wanted to come here. Forty-eight people finally went in the second wave. We had decided that each *mataaniu* should send one

man to Kioa to represent his family's share in the island. Every man could take his wife and one child. We wanted to do the same with the third and fourth group. But later on, when I was no longer magistrate, people just went as they pleased.

The people of the first group sent letters to their relatives. They felt very sorry about the hard life that they faced and they missed Vaitupu. Because of this news very few people wanted to follow them to Kioa. I told the people that they had to forget their Vaitupu life in Kioa and work hard to develop the island.

On the twenty-sixth of October, forty-seven,
 At two in the afternoon of a Sunday,
 We arrived at the bay of Kioa.
 I cast my eyes to the mountain heights
 For which I longed when in Vaitupu.
 What now that I am here?
 Oh, I feel a sorrow seeing Paka,
 The leader of our group of travellers.

On solid ground I have set my feet
 But no one comes to welcome me.
 Trees alone are standing there before me,
 And birds are singing.
 Come and assemble to offer thanks.
 Ready the cargo to be taken
 To the shelter crudely made.

The voice of command has been heard:
 Be ready now for a soldierly life.
 In walking toward the mountain's top,
 Unused to this kind of trail,
 Breath comes in short gasps.
 Old men, be encouraged!
 The Six Chiefs and the Old Men
 Remember us.

— A song commemorating the arrival of the first settlers
 by Asuelu Fakamua; translated into English by Foua
 Tofinga and edited by Klaus-Friedrich Koch.

WORKING FOR THE WHOLESALE SOCIETY

In 1951 the people no longer wanted me to be their magistrate. I had my own private cases. I had heard that the people were unhappy about me, so I let them have a meeting in the *maneapa*. I did not go there when they discussed the situation. But I sent a telegram to the D.O. in Funafuti to come over to fix the matter and appoint someone else to be the magistrate. But the District Officer sent a telegram to say that I should carry on my duties until he would come on his next visit. He came after six months.

The D.O. tried to explain to the people what I had done for them when I was a magistrate. He said, "I am really sorry that you don't want Neli as your magistrate. I can tell you that I have never known another magistrate like Neli. He knows how to do his job very well. You must change your mind because you are the luckiest people in this Colony with Neli as your magistrate." He explained everything to them but the people didn't change their mind.

The trouble was about me and the new pastor's wife. The pastor was an old man and his wife was very young. Well, I do know that she started it. She used to come to the government station, where I often slept, in the evening. I did something very rude according to the custom. One day, on Christmas Eve, my scribe found us in the church. Because he was the deacon he thought of the church first and of the community second. The D.O. sent a telegram to the Resident Commissioner, and after two weeks the Resident Commissioner answered. He told the old men of the community of Vaitupu: "You had better think again about your magistrate." That's all that he said. But the old men never changed their minds. So the District Officer sent another telegram to the Resident Commissioner. After another two weeks, the Resident Commissioner sent a reply to the island council and the chiefs of the community asking them to change their minds. But they didn't. Then the Resident Commissioner told the D.O. in a telegram to ask me to quit my job. The D.O. was staying on Vaitupu all that time, because he wanted to keep me in my position. I told the D.O. that I agreed with the decision and that I was sorry he had wasted his time.¹³

The District Officer left Vaitupu and after two weeks I received a telegram from Tarawa about a job over there. I didn't know what kind of job, so it was very hard for me to answer. After about a month the "Tungaru," a ship from the Colonial Wholesale Society, arrived in Vaitupu. The captain sent a man to let me know that he

wanted to see me on the ship. I went to the ship by canoe. When I was going up to the bridge, I met a European. He was the Director of Education for the Colony. He told me, "Neli, don't miss this chance. We have had many meetings about you at headquarters in Tarawa. The Resident Commissioner discussed your case with the heads of all departments. Everybody gave good reports about you as the magistrate of Vaitupu. It was really very hard for the Resident Commissioner to dismiss you from your position. We couldn't do anything about it. So we agreed that the first job any department had was for you. Now, the manager of the Wholesale Society wants you."

Then I went to see the captain, and he explained that I had to make up my mind right away. I was afraid to agree because I didn't know what kind of job it was. My education was very poor and maybe I couldn't do the work properly. The captain didn't know about the position, but in the end I agreed to leave Vaitupu.

The evening before I left the young boys and the young girls made a special farewell feast for me. They didn't meet in the *maneapa* but in a different house. I received a letter from the dresser there. The dresser was a member of the council. He warned me that the old men and the council had decided that morning to force me to stay in Vaitupu, that they would not let me go away from the island. I don't know why; maybe they thought I should not have a new job or something. Anyway, the boys prepared the canoe for me and my luggage. We got to the ship before the others could reach us. The government canoe followed our canoe. It carried the magistrate and all the policemen. The ship had already started to move when the magistrate came aboard. He asked the captain to make me go back to the island, but the captain told him that he would throw him overboard if he didn't leave the ship right away. So he left, and the captain ordered three long whistle blasts to say "goodbye" from me.

In Tarawa the Manager of the Colonial Wholesale Society told me that I was to be the supercargo [ship's business manager] on the "Tungaru." At first I didn't want to take the job, because I had never kept books about copra. But I was lucky because the supercargo who was doing the job before me taught me everything about my job. He helped me a lot. He was a part-European. His mother was Gilbertese. He had been promoted to second mate.

I made eight pounds a month in wages. That was much more than I made as a magistrate when I got two pounds ten a month. My job was to supervise the loading of the cargo, write the manifest and

collect the fare from the passengers. Our first trip was to the Northern Gilberts.

When we came back from our second trip which was to the Central Gilbert Islands, I got my first wages. It was 12 pounds, not eight, and I was very surprised.

On the third trip we went to Funafuti and Vaitupu. When the captain sent a telegram to the wireless operator on Vaitupu to prepare the copra for Neli to pick up by launch, the wireless operator asked him who Neli was. The Vaitupu people couldn't understand that I had been given a big job. I had left my island only two weeks before. When the ship had anchored, all the young boys came out in their canoes to greet me; and when I came to the village, the old men looked very ashamed. I was the first native to get the job as a supercargo.

All the old men were inside the *maneapa*. One of them, Vailele, who was the speaker and the master of ceremony, stepped outside to invite me to join them. But I first had to do my job about the copra. When I had arranged everything for packing the sacks that we had brought, I went to the *maneapa*. I shook hands with the old men, because I thought they realized what they had done to me. They looked ashamed, and I wanted them to forget about the matter. Vailele asked me to tell them what I had done since I left Vaitupu. I explained everything about my new work. At midnight the boys had finished their job packing up the copra, and early in the morning the ship left with the cargo from Vaitupu for Tarawa.

At one time, after a trip to the Phoenix Islands, the manager of the Wholesale Society called me to his office. He gave me a new job in Funafuti. I replaced the assistant to the manager of the Wholesale Society there who was going on leave. I stayed in Funafuti for about seven months. After that I was sent to Fiji. The Wholesale Society had a new ship built in Suva, and I was supposed to work on that boat. But the ship wasn't finished when I arrived in Fiji and I stayed there for several months. Together with six boys I lived on the ship, because the crew's quarters were already finished. I got extra money because I was an officer and I could have slept in the hotel. But I preferred to take the money for the accommodations and stay on the ship. I saved a lot of money that way.

In 1953 we sailed to Tarawa with the new ship. It was called "Matapula"; that means "watchful eyes" and is the name of a white bird in the Ellice language [the white tern]. In 1954 the Colonial

Wholesale Society sold the ship to the government. I was made the supercargo on the "Tuvalu," another ship of the Wholesale Society. Our master was Captain Ward.

One day, in 1956, the manager in Tarawa called me to his office. He told me that the Resident Commissioner's Office had selected me to go as a delegate to the South Pacific Conference in Suva. I asked the manager whether somebody else could take my place, because I had only a very poor education. He told me that all members of the committee [the heads of all departments] had agreed to send me as a delegate and that I had to accept.

The conference was held at Nasinu College near Suva. It lasted for ten days. I talked about the problem of training courses for dressers and nurses on the islands. I was given some papers from the District Commissioner to study, so I knew about the work of the government. I was very proud to be a delegate. I got back to Tarawa by a New Zealand Air Force seaplane, and went back to work on the "Tuvalu."

After I had started work with the Wholesale Society I brought my two daughters to Tarawa to go to school. My wife was still angry with me about the case with the pastor's wife and she refused to let my daughters go. But I told her older sister to help me get my daughters to Tarawa. She was a bright woman and understood that it was important for my daughters to go to school in Tarawa. She brought my children to the canoe to be taken to the ship. I took my daughter Tusinela with me first, when my ship was back in Vaitupu one day. I put her in the Catholic school. On another visit to Vaitupu I took my younger daughter Luluta to Tarawa. Only my youngest son, Kailopa, stayed with his mother. One year later, when the ship was in Vaitupu again, I told my wife's sister to talk to my wife and to ask her to forget everything and come to Tarawa with our son Kailopa who was four or five years old then.

That day I went over to the house of my wife. I took her hand and we walked together to the canoe waiting for us on the beach. When the people saw us like that, they were very happy, because they had heard about my work and they were proud of me or something.

When we arrived in Tarawa, the manager of the Wholesale Society was angry with me because I had not told him that I would bring my wife. He wanted to give me the right house, but he had a

house only in the laborers' quarters. So my wife and my son stayed in the laborers' quarters until the manager had a new house built for my family.

One day, it was before I brought my family up to Tarawa, I spent a weekend in Bairiki. Bairiki is the island of Tarawa [atoll] where the office of the Resident Commissioner and the other government offices were. I went to visit Tupua, who was the chief clerk in the Resident Commissioner's office. He was a Vaitupuan. When I came to his house, I saw two old men from Vaitupu there, Oma and Iele. Oma was the [high] chief in Vaitupu at the time they put me out of my job as a magistrate. But Iele was the one who stood up in front of the District Officer and told him that they would write to the Resident Commissioner if he didn't kick me out from my position. But that day they were very happy to see me. We had something to eat together with Tupua and then we played cards.

When Tupua had gone to sleep, we took a walk together to the beach. Iele started to talk first. He told me that the chiefs and the old men in Vaitupu had talked about me and what they had done to me. They had decided to ask me to come back to Vaitupu to be their magistrate again. They said that the people were unhappy with the new magistrate, because he didn't know how to deal with the government and because he liked his relatives more than the other people in the community. When the Vaitupu people saw that their new magistrate couldn't do his job well, they remembered the work I had done.

I answered that I was very sorry to hear that, but that I would never be a magistrate in Vaitupu again. I told Iele what he had done to get me out of my job. Still, he asked me to change my mind. But I refused no matter how much they apologized. I told them, "I love my people. I was born in Vaitupu. But you people, the chiefs, didn't like me. Therefore, I will not come back to help you now."

When the Wholesale Society sold the "Tuvalu" I went back to work on the "Tungaru." After a few months the officers of the ship, including me, and half of the crew went to Hong Kong by plane to pick up a new, big ship there. The "Tungaru" took us to Suva. From there we flew to Sydney, then to Darwin, then to Manila, and then to Hong Kong.

The first thing I saw in Hong Kong was people. People were everywhere; not one place without people! It was too crowded. One could hardly walk. We had to wait in Hong Kong for six weeks until



Officer Lifuka (Moana Raoi, 1959)

a new propeller for the ship arrived from Holland. The first one was not right for the ship. We stayed in a very nice hotel. When the ship was finished we went directly back to Tarawa. The ship was named "Moana Raoi." "Moana" is an Ellice word meaning "blue sea," and "raoi" is a Gilbertese word and means "beautiful."

We stayed in Tarawa for about two weeks. Our first trip with the new ship was to Suva. During that time I made up my mind about my two daughters. I went to see Tofinga. I told him that my daughter Tusi wanted to continue in school, and my daughter Luluta wanted to learn typing. Tofinga agreed to take care of them. I went to see the headmaster of the Seventh-Day-Adventist Church College. I filled out an application for Tusi. Then I arranged for transport to Suva of my two daughters with the next ship. That was in 1959.

On one trip, when we got back to Tarawa, I had a bad attack of rheumatism. The doctor said he could not cure my sickness; he could only give me morphine injections against my pain. I could not move my legs. Sometimes I could not even move my arms and my wife had to feed me. One day the manager came to see me. He told me that the ship was to leave in two days, but that the captain refused to put another person in my place. Mr. Ward had gone on leave and another captain had taken his position. Next day that captain came to visit me. He saw there was no hope that I would get better. The following day the manager came again. He told me that the captain still refused to sail if I was not aboard, even though the Resident Commissioner had ordered him to go. I was sorry about that. Finally the manager said that he would take me to the ship in his car, then I could continue to be sick on the ship. I said that I couldn't move.

But the manager came back again in the afternoon, an hour before the ship was to leave. So I couldn't refuse any more. My wife cried, but she helped the manager to put me in his car. When we reached the ship by launch, the captain was very happy. He told some of the crew to carry me to my cabin. When the ship had started to move, the captain came to see me. He told me that it was his responsibility to decide how to run the ship; it was not the manager's or the Resident Commissioner's job. He said that he couldn't make the trip to the islands without me and that the manager was very smart to get me on the ship.

I got better on the trip and when we arrived in Suva my two daughters were on the pier to meet me. My son Loto also worked on the ship. He had been in the mission school in Vaitupu, where he

lived with his adoptive mother and father. One day he had come to the ship to tell me that he wanted to stay with me. So I asked the captain to give him a job as a launch boy. He didn't like to be in school. That's why I like my two daughters better than my sons. Tusi and Luluta always wanted to learn.

After the ship had returned to Tarawa, the captain told me that the manager wanted me to take a job ashore in the depot. That job had always been held by a European, so I said that I didn't think I wanted it. But two days later the manager called me to tell me that he wanted me for the job.

The next trip of the ship was to Ocean Island, and the manager asked me whether I wanted to see my friends there once more. I agreed to that, and he let me go to Ocean Island once more. When we got back to Tarawa, the manager asked me whether I wanted to say "goodbye" to my friends in the Gilbert Islands. I agreed again and stayed on the ship until it returned from that trip to Tarawa.

I took over the job from the European in two weeks. It was not difficult for me because I had already some experience with storage and bookkeeping. One day the manager called me to his office. He showed me a telegram from the Resident Commissioner's office asking for information on how much fuel and kerosene we had in stock. The manager said that the telegram should have been addressed to me and he asked me to send the reply myself. Two weeks later the manager received the same telegram again. He was very angry, because it meant to him that the people in the government did not trust the work of a native. I am sure the people in the government were worried about me, because everybody knew that I had no education. But after that time the Resident Commissioner's office dealt with me directly. My wages were 35 pounds a month.

I left this job after two years, because I had made up my mind to go to Kioa. The manager did not want to accept my resignation. He promised to double my wages if I continued my work.¹⁴ But the time had come to help the poor people in Kioa whom I had sent there when I was still a magistrate.

IN KIOA

I had to join the people in Kioa, because they were unhappy on their new island. The first big trouble they had was about Mr. Kennedy. Less than a week after I had been put out of my job as a magistrate a letter arrived from Kioa about Mr. Kennedy. The letter said that Mr. Kennedy had come to Kioa to stay there and help the people in their work to build up the island. He had suggested that the Vaitupu people make a collection to buy a boat. The boat was to travel between Vaitupu and Kioa to carry cargo and people. The letter asked for 2,000 pounds.

About that time the B.P.C. sent a telegram that they wanted to recruit only 12 more laborers from Vaitupu. That was because many boys from Vaitupu renewed their contracts, and the government allowed only so many from each island. But the boys who were already in Ocean Island agreed to the idea of collecting money for the boat. So after a year they had the money. But by that time the situation on Kioa had changed. People from Vaitupu had sent letters to Kioa to say that they didn't want Mr. Kennedy to be on Kioa. They thought that Mr. Kennedy would make the people on Kioa work like slaves or something.

I later found out that Mr. Kennedy had told the people to divide the land. Every family was to get five acres for themselves in lease from the Council of Kioa *matai* [shareholders]. Mr. Kennedy was to lease five acres, too. But the people did not understand what a lease meant. They thought that Mr. Kennedy would work his land with laborers, and then take more land, and more land. They were afraid that Mr. Kennedy would take over the island. Mr. Kennedy also treated the people in a very hard way. They had to build a fence for the goats that Mr. Kennedy wanted to have on the island.

Mr. Kennedy also brought cattle to Kioa. The people didn't like his idea that he would give one of every two calves to the community. They thought that this was not a good idea, because Mr. Kennedy was only one person, and there were so many Vaitupu people on Kioa.

There were also other problems. Kennedy once told Paka that his land was to be for his grandson. That was the [illegitimate] son of Paka's daughter and Kennedy was his father. Paka's daughter had been Mr. Kennedy's housegirl when he was living on Vaitupu. When the people heard about that, they tried to spoil everything Mr. Kennedy wanted to do.

One man, Kaisami, always spoke against Mr. Kennedy. Kaisami wanted to be the storekeeper of the cooperative society. But Angelu, who was the storekeeper then, had done everything wrong with the books. So Mr. Kennedy wanted to clear the matter first. Kaisami kept bothering him about the job, because he didn't want to do any hard work on the plantation. One day Mr. Kennedy threw him out of his house.¹⁵

The Kioa people were divided. Some liked Mr. Kennedy, some didn't like him. The two groups even had their own meetings. One morning many people went to Mr. Kennedy's house. He refused to listen to Kaisami but he agreed to listen to Uea to speak for them. Uea is my cousin, his father was Lifuka's brother. So Uea told Mr. Kennedy that the people wanted him to leave Kioa before sunset. He left the island the same day.¹⁶

When the boys on Ocean Island sent the money to Vaitupu, the people did not give it to Kioa. They divided it among the *mataaniu*. I was in Funafuti at that time.

Later when I was working in Tarawa, I heard that the people in Kioa didn't like the island and that they went to work elsewhere in Fiji whenever they pleased. They made a very bad impression in Fiji. That is the reason why I began to think about going to Kioa myself.

On one trip to Suva my son Loto told me that two men from Kioa were looking for me. They were Fiafia and Esene and they were staying in Veisari [a village not far from Suva where people from Tuvalu had settled]. We took a taxi to go out there to see them. I had bought two cartons of beer. After we had finished them with the other men who were with us, we drank *yaqona* until five o'clock in the morning. Then Fiafia and Esene came back with me to the ship. After we had eaten our breakfast, they asked me whether I would come to Kioa. They told me that things were bad and that the people needed a leader. We talked and talked about the problems on the island, and I promised them that I would come to Kioa as soon as I could leave the Wholesale Society. That was in 1960. [The Colonial Wholesale Society became a statutory corporation in the mid-1950s.]

I had already made my application to the *matai* in Vaitupu to be allowed to go to Kioa a long time before I resigned from my job. I had also written to Tofinga in Suva. He was the advisor to the Kioa people and did all the paperwork with the government in Fiji.

Finally, I think in June 1962, I received a telegram from Tofinga that I could come to Fiji with all my family.

At about the same time the "Moana Raoi" was ready to sail to Suva for overhaul. The manager told the captain to pass by Vaitupu so that I could say "goodbye" to my people. The Wholesale Society paid the fare for my whole family. We were ten people. As the ship left Tarawa the pier was packed with people to say farewell. All the Europeans with their wives were there, and very many of the Gilbertese natives.

We arrived at Vaitupu at seven o'clock at night. I went ashore with my family and said goodbye to the people of my island. The people had prepared a big feast for us in the *maneapa*. My relatives and the Vaitupu people had killed about 30 pigs. The custom is to make speeches at those times. When I spoke I promised the people to look after Kioa as best as I could. At midnight we sailed away to Fiji.

My family included my wife; my daughters, Tusi and Luluta; my sons, Loto and Kailopa; Itangia, a friend of my son Loto; my [half-] brother, Keniti; my nephew Luti, my [half-] sister's son; and my sister's granddaughter [who later returned to Vaitupu]. My daughters were with me in Tarawa at that time, because Luluta had taken a job with the government there. Tusi had left her school in Fiji and gone to Australia to train as a nurse in the meantime. She was visiting us on her holiday in Tarawa when we had to leave the Colony.

While the "Moana Raoi" was in Suva port, I had time to buy supplies in the stores: saws, axes, nails, and other tools that I wanted to take to Kioa. The manager of the Wholesale Society had told the captain to take us to Kioa on the way back to Tarawa. We dropped anchor at Kioa one day [September 1962] about ten o'clock in the morning. All the canoes from Salia came out to meet the ship.

The first man I met was Nika Taitai. He talked to me in English. He said to me, "Are you the one I have been waiting for?" I said, "What do you mean?" He answered, "I have been waiting for you for a long time. I want to hand over to you the load that I have carried on my shoulder." I said, "Nika, that's not your business. That's not my business. That's the community's business to decide."

Nika talked in English with me, because we use the English

language when we want to say something very important. I do this myself. He held my hand until he had finished his talk.

When the "Moana Raoi" sailed away, I had left my ship forever, and she had left me on my new island. Nika and I were the last to go ashore. Only women were on the beach then. All the men had already gone to the *maneapa*. Nika and I went over there, and I shook hands with everybody. They were happy to see me, and I was happy to see them. But in my mind I had the picture of these men when they left their pretty island of Vaitupu to go to the rough country of Kioa to obey the words of the nonsense man Neli. I cried like a kid.

Before I sat down, the people pointed to one of the posts in the *maneapa* and said, "That's yours, that is your place." I saw that the people were smiling. And then I remembered that the leader of the first wave, Old Man Paka, who had returned to Vaitupu two or three years earlier, had told me something about his post in the *maneapa* of Kioa on my last visit to Vaitupu.

Paka had told the people that his post had to remain empty until the day when a man would decide that he is strong enough to take it. Such a man was not living on Kioa then, he said. When Paka had explained that to me, he had also said that he wanted me to take his post. I had forgotten about this when I entered the *maneapa*, but when the people showed me the post I remembered Paka's words.

After we had talked about our trip, and the Kioa people had talked about their waiting for us to arrive—that's the custom to talk about such things first—Nika stood up to make a speech.

Nika had been the dresser on Vaitupu and in Kioa, but later he became the schoolmaster and the chairman of the community. Now he turned to the old men and once again asked them to agree that he handed over the job of chairman to me, the man whom he had been waiting for to sit at Paka's post.

Later, when we had the big trouble with our community, I heard that some people did not like Nika's speech about me. Especially Kaisami didn't want me to be the chairman; he wanted the job for himself.

Kaisami had never done anything well. Wherever he had worked in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony he had gotten bad marks. Well, he is one of the reasons that we later had so much trouble.

At the meeting in the *maneapa* on my first day in Kioa, everybody agreed with Nika. I stood up then and thanked the community. But I asked them to get the approval of the *matai* in Vaitupu. I told them that I would accept their decision, because I had not come to Kioa to be the headman. Nika sent a telegram to Vaitupu. After about one month we received the answer. The *matai* agreed to have me take the position.

We had a big feast that day. According to our custom the people built a special seat for me. The seat is really only a pile of green drinking coconuts covered with woven coconut leaves. All my relatives on Kioa helped in the preparation.

The meaning of the coconuts is this: In the old times the people would pour the liquid over the body of a new chief. That way the people could make sure that everything would be all right and food and coconuts would be plentiful. But now the people think that this is too much of a waste and, besides, why make a person wet all over? Civilization changed their minds. Now the people use the nuts for making a high seat.

At that time Mr. White [an anthropology student from the University of Oregon] and his wife were living on the island. I allowed them to sit with me on top of the nuts. I wanted to show them my respect. First they didn't want to come up. They didn't want to disturb our custom, but I told them not to mind the custom.

The first thing on my mind was what I had to do to improve the island. We had no money to pay for the labor. The plantations of the community had turned into bush. So much work had to be done. I wrote a letter to the *matai* in Vaitupu to ask if they could give us some money to help out. I didn't speak to anyone in Kioa about that.

One day at four o'clock in the morning I had my two sons take me to Natuvu [the nearest settlement on Vanua Levu] in our canoe, which we had brought from Vaitupu. From Natuvu we took a taxi to Savusavu [an hour's trip]. I was lucky. There was a ship going to Suva the same day, and before the ship left Savusavu I had some time to visit the District Officer, Mr. Westwood. I asked him how I could get a loan to develop the island. The D.O. told me that the Agriculture Department could arrange a loan for us. I told the D.O. that I had to discuss the matter with Tofinga first.

When I had reached Suva, I went to see Tofinga. I told him that

my work in Kioa was stuck because there was no money to develop the island and that we needed a loan. Tofinga agreed to sign the papers if the D.O. in Savusavu could get us the loan.

But I was still worried, so I went to the bank where I had an account. I took out 100 pounds. I knew the manager, and when he saw me he asked what I needed so much money for. I explained that I had to use the money now to help the people in Kioa. Tofinga didn't want me to use up my own money for the island, but I told him that the development of Kioa came first.¹⁷

When I was back in Savusavu, I went to Mr. Westwood again. He did not look very happy when I walked into his office. He explained to me that we couldn't get a loan because we had no title to the land. He was very sorry and promised to try to get us a contract for timber. I went back to Kioa and called a meeting of the Island Council. I put the 100 pounds up for the development of the island.

We started our work with the community plantations. The young trees were dying because nobody had cut down the bush for several years. We used my money to pay the boys five shillings a day for the work. It was the first time that people had earned money with work on their own island. That was a big thing for the people.

Two weeks later the District Officer sent a message that we could have a contract for cutting 2,000 superfeet of timber. We would get five pounds per 100 superfeet. I called a council meeting to discuss the matter. The council agreed because the contract meant that the men could stay on Kioa to earn an income.

Some time later Nika received a telegram from Rabi to come over and collect 500 pounds sent from Vaitupu. The government advisor on Rabi didn't know that I had taken over the post of chairman from Nika. But Nika went to Rabi anyway.

We continued the work on the plantations, clearing the ground and taking bad trees down. When that work was done, we finished the building of a new school house. We had no money left for buying pipes for a water supply system, so we put together a show with 60 young people and went over to Rabi in our old launch to perform our dances. We collected about 80 pounds from the Rabi people. I had the idea for a show like that, because the Americans had paid us when we made dances in Funafuti during the war.¹⁸

I put the money into our account in Savusavu, where we al-

ready had saved about 200 pounds from selling our timber. There should have been some money left for the community from the 500 pounds we got from Vaitupu. What happened was that some people needed some of that money to feed their families. At first I disagreed with giving them anything. But when I saw the hard life some families were facing, I gave in and let them have a few pounds so they could buy flour and sugar and things like that.¹⁹ Before I came to Kioa many of the young men were working on the plantations in Vanua Levu to earn money. When I had called them back to Kioa, their families had no income any more. If I had not given in, the young men would have left the island again; but I needed them for the development work.

The new District Officer in Savusavu, Mr. Hughes, wanted to help us with the problem of the title. We people don't understand anything about titles. We just wanted an island for our future. We knew nothing about things like titles. Even I didn't understand what the people in Kioa were talking about when they told me after I arrived that they wanted the title to the island. At that time I scolded them about that because it looked to me that the island belonged to the *matai*. Later we had a big trouble about the title business, and I found out that the Kioa people were right.

Mr. Hughes also helped us to get money for our baskets and mats. We started to sell them in Savusavu to the people who came with the tourist ships. I hired a whole bus to take the people from Natuzu to Savusavu. The young people also made a dance show at the Hot Springs Hotel in Savusavu. But one Ellice woman, who had been married to a European planter, ruined that. She was the assistant to the manager, or maybe the "assistant wife" to the manager, and she didn't like the Kioa people. I don't know why; anyway, she talked bad about our boys and girls, so they couldn't go back again.

But few ships came to Savusavu and often the women came back to Kioa with most of their baskets. The reason was that some of the ships had first been in Samoa and in Tonga, and all the tourists had already bought baskets in those islands. Once we sent a man to Suva to sell about 50 baskets there. He stayed for one month. When he came back, he gave me one pound. He had spent the rest of the money for taxis, taking the baskets to the market in the morning and back again in the evening.

One day I burned 30 baskets that I had bought myself to help

the people, because they had started to rot. I made a big fire to send the damned things up to heaven. I thought that maybe they could sell them up there.

Anyway, in 1963 Mr. Hughes came to Kioa with Mr. Moffatt. Mr. Moffatt was the Colonial Secretary at that time, I think. We had a meeting with them in the evening soon after the ship had anchored. Mr. Moffatt explained to us that our case was very, very complicated. He told us that the island belonged to the people of Vaitupu, and that the Governor of Fiji was their trustee. Because the papers said "the people of Vaitupu," nobody knew who the actual owners were. "Later on," he said, "we found out that the island belongs to 105 shareholders, but it is now very hard to change the word 'Vaitupu people' in the papers, unless the 105 shareholders agree to that." Then he said that he would ask the government to let us have a subsidy to develop Kioa even before the title business could be cleared up.

Next morning we had a community meeting in the *maneapa*. Nika explained to the people what Mr. Moffatt had said. Everybody agreed that Mr. Moffatt should settle the matter about the title with the Resident Commissioner in Tarawa. From that day on the people started to develop their own blocks of land, the five acres that the *matai* had allowed each family for its own use. By then very few people had actually made gardens or planted their own coconut trees.

About two weeks after Mr. Moffatt's visit, Mr. Hughes and a Fijian agricultural officer came to Kioa to plan a survey of the island, because the land had to be subdivided into family blocks for people to get a subsidy.

The work on the survey took many days over, maybe, eight months. The government had already taken a picture of the island from an airplane, but the soil had to be checked everywhere to find out which land was suitable for coconut and which good for cacao planting. Our party had to cross the island again and again. Once we got lost so badly that we had to sleep in the bush without anything to eat.

We had to subdivide the island because the government could only give a subsidy to people who had more than ten acres. The five acres the *matai* had allowed were not enough for that. I had already

changed my mind about the *matai*. The Fiji government did not permit more Vaitupu people to settle in Kioa. Therefore, we were to stay there permanently, and we had to develop the island ourselves.

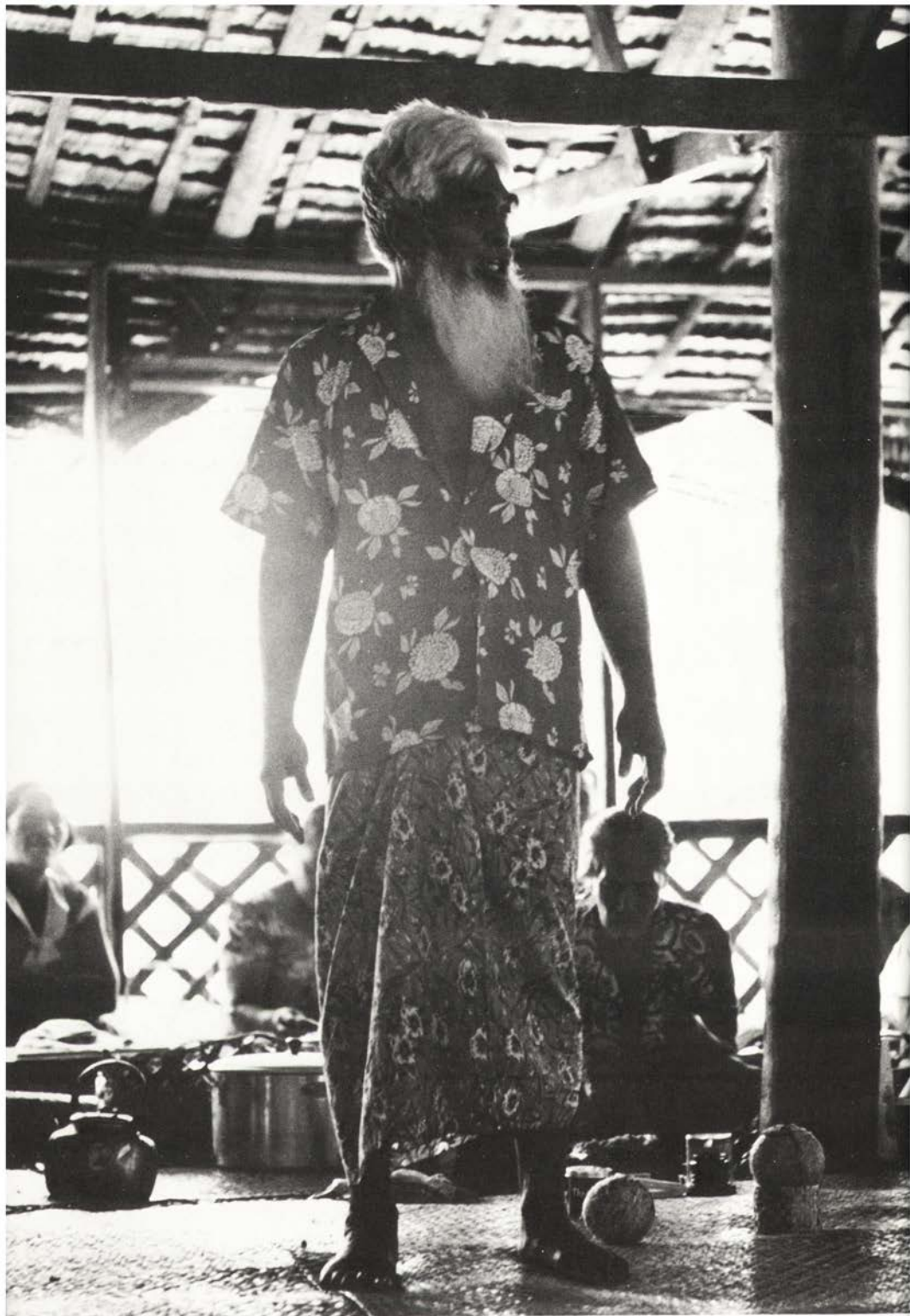
After the survey work had been finished, Mr. Hughes and another officer came back with a map, and I went with them around and across the island again for two weeks. The map showed the subdivisions that had been made from the aerial photograph and the soil survey.

There were 56 blocks. Those people who had already worked on their land were given the block on which that land was. The big problem was that on some blocks more than one person had already made a garden or planted coconut trees. We left it to the people themselves to decide who could stay and who had to move in those cases where their block had less than 20 acres. In one case the two men never agreed, and the block was a big problem for a long time because only the name of one was properly registered.

Another problem the people didn't understand was that every block had a different size. The average block had about 17 acres and the largest about 30, because the soil was not the same everywhere, and some blocks were on the beach and others had a stream. So, the blocks with the rich soil were smaller than the blocks with the poor soil. I also wanted the boundaries to be according to the landscape so that there would not be any problems about them in the future. The people quarreled a lot about the subdivision, yet today, after seven years, not one person has developed all of his land. That's the kind of people I have had to face.

We held a meeting to decide how to share the blocks that were not already taken. The people agreed with the old men who wanted every man and his wife to have one block but a man with many children to have two blocks. The trouble was to agree whose name should go with a block. I didn't want the old men to have a block in their name because they were too old to work the land. But they rejected my idea, and I couldn't do anything about that because the people agreed with the old men.

First I told the people who had already worked their land what their block number was. Then I asked the other men to gather around me and to pick a block from the map. Many didn't know how to read a map, so I explained the location of the blocks by the places they knew on the island. We spent almost a full day on this. I



Neli in the *maneapa* on Vaitupu (1969)

was the last to take a block. The one I got had first been taken by a young man who later changed his mind and asked for a block next to his father's. The block he wanted, however, belonged to somebody who had already planted coconut trees on the land. I asked that man to let it go and take in exchange the last remaining block with the best soil on the island, the one which I had wanted for myself.

My block number was to be 21, but I didn't sign my name yet. I wanted to wait until everybody had gotten what he wanted. My son Loto had Block No. 4. But we had to change that later. One man, who had been away when the people selected their blocks, wanted his land on the far side of the island, where the good soil is. But no block was left there, and both the District Officer and Nika asked me and Loto to give him No. 4; then Loto would get a new block next to mine. But Block No. 22 had already been taken. It belonged to a sick man who could not work there because it was in very rough country. There was one block left nearer to the village and the sick man agreed to take that one. In the end Loto got Block No. 21, and I took No. 22.²⁰

This was the way we divided the island.

By the beginning of 1964 everything was going well with the subdivision. Forty-four blocks were in operation; they were put under the agricultural development scheme and received subsidies. Four blocks had not been allocated.

All the farmers were very happy, because that's what they had wanted: a piece of land they could call their own. For that they had been fighting against me when I stood up in the *maneapa* to take the side of the *matai*. But I had changed my mind, when I heard that the Immigration Office would not allow more Vaitupu people to come to Kioa.

I wrote a letter to the *matai* to explain what we had done and that the government would not allow more Vaitupu people to immigrate to Fiji. I wrote: "It looks to me that you are the owners of the island. But we can't do anything about our original idea to have the benefits from Kioa come to all the Vaitupu people. Our people are not allowed to go back and forth between Vaitupu and Kioa. The people who are here now will stay and new people will not come. However, the custom will never break between us, and we will help you according to our old ways when we have developed the island."

I read my letter to the Kioa people in the *maneapa*. Nobody said that he did not agree. Nobody stood up to speak against my idea.

But someone had written a report about me to Vaitupu. When the *matai* read my letter, they made it mean something different. They reckoned that I was the one who had gone to the government to change everything. They blamed me for what the government had decided.

One day my [half-] brother, Keniti, came to visit me from the other side of the island. He told me that Lisati had talked to the people and asked them to sign a letter to the *matai*. The letter complained about my actions and the subdivision. Keniti did not sign, and other people did not sign. I heard that Lisati had signed the names of others himself. Lisati tried to murder my name. At that time he was not even living on Kioa. He worked on the Natuvu Estate. He was the only one who did not live on Kioa then. Lisati had always tried to make my work difficult. He called me a silly fool, but I didn't take any notice at first.

One day when I had gone to Natuvu to arrange for a bus to take the women with their baskets to Savusavu, I got an attack of rheumatism. I went to Lisati's house to lie down. His wife and an old woman in his family put blankets on me because I was shivering. When Lisati came in he said to the women, "Don't bother with him, he is a silly fool." That was the third time he had said that. I stood up and said, "Lisati, what are you complaining about? If you don't like the way I try to develop the island, why are you here instead of facing the hard life in the bush? You were sent to Kioa to work the land. You must shut up."

Lisati was one of the people who made trouble when we allocated the blocks. He had worked on one piece of land, but because he had a job, he could pay a Fijian to work on a second piece of land. Therefore, he wanted to have both blocks. Nobody agreed with him, and I had a big argument with him.

Sometime in 1964—I can't remember which month [January]—four delegates of the *matai* council in Vaitupu arrived, including Puapua, the magistrate. Lisati was the first person from Kioa they met, because he was staying in Natuvu. He took them across to Kioa in his outboard. The delegation came because of his letter. I didn't even know when they would be coming. I had only heard from other

people that some *matai* planned to visit Kioa. But the original plan had been just to come for a visit, not for official business.

In the evening we had a feast in the *maneapa*. After the meal we made speeches according to our custom, and afterward the young people danced.

Next morning, about half past seven, I heard a launch coming over to Kioa. It was Mr. Hughes. He wanted to see the delegates and me.

At the meeting Mr. Hughes told the delegates that the island had already been subdivided. He explained to them why the government had to make the subdivision. Then he told them that one day the people in Kioa could pay rent to the *matai* in Vaitupu, but that some of that money would have to stay in Kioa anyway because members of some *matai* were living on the island. "Therefore," he asked them, "why don't you agree to let the Kioa people have this island and you take the land they have on Vaitupu?"

Mr. Hughes made that idea very clear to them. He had already talked about it with the Kioa people before. But the delegates did not like his talk. They kept speaking about their land in Kioa. They even said to Mr. Hughes that they would take the matter to the United Nations if the Fiji Government would not permit the owners of Kioa to settle there. Mr. Hughes told them that Fiji was British and the United Nations could do nothing. The delegates answered that they would take the matter to the Queen. Mr. Hughes told them that the Queen had no business to do anything in Fiji, but Mr. Mofatt would see them in Suva. The poor men looked like silly fools to me.

I liked Mr. Hughes' idea, but only my cousin Favae Koloa and I wrote letters to our relatives in Vaitupu to fix the matter. Nothing has ever been done about it. I am thinking now, why should we pay rent to the *matai* in Vaitupu, when we don't get any rent from them for our land there?²¹

Next day one of the delegates looked at the books. I did double-entry bookkeeping, which I had learned when I was working for the Wholesale Society. The man didn't understand that, because in Vaitupu they knew only the single-entry way. I had to explain everything to him. "B-f" means "brought forward" and so on. It was too complicated for him, so he closed the book. Another one of

them did the same with the next book. They spent only half an hour "checking" my books. When they had finished the feast continued in the *maneapa*. That's the custom: to go on and on with eating and yarning and dancing when visitors have come.

The following day the launch came to take the delegates to Natuvu; from there they went to Suva. Nika and I wanted to go along, as Mr. Hughes had suggested, but these big shots from Vaitupu never said anything about that again before they left.²²

After about a week, two of the delegates came back to Kioa. We had another feast in the *maneapa* that night, and the two explained to the people what Mr. Moffatt had told them about the subdivision. Next morning Mr. Hughes arrived. He had accompanied them to Mr. Moffatt. Mr. Hughes asked me, "Did they tell the people anything about you?" I said, "No." Then Mr. Hughes told me this: Mr. Moffatt, first thing, had asked the delegates why they had not brought me along. They had lied and said that I was busy. Afterwards, every time they had asked a question about Kioa, Mr. Moffatt had asked them why they hadn't brought me with them. Mr. Moffatt had also told them that more Vaitupu people could not come to Fiji.

But Mr. Moffatt had told Mr. Hughes in secret that he could get a permission for more immigrants if I agreed to that. So, Mr. Hughes asked me whether I wanted more people to come to Kioa or not. I said, "No thank you, I don't want more people here, because many children have already been born on Kioa." Mr. Hughes agreed, and he told me to say that nothing could be done about the decision of the government if the people brought the matter up again. Still today, some people on Kioa think that more people will come from Vaitupu one day.

I have often told the people that even if the government were to allow more Vaitupu to immigrate to Kioa, they will have to make the decision, but that they must always think of the future of their own children. Maybe half of the children in Kioa today [1969] were born on this island. Who is going to have our land? Our own children or new people from Vaitupu who did not take part in the development of Kioa?

A few days later the other two delegates arrived on a ship that was going to the Ellice Islands. The two men who were on Kioa left with them. They never told me that I was to be kicked out of my position, although they had decided that in Suva. I later heard that

they had been sent to take me back to Vaitupu—as a prisoner or what?

Some months later, Mafalu [who had taken a civil service job with the cooperatives department] came from Suva. I had already heard that Mafalu was to be the manager of the island. The delegates had asked him to check all my books, which he did. He was satisfied with everything except the loss in the basket account. But he knew about that problem.

Next morning, we had a meeting of the whole community. Mafalu announced the decision of the *matai* in Vaitupu that he was to take over my job as their manager. Before the meeting he had given me a letter from the *matai*, in which they wrote that they didn't want me as chairman any more. Because Mafalu did not live on Kioa, he asked the people to vote on an assistant for him.

First we discussed who the assistant could be. Some people said, "We want Neli"; some people said, "We want Kitione [Gideon Nitz]"; and some people said, "We want Lisati." So there were three persons to vote for. Lisati won. Lisati was in Natuvu, and we had to send a message to get him over to Kioa.²³

I think the reason for Lisati being the winner was that he had supported the old men. Some of the old men who had their blocks on the other side of the island wanted to have part of the coconut trees at the community plantation in Naba just for their families so that they would not have to come to the village to get nuts. The situation was this: before I came to Kioa, the people had allocated the trees near the village in such a way that every adult had four trees and every child had two trees to get enough brown nuts for their food. When the matter about the Naba plantation came up, I disagreed with the old men, because other people had their blocks even farther away from the village. We had a big argument. Most of the people supported me, because we had already agreed that half of the copra from Naba was to be sold to help the parents of the school-children pay their school fees. I didn't want to disturb this arrangement.

Lisati was a member of the church who could also preach. On Sundays he would come over from Natuvu and visit the families on their blocks to preach about God and about Neli. He preached about God and Neli, the devil, at the same time. He also gave the people

gifts, food, and tobacco. That way he tried to drag the minds of the people to him.

To deal with these men, Lisati, Kaisami, Gideon Nitz, was the hardest part of my job. They opposed me. I mention their names because they are men who know something; the others just follow, they don't know anything by themselves.²⁴

The day after the meeting a launch came to Kioa with Mr. Hughes and the Agricultural Officer from Savusavu. They came straight to my house. They wanted to talk to Nika and Koloa, and I sent someone to get them. Because Nika as our schoolmaster and Koloa as our dresser had a government job, Mr. Hughes asked them what they thought about my appointment as a sector officer in the agricultural development scheme. Nika and Koloa explained what I had done for the people of Kioa and that I was the only person who could encourage the farmers to work their land.

Mr. Hughes had received a letter from the *matai* that I was no longer the chairman the day before. Therefore, he had come over to give me another job.²⁵

I kept my post in the *maneapa*. Nobody could take my place away from me. Lisati didn't have a post, and he had to take the place of someone else. Lisati and Kaisami still tried to change the subdivision. They wanted each of the *matai* to own one part of the island by title. What a foolish idea! If a *matai* had a piece of Kioa in freehold and he could not come here, then he could sell the land to anybody. Maybe an Indian would offer him a lot of money, and he would sell it to the Indian. Soon Kioa would not belong to Vaitupu people alone. There would be Indians, Chinese, and maybe other people. I learned about that from Mr. Kennedy, who had explained these things in a letter to me. He wrote me after the four delegates had talked to him in Suva. The government advisor in Rabi had also talked to me about that one day. I tried to explain the matter to the people, but they understood nothing. They listened to Lisati and Kaisami, who tried to spoil everything.²⁶

That was the situation when Mr. Hughes came with the papers about the subdivision that the people had to sign, in late 1964 or maybe in early 1965.²⁷ I still get wild when I think about what happened: the people didn't want to sign. I held a meeting in my house—not in the *maneapa* because I had no right to do that any more. About 20 people came. We discussed the matter and at the end all of

them agreed to sign. From that time on we had two meetings in the community, those with Lisati in the *maneapa* and those in my house where we talked about the development.

After our first meeting I sent a telegram to the *matai* that we had agreed to sign up for the blocks. I did that in my position as a sector officer. The *matai* sent a wireless to say that they did not agree because I had signed the telegram—the bloody fools over there in Vaitupu.

But Lisati and his people had also sent a telegram to the *matai* to say that they would not sign because they didn't want the island to be subdivided.²⁸

Sometime later [in May 1965] the Assistant Colonial Secretary from Suva, Mr. Davies; the Commissioner Northern from Labasa; the District Officer from Savusavu, Mr. Hughes; and the Development Officer, Mr. Westwood, came to Kioa to settle the problem. At the meeting Kaisami told them that the people shouldn't sign the papers because that would take the land away from the *matai*. Lisati said that the Kioa people didn't want any government program on the island, that they wanted to keep to their own customs about land. Now I think what they really wanted was to have titles to Kioa land in their own names.

The government officers tried their best to make the people understand the situation. But still, not all people were ready to sign the papers. Sometime later Tofinga came to Kioa. He told the people that they had better do what the government wanted. Finally all agreed, and when Mafalu came a week or so later everybody signed.²⁹ The whole business had taken six months, because some foolish people thought that the government tried to cheat them or something.

Things began to be all right in Kioa. But the trouble was that Lisati had the right to call on the people to work on projects according to our custom. Before the subdivision I had asked the people to do away with these customs: to have feasts, celebrating the Queen's birthday; celebrating Christmas; celebrating so-and-so day, and so-and-so days. I told the people to celebrate the Queen's birthday and their Christmas on their own blocks, not to stop their work and make a feast in the village.

But Lisati had the power to call them, so they carried on with the custom. There was no council any more, and Lisati only dealt with the old men. They liked to keep the custom.

Lisati wanted to build a new *maneapa*. Sure, we needed a new *maneapa*, but I did not want the people to interrupt their work on the development at that time. The talk about the new *maneapa* stopped for a while, until Levolo came for a visit. Levolo is a rich man—he runs a hotel and a store in the Marshall Islands, where his wife is from—and he gave money to his brother Mafalu to buy building materials for the new *maneapa*. When the roofing iron arrived in Kioa, Lisati held a meeting about the project. Only Nika and I didn't want the work to begin then.

I didn't help myself with the cutting of the timber, but I sent my two sons and my son-in-law to assist the others. I thought that if I would die very soon, they would have no right to talk in the community if they didn't help. I didn't even give any money to the collection for the cement, but I paid my sons' shares, ten shillings for each block.

One day Lisati asked me in a meeting why I was the only one who had not paid his share. I stood up and said this to the people: "You know that I have money from my government job. But you people have no income except what you get for a fish and a basket. Therefore, tell me, how do you support your family? How do you pay the school fees for your children? And remember, a person who works his three days for the *maneapa* does not work another three days on his block. He goes fishing to get some money for his family. Where does that leave the development? We must have a new *maneapa*, but not now!"

One day the government sent a surveyor to check on the subdivision once more. He had a talk with Lisati. Chairman Lisati told this man how happy the people were with the work going on for the *maneapa*. The surveyor told him that he had seen the young coconut trees on the other side of the island that were not growing properly because nobody took care of them. Then he asked Lisati, "What's the use of this big house?" Lisati said, "That's for having meetings." He said "meetings" because that sounds more important than "dancing." The gentleman laughed and told Lisati that he could hold his meetings in the schoolhouse, since there were no classes at night, or even under the coconut trees, and that a person like himself visiting Kioa would not be impressed by a building but only by what the people had done about the development.

Because I had been busy with the subdivision, I didn't have time to work on my own block. The other farmers began to talk about that. They were quite right, although they knew why I had done nothing on my family's land. In September 1965, my two sons, Loto and Kailopa, and I began the work on our blocks. Before we started, Old Man Elia helped us to build a canoe. Elia had been taught by his father, a *tufunga* [master canoe builder], who used to build the fastest racing canoes in Vaitupu.

The first tree on the block I cut down myself. It took me three hours. Afterward, my sons did the heavy work and I cut down the brushes. By January 1966, we had cleared fifteen acres.

We faced a very hard life, working from sunrise to sunset. We slept in a natural cave on Mafalu's block. Luckily, I had some income from my job as a sector officer. But it wasn't enough. Therefore, my two sons had to spend one day each week to get food for us. They collected paw-paw from the blocks of some farmers who had already planted these trees [papaya]. According to Ellice custom people can help themselves to such fruits once they have asked permission, because we don't consider the paw-paw to be a valuable fruit. The trees grow by themselves anyway, and the ripe fruits rot easily. Loto and Kailopa also went out at night to spear fish, using a light to attract the fish to the canoe. Some of the fish we salted and dried in the sun to build up a supply. My daughter Luluta sometimes brought us some rice, but mostly we ate paw-paw, tapioca, coconuts, and fish. I did the cooking for us, because I had done this kind of work when I was a sergeant major during the war. In a few years our trees will begin to bear nuts.

Well, when the *maneapa* was finished in the summer of 1968 [August], the question about the posts had to be decided. There were twelve posts in the new *maneapa*. The posts are very important in our custom. Old men and others who can talk to the community must get one.

When the people had their feast to celebrate the completion of the work, they also discussed who was to have a post. I was staying in my house at that time. But Nika's wife sent a young boy to get me. She had prepared some food for me. So I went over and sat down to eat, with my back to the people and facing the sea. The young people were dancing then.

When I saw how happy everybody was, I made up my mind to say something to the community. I stood up and said: "Thank you very much for the work you have done for our community. That's very nice work. When I came over here and saw the young people dancing, I remembered Vaitupu and our old customs. But do you know that you are now a different people? Do you think that you can go on living by your customs? Listen, we didn't come from that faraway island to do such silly things like dancing in the daytime. Why do you do these damned things in the daytime? Remember, we have come here to show the people of Fiji that we are a good people, that we are people who have common sense. But when I see what you are happy about—that's the Vaitupu custom, that's our old custom. Now you must change all that. You are no longer like the Ellice people. If the Ellice people saw you now, they would think that you are doing good things. But if other people saw you, they would laugh at you. Don't think that you have done a good thing wasting your time on this house. You have shown that you are stupid people and lazy people. That's all I want to say. Thank you."

Everybody kept quiet. Nobody spoke a word. I stood up and went to the school to see Nika. After a while my half-brother Nimo came up. He asked why I had talked like that to the people. I told him that I wanted to let them know what they were doing. Then Nika asked what the men had decided about the posts.

They had done nothing. They couldn't do anything because of me. They didn't know how to handle the situation. So I told Nimo's daughter to bring me a piece of paper and a pen. When she came back I told her to count the minutes it would take me to allocate the posts. It took me five minutes to give the posts to the 12 men I selected. First I gave a post to each of the government officers on the island: Koloa, myself, Nika, and the assistant schoolmaster. Then I gave a post to Ale and Ioane who were speakers; they could talk well in the *maneapa*. On the other side, I put Lisati, the pastor, and the old men Maunga, Elia, Falesau, and Gideon Nitz. Nika and Nimo were laughing while I was writing down the names.

In the evening I went back to the *maneapa* for the evening service. When that was finished and we had eaten our meal, the master of ceremony asked whether anybody wanted to make a speech. I stood up with the paper in my hand. I said: "I know that you will not agree with me, but you listen to me! You have wasted a whole

day deciding about the posts. You can't do it. I have already selected the men who will have a post in this *maneapa*. One side of the *maneapa* is for the government officers, the other side is for the community representatives. The first man on the government side is Neli, then Nika, then Koloa . . .”

When I had finished everybody was talking and moaning. I shut them up and talked for a whole hour to explain my reasons for allocating the posts that way. “What's the use of having more old men sit at the posts if they can't talk?” I asked. “Who is going to speak to the governor or some other big shot when he comes to visit Kioa?” In the end I had almost lost my voice.

The people realized that I was right. I took the piece of paper, walked around the *maneapa* and showed the men their new posts. Then Lisati stood up. He thanked me for what I had said, because they could now better discuss the matter with the old men. Well, no change was made, no change at all.

There was another kind of trouble: the old pastor. He was a Samoan. When I came to Kioa, he had already been gone from the island for one year. The people wanted to write a letter asking him to come back. But I told Nika that I didn't want a pastor on Kioa, because a pastor would only spoil the development. I didn't want another “King of Vaitupu” on Kioa. That's the only point on which Nika and I never agreed.

When the matter came up in the *maneapa*, I told the people that we could wait for a pastor until we could afford one. But the old men kept talking about a pastor. They wanted someone to talk to them about paradise, and do the Lord's Supper, and I don't know what. I never believed that this is the way to go to heaven. I believe that if you do your job properly and love your family and your neighbor, that's enough. Never mind about the rest.

Anyway, when Lisati was chairman he went to Suva with Gideon Nitz and Fepuali, who had taken the pastor's place because he knew how to preach, to apply for an immigration permit for the pastor. Lisati had already collected one pound from each block and sent the money to Samoa to pay for the pastor's fare. But the immigration office refused their application, and the old pastor never came back. You see how stupid we people can be?³⁰

Afterwards, the people discussed how to get a new pastor for Kioa. I had a big row in the *maneapa* with Kaisami about the matter. At one meeting we took a vote. The people who wanted a pastor won. So Lisati wrote a letter to a pastor in Veisari asking him to come to Kioa. But he never told Tofinga and Mafalu, who were the managing trustees of the island then, about that. Therefore, when Mafalu heard from this pastor that he was going to Kioa, he asked who had given him permission to go there. The pastor answered that Chairman Lisati of Kioa had done that. Mafalu told him that there was no chairman in Kioa and that only he himself and Tofinga had a right to allow people to go to Kioa. However, Tofinga and Mafalu let the pastor come here anyway.

Well, one time when I was sick, that new pastor came to visit me. We talked for a while about my rheumatism and other little things. Then the pastor asked me, "Neli, what about making up your mind and become a member of the church, become a deacon or a preacher?" I said, "Thank you; since you asked me, I have to tell you something. I don't believe any more in the church of the London Missionary Society. Back in Vaitupu I was a preacher, and one day the pastor there asked me to be a deacon. I told him that I was too young for that, but he insisted that I take the position. Later during my time as a magistrate I taught the young people new dances. The pastor didn't approve of the *taralala*—a girl and a boy dancing together. He kicked me out of my position as a deacon."

"Here in Kioa I was kicked out of the church once more. One day we had a very big feast in the *maneapa* to say farewell to Mr. and Mrs. White. After the feast Mr. and Mrs. White invited me and my council to their house for a special party. They had a bottle of *kamangi*, which we drank. I didn't get drunk or anything. But the following Sunday the deacon told me that I was not allowed to take part in the Lord's supper, because I had drunk *kamangi*."

I said to myself, then, "Bugger the bloody church, bugger the London Missionary Society, bugger you people! I don't want to be part of the church any more. Now Neli's church is Neli by himself."

When I was working in Tarawa I didn't belong to any church, but my wife always went to the service and she always took our children to Sunday School because our parents had done that with us so we could learn about Jesus Christ and God. However, when I had made up my mind to go to Kioa, I joined the church again. I wanted to be with the people here in everything they did.

Anyway, I told the pastor that I will have nothing to do with the church to the end of the world. He said, "O.K., Neli, you have made up your mind." And he went away.

Last year [1968] at a meeting in the *maneapa*, I suggested to the people that we form a farmers' committee to deal with the community land. I didn't want Lisati to have control over that, because he had too many expenses and not enough income. He had paid our own people as much as the workers got on the estate plantations over in Vanua Levu. Mafalu had already told the people that the island was now held by the Public Trustee and that the *matai* had no direct control over the land any more, and that, therefore, any profit was to be for the Kioa people.

My idea was to save the income from the copra of the community plantations and use that money later to form our own trading company. That way the farmers would not have to sell their copra to outside companies. But Kaisami spoiled my idea with his talk, and we had a big fight. According to our custom the old men stop such wild shouting and make the people keep quiet. That's what Kaisami wanted to happen, so that we could not discuss the matter any more. The talk was finished.

About two weeks later, when I was staying on my block, I heard that Lisati had left Kioa to go to Vaitupu to ask the *matai* why he hadn't received his salary for the last two years. I went straight to the village and asked the Old Man Maunga why Lisati was going to Vaitupu. Maunga just told me that Lisati's wife and Ioane, the secretary, had received letters from him from Suva, in which he asked for some money—I think 12 pounds—from the school fund. Nobody knew what Lisati wanted the money for or what right he had to take it from the fund for the school fees.

Old Man Esene went to visit Vaitupu on the same boat. When they returned after one month, Esene told me that Lisati had told the *matai* that they had no say over Kioa any more. That was not quite right, although the situation had changed. But I think that Lisati tried to make the situation look different. Esene told me that Lisati did not speak about it in the *maneapa* but only in a secret way. On the last day Lisati and Esene were in Vaitupu, the chairman of the *matai* council had someone type a letter to Mafalu, who was in England then, one to Tofinga, and one to me.

Lisati never gave me my letter after he had come back. He was too frightened. Esene told me that the *matai* had decided to kick

Mafalu out of his job and make Lisati the manager. Lisati never mentioned that to the people in Kioa either. He is a bloody troublemaker, a Samoan man. He is not a real Vaitupuan, he only grew up there. His father is from Nui and his mother is a Samoan; only his grandmother is half-Vaitupuan.

After Mafalu had returned from England, he came on a visit to Kioa. We talked together about the letter he had received from the *matai*. Mafalu said that he would take care of the matter properly.

Two months later, in December 1968, Tofinga and Mr. Andersen, the Public Trustee,³¹ arrived in Kioa to discuss with the people the new matter about the lease. Nika had passed away in the meantime and we talked about this very, very good man for a while. I told them that a man like Nika cannot be found among a thousand people.

Tofinga and Mafalu could appoint the leader of the island; the people had no right to vote on that any more. I didn't want to accept the job at first, because the *matai* had kicked me out before. But later I agreed to accept. It happened like this: Mafalu came back last February [1969]. At the meeting in the *maneapa* he asked Lisati how much community money he had in his hand. Lisati said, "About 30 cents, I think." "How many nuts for copra?" "About 3,000." "How much in school-fees money?" he asked Kaisami, the manager of the school committee. "Thirty-nine pounds." "How much for the upkeep of the school?" "Two pounds ten."

Mafalu didn't even bother to check the books, because it would have taken him two weeks to find out what was going on. He simply wrote down the amounts. Then he recorded the school supplies. He did all that in front of the people to let them know what the situation was at that time.

Then we came to the selection of the council. I stood up and suggested that the headmen of all departments form the new council: one member from the women's committee that runs the store, one each from the two women's clubs, the dresser for the medical department, the schoolmaster for the education department, the preacher for the church, and so on. That was a new idea because, before, Lisati had made up his own council with the old men.

Mafalu agreed, and the people did too. The council had 12 members, including one representative of the old men. Mafalu had changed his mind about appointing the chairman. So, when the vote

was taken for the chairman—there were four names—Lisati won. I and Fepuali had the same number of votes. Mafalu was very unhappy, because he had thought I would win.

When Mafalu asked Lisati if he accepted the position, he did not answer right away. He said that his wife had always complained about the time he had spent working for the community, and sometimes she had not given him any food, because he had had no time to go fishing. Now he wanted his wife to decide.

Later, in the evening, Lisati told us that his wife didn't want him to take the job. Mafalu wanted another vote, but Fepuali said that he didn't want the job himself, but that he wanted me to have the position. So, Mafalu asked me whether I would take the job or not.

I stood up and said, "I have been waiting for this moment for a long time, because I know this is my job. None of you can do this job. I am ready to take the responsibility. Thank you."

Mafalu sent someone to get *yaqona* from the store to celebrate the new situation. We had a very good time that night. The young people were dancing, we drank *yaqona*, everything looked fine.

Well, everything in Kioa is going well now. When I look at the young coconut trees, I know that my people will be all right. I am sorry my wife passed away five years ago. She never saw her grandchildren. Luluta got married first, to one of the young men in Kioa, who is now a policeman in Taveuni. Tusi went back to Australia to finish her nursing school. Later, when she was working on Ocean Island in the B.P.C. hospital, she got engaged to an Englishman and they came to Kioa to be married according to Vaitupu custom.³²

But our old customs will not be with us in the future. We were born in faraway Vaitupu but we live in a new country. I don't want to live like a European, but I know very well that I cannot waste my time with feasting in the *maneapa*. We must think about the future of our grandchildren in Fiji. Times have changed, the world is moving ahead, and we people of Kioa must move along.

One day when I talked to my people about that they said, "Why do you worry? Jesus Christ said, 'Don't worry about what you will eat tomorrow, God will take care of you.'" And I asked them, "Have you seen Jesus Christ planting coconut trees in a man's garden or have you seen how a man must work on the land with his own

hands?" The people go to church but they don't understand the Bible. Yes, God will give us food but only if we work for it ourselves. There are fish in the sea, but we must catch them. That's what Jesus meant.

Vaitupu will always be on our minds. We will be able to help our relatives there in the future because the people of Kioa are now on the right way. Before I came to this island there was no leadership for the community. People without a leader are like logs in the current of the sea; they don't know where to go.

The breaking waves of the blue sea of my heart
Implore the Great Bird in His wisdom
He gives the things that sustain your life
Sometimes abundant, sometimes wanting.

The venerable gray-heads of my home
Leave thoughts of selfish interests.
Pursue one bird, the one ahead:
The development of your land.

What it may be, agreeable or not
Look for the hidden easy way
To throw into the waste all void ideas.
Strong storms will come and softly blowing winds.

Chorus:
Oh, Kioa, become a house united
Together let us lift the burden
The task designed by our father [the government]
According to his plan.

— A song commemorating the split of the Kioa community in 1956 by Nika Taitai; translated into English by Foua Tofinga; and edited by Klaus-Friedrich Koch.

The Legal History of the Kioa Settlement

THE LEGAL HISTORY OF THE KIOA SETTLEMENT AS RECORDED IN GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

In April or May 1946 Foua Tofinga showed then Major D. G. Kennedy a notice in the *Fiji Times* advertising the auction of Kioa Island. Kennedy, of course, was the one-time schoolteacher on Vaitupu, now in charge of the Rabi settlement scheme; Tofinga was a Vaitupuan civil servant in the service of the Western Pacific High Commission. On his last tour of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony Kennedy discussed the prospect of buying land in Fiji with the Council and the elders of Vaitupu. He then promptly telegraphed the Secretary of the Western Pacific High Commission (CS 128/23/1, p. 6; 05/17/1946): "I have been requested by the people of Vaitupu to assist them in purchasing Kioa Island which is to be sold by auction 15th June. . . . I am given to understand Vaitupu has between £5,000 and £6,000 cash available and may be prepared to borrow if necessary to ensure purchase up to a maximum of £7,000. Would be grateful if early enquiry could be made through Resident Commissioner and the necessary action taken if possible for implementation of proposal provided that no objection on the part of Fiji Government."

The Fiji Government ultimately had no objection, although, as the records show (CS 128/23/1, p. 3 seq. and LD 43/3/1, p. 4 seq.), the proposal generated a mild controversy between several government departments. Yet, in the end, one day before the auction, the Colonial Secretary of Fiji informed the W.H.P.C. Secretary (LD 43/3/1, p. 3; 06/14/46) "that this Government would welcome the purchase of the island of Kioa by natives of Vaitupu. If the island is so purchased, the immigration into Fiji, over a period of ten years, of the joint purchasers and their families, up to a maximum of 250 persons, will be approved."

Together with Tofinga Mr. H. E. Maude, Native Lands Commissioner, later the Resident Commissioner, of the G.E.I.C., acting for the Office of the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific attended the auction and bidding on behalf of the Vaitupu people bought Kioa for £3,000 on June 15, 1946.

The proposal to allow Vaitupu people to settle on Kioa did not represent an unusual idea for the Fiji Government. It already was involved in the resettlement on Rabi of the Banabans, the native population of Ocean Island, whose homeland was literally disappearing with the continuing removal of its phosphate ground (Silverman 1971). In May 1946, the W.P.H.C. Secretary discussed the question of further immigration in a letter to the Colonial Secretary of Fiji

(CS 128/23/1, p. 1). After citing land shortage due to overpopulation and the destruction of resources during the war as the reason for the envisioned mass immigration of Gilbertese and Ellice colonists, he states: "It would be proposed to settle the colonists on this island or estate as individual peasant proprietors, both planted and unplanted land being divided up amongst them in accordance with their local customary law. The settlement or settlements would, of course, be entirely self-supporting and their establishment would occasion no expense whatever to the Fiji Government who would, on the other hand, benefit materially from the advent of an element generally recognized to be exceptionally hard-working, frugal, and law-abiding."

Soon after the Kioa purchase the Office of the High Commissioner realized that its involvement in the transaction was a legal *faux pas*. Mr. Vaskess, W.P.H.C. Secretary, suggested a remedy for the situation in his letter of 01/08/1947 (CS 128/23/1, p. 47) to the Colonial Secretary: "The question has been considered of the formation of a Vaitupuan Corporation with Trustees who could take over the property in Kioa Island and hold it in trust for the people of Vaitupu; but this would present considerable difficulty and would in any case leave many difficulties to be surmounted in connexion with the subdivision of the land in Kioa Island and its transfer to individual owners, succession, etc." He further reported the opinion of the Native Magistrate, Neli, and his two companions from Vaitupu, who had inspected their new island in the meantime, that "the wishes of the people of Vaitupu are that the land in Kioa should be divided among those people in individual freehold blocks with rights of title and succession in accordance with their own customary law governing such matters."

The future conflict between the Kioa settlers and Vaitupu casts doubt on the Secretary's understanding of the wishes of the people of Vaitupu. In any case, the Secretary's suggestion elicited a series of conflicting proposals from the Western Pacific High Commission offices, the Colonial Secretary, and the Director of Lands regarding registration of the title and tenancy: whether Kioa should be held in trust by the Fijian Native Lands Trust Board or by an incorporated council of the Vaitupu and/or the Kioa people, or whether the island should revert to Crown land, and what special legislation was needed to implement the transfer with each of these arrangements.

The inconclusive interdepartmental discussions came to a fateful end in October 1947, when Neli, Native Magistrate in Vaitupu, responded to a W.P.D.C. inquiry, transmitted through the G.E.I.C. Resident Commissioner in the following telegraphed message (CS

128/23/1, p. 110): "People of Vaitupu want Governor to look after Kioa. If in the future we settle and everything is settled at Kioa that will be the time for council to look after Kioa and every concern because they are in or near Fiji. Magistrate."

It is impossible to reconstruct the events on Vaitupu that preceded this decision. Undoubtedly the Vaitupians were quite aware that, customary community ventures notwithstanding, not *all* of the islanders had contributed money to the fund used for the purchase of Kioa. According to a telegram from the District Officer in Funafuti (Tuvalu) to the Resident Commissioner, Tarawa (GEIC 48/7/2, p. 29; 10/28/46), the Vaitupu people were prepared to accept the latter's proposal to form a "Colonization Society comprising all Vaitupu family leaders of which (about 100 in number) desire to sign deed trust."

The expedient of registering the title in the name of the Governor of Fiji as trustee produced a knot of legal and administrative problems that occupied the governments of Fiji and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands for years to come, gravely disturbed relations between Vaitupu and its Kioa settlers, created bitter enmity between opposing factions on Kioa itself, and retarded the development of the island for half a generation.

Though the government could not know "the wishes of the people of Vaitupu" if only because the people of Vaitupu did not know their own wishes at that time, one is dismayed to learn that the solution later adopted to clear up the legal mess created by bureaucratic negligence entered the records less than a week after the purchase of Kioa.

In a letter dated 06/21/1946 to the W.P.H.C. Secretary (GEIC 48/7/2, p.18) the vendor's agents, a private Suva law firm, explained that the transfer of the title "is somewhat complicated by the fact that the purchasers are 'the people of the Island of Vaitupu' and we feel certain that the Titles Office would not accept a transfer to purchasers by that name. The Registrar of Titles is concerned to see that the persons in whose name a Title is held are identified."

The initial legal blunder buried the title and tenancy issue in the files of the government until practical difficulties in the development of Kioa Island forced its emergence in the 1950s, long after the Vaitupu family heads who had contributed to the purchase fund, or their successors, had formed a "Council of Kioa Shareholders" (*fono a matai o Kioa*). On May 5, 1956, the D.O. Taveuni, whose district included Kioa, sent a confidential memorandum to the Colonial Secre-

tary (CS 9/24/1, p. 4) concerning internal problems of the Kioa community in which he observed, "It is not fully clear to me if the settlers of Kioa have a free hand to develop the island or if there are restrictions from Vaitupu. . . . On one occasion I have received a telegram from Vaitupu advocating certain things, concerning points of disagreement amongst the Kioan settlers. I have ignored this as it was not of importance, but I should like to be advised to what extent, if any, the Council of Vaitupu would be entitled to dictate policy at Kioa."

That the *matai* in Vaitupu did not think that their Kioa colonists had a free hand to develop the island is evident from the memorandum from the D.O. Ellice Islands District to the Secretary to Government, Tarawa (GEIC 27/1/1, p. 17; 12/10/1953). "I have received the following telegram from the magistrate at Vaitupu: '7th December (1953). I advise you that we have heard a rumour that Kioa is to be subdivided by the Fiji Government among those people who are resident at Kioa on 28th December '53. We beg you to place our complaint before the Fiji Government. Vaitupu (the people) does not agree that Kioa be divided because Kioa was bought by one hundred and five householders the majority of whom are at Vaitupu and only a few resident at Kioa. We do not consent to Kioa being divided at present.' "

Nor did the D.O. Ellice Islands think that the Fiji Government had a right to ignore the wishes of the Vaitupuan, for he went on to say: "From this I understand, if the rumour is correct, that the Fiji Government wishes to identify Kioa, or rather each part of it, with some particular person who, therefore, might be considered as a 'landowner'. It is possible that the alleged failure of the residents of Kioa properly to develop the plantations there may well be the cause of this suspected attempt by the Fiji Government to compel them to strive for agricultural independence. While the the island of Kioa is part of the Colony of Fiji. [sic] And the administration of Kioa is no concern of this Colony, a fact which the Vaitupuan have never properly understood, I feel that the 'community ownership' of Kioa may have been overlooked and I suggest, with respect, that the Fiji Government be reminded of this."

But the suspected action by the Fiji Government was not the only reason why the *matai* in Vaitupu were concerned with the happenings on Kioa. Indeed, by that time, factional dissension on the island had become both the cause and the consequence of their rightful interference in the affairs of the community.

The D.O. Taveuni appears to have grasped the complexity of the problem when he noted in a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary (CS 9/24/1, p. 9; 11/07/57): "In general hard and consistent effort in agricultural pursuits is not attractive to these people though they are adopting [sic] themselves slowly to it. . . . The chief hindrance [sic] to development on Kioa are: (a) The Islanders' natural preference for leisure rather than activity [and] (b) The absence of any active or acceptable leaders within the community." The D.O. went on to observe that "it would be optimistic to expect greater development in the metamorphosis from a fishing and nut-collecting life at Vaitupu to a truly agricultural existence on Kioa . . .", an opinion that he perceptively amended in a subsequent memorandum (CS 9/24/1, p. 17; 01/22/1958) by noting that "many of the people settled on Kioa are not shareholders and they feel that any clearing, planting and development work they do will not be of benefit to themselves and their families. This situation obviously discourages incentives and development."

The uncertainty of the Kioa settlers concerning their future on the island was temporarily mitigated by the results of a visit to Vaitupu in June 1958, by a deputation of several men and Foua Tofinga. The *matai* agreed to (1) grant the settlers £4,000 over the next three years for development work (the transfer of £3,000 being contingent on the results achieved from the investment of the first £1,000), (2) appoint Nika Taitai, the schoolmaster, as their resident agent, (3) seek the transfer of title to the name of the *matai* at Vaitupu, (4) elect an executive committee from among the *matai* to act as a board of directors, and most importantly, (5) lease blocks of at least five acres each to all able-bodied male adults living on Kioa.

How much money the *matai* before and after this agreement actually transferred to Kioa is difficult to establish. In any case, the informality of the lease agreement itself did little to improve the situation on Kioa. Although the men who had already started cultivation of their "own" garden areas continued their planting and others began working on their "family blocks," the Kioa community council did not make a formal allotment before December 1960 (CS 9/24/1, p. 95). But the yet unsolved problem of security of tenure continued to be the main hindrance to long-range development work.

In 1961, the D.O. for the Cakaudrove District, to which Kioa belongs, advised the Colonial Secretary (LD 43/3/1, p. 30; 04/01/1961) that the Ellice Islands settlers on Kioa "are particularly concerned with the matter of succession and wish to ensure that their land and crops will pass to their children on their death. A number

of individuals also wish to move out of the village and erect houses on their own land, but only if they can be assured of reasonable tenure." The D.O.'s letter further suggested in reference to an opinion of the Attorney General that the title of Kioa Island be transferred to the Commissioner Northern Division, "as the best of a number of bad alternatives," so that the settlers could lease individually registered landholdings and pay rent to the *matai*.

The Director of Lands (LD 43/3/1, p. 31; 04/07/1961) rejected this proposal and recommended instead the formation of a cooperative society with rights to grant leases to individual settlers. According to a memorandum from the D.O. to the Commissioner Northern Division (LD 43/3/1, p. 31; 05/20/1961) the Kioa people rejected this solution on the grounds that the *matai* "would certainly not allow the title to be held by such a Society . . . and would be most reluctant to dispose of their share in Kioa Island as with the share they would also dispose of their right to take up residence on the island."

The government's willingness to assist the Kioa settlers ran up against a host of difficulties all of which can all be traced back to its original mistake in registering the title in the name "the people of Vaitupu." Legal, administrative, and financial problems relating to the survey and subdivision of the island, assessment and collection of rent, the formation of a landholding cooperative society, the legal status of the council of *matai* in Vaitupu, and the tricky problem of further immigration added voluminous interdepartmental correspondence, including the learned opinions by the Attorney General quoting from handbooks on trusteeship and equity law, to the Kioa files held by various branches of the Fiji Government.

The bureaucratic tangle was further complicated by the dual land tenure system operating in the Ellice Islands (see Brady, 1970, ch. IV and Kennedy 1953), which distinguishes joint-family estates from individual holdings. Successive colonial lands commissions required nearly 40 years, from 1918 to 1954, to create a workable tenure code that all but eradicated endemic conflicts over land, which were in part caused by the abolition of the indigenous religious system and whose settlement far exceeded the capability of traditional governmental and legal processes. Kioa did not come under either form of tenure. It presented an altogether novel problem.

The Commissioner Northern correctly guessed the novelty of the Kioa venture when he informed the Registrar of Cooperative Societies (LD 43/3/1, p. 50, 09/09/1962) that "[i]t appears that the

island of Vaitupu [read: Kioa] is held in Trust by His Excellency for 'the people of Vaitupu.' Money for the purchase of Kioa was collected from a great many people of Vaitupu and I understand that there are some 107 names recorded on lists of persons who contributed to the Fund. These people have never at any time had any corporate entity, although there is a Committee on Vaitupu headed by the Island Magistrate . . . but the Committee has no official connection with the Island Council of Vaitupu. Ellice land custom is in some respects similar to the 'Matai' system of Samoa, although following the Lands Commission in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and the adoption of Lands Codes by the islands in the Ellice Islands District, this system has been modified in the direction of individual ownership. . . . Thus, although in the former custom, ownership of Kioa could be said to be vested in the 'Matai' or Heads of Families on Vaitupu, such a body has no legal existence under the present law in force in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. Presuming that the consent of 'the people of Vaitupu' will have to be obtained to the proposed Cooperative Society, it becomes necessary to discover who is in a position to give this consent. . . ."

The conflicting ideas held by the *matai* in Vaitupu and by their settlers about the purpose and implementation of the development of Kioa are summarized in a report by Mafalu Sakaio, a Vaitupuan civil servant with the Cooperative Societies Department, and later, one of the Managing Trustees of Kioa, to the Registrar of his Department (RCS 10.49, p. 131; 09/04/1968): "From [the beginning of settlement] to 1957, the island was collectively developed under a pure communal system like the Kibbutz of Israel. This system was later experienced to be unfavourable to the people and also unsuccessful. . . . It is thought that the main failure of communal system was the inadequate financial support from Matai.

"The plan of the Matai at the initial stage of development on Kioa was to develop the island together and the Matai would give all financial support for food, clothing, schools fees for children, maneapa (hall), and other facilities such as school, dispensary etc. Each one [of the settlers] was prohibited to undertake any individual holding on Kioa even a garden to plant individual food crop was not allowed. The only garden that the people would have was the community garden where food had to be obtained and ration [sic] to each family. Since every one has to follow this plan, there was little chance for each family to improve the education of their children, and more over there was no incentive to improve communal development since there was no help from Vaitupu. Under these

circumstances the Kioa people faught [sic] their way to obtain individual lease in which they had realised that communal works would not at all help in any case to improve communal development, and each family and their children."

Delays in communication and misunderstandings between the governments of the G.E.I.C. and Fiji, respectively, added to the complications and resulted in occasional acerbic notes to internal memoranda on both sides, such as: "It is high time that the Colonial Secretary realised that this administration is not concerned with or interested in what happens at Kioa" (GEIC 27/1/1, p. 128; 11/04/1959); and: "Action to 'iron out' was commenced on a number of occasions but never completed as it became too difficult for the great brains in the G&E Secretariat to cope with! . . . At least the powers that be at Tarawa are now forewarned in case the powers that be here [Fiji] are ever jockeyed and pushed into doing something" (RCS 10.49, p. 27).

Among the many thorny issues that still needed "ironing out" was that of more Vaitupu immigrants to Kioa.

The first group of 35 settlers came to Kioa in October 1947, the second group of 50 settlers in March 1948. Three years later, in March 1951, 30 more settlers arrived followed by another 10 in September 1951. After 43 new arrivals in 1954, 33 in 1956, and another 6 in 1959, the open-admission policy of the Fiji Government for Vaitupians ended. Neli and his family of 9, who came to Kioa in September 1962, were the first settlers to enter the Colony with regular permits. They were also the last Vaitupians allowed to immigrate.

Although by 1962 over 40 of the settlers had returned to Vaitupu, the government was cautioned not to permit further immigration to Kioa Island. The birth rate on Kioa was high—about 100 children had been born since 1947—and a soil survey designated only one-fourth of the land as suitable for cultivation (LDA Paper 140/65).

The *matai*, however, continued to insist that not all of their families had sent a member to Kioa, a fact which militated against their approval of any permanent subdivision of the land. The original wording of the pertinent passage cited above (LD 43/3/1, p. 3) left an important question open: whether the settlers who had later returned to Vaitupu were to be counted as "immigrants." When in 1964 the *matai* demanded a clarification of this matter, the government discovered (a) that the time limit had not been adhered to and (b) that although the quota of 250 persons had not been reached, no definite regulation existed covering the right of re-entry of the returnees. At that time, however, the Kioa people had themselves indicated that they did not wish more settlers from Vaitupu. Prodded by the

Government of Fiji, the Resident Commissioner of the G.E.I.C. succeeded, in 1965, in obtaining a provisional agreement from the *matai* to halt further emigration to Kioa (CS 34/6, p. 175).

Three years earlier, in 1962, the news of the chaotic situation on Kioa had reached the general public through an anonymous letter published by the *Fiji Times* on February 5, 1963. It was signed "Commercial Anthropologist" and complained about the government's indulgence with the Kioa people in allegedly giving free medical services and assessing them the lowest school fees in the Colony. "Although Kioa is an extremely fertile island of 4,000 acres densely wooded with commercially valuable timber and never in these 17 years [after settlement] has there been any lack of manpower among the settlers, today they are hardly any better off than when they first came to Fiji, producing very little copra or cocoa. . . .

"The men of Kioa, because their forebears developed under a matriarchal system and just do not care to pull their weight and justify their existence under a different system, are coddled by our government and handed out money produced by hard-working residents of Fiji, even by the indigenous race through indirect taxation.

"To students of anthropology the situation at Kioa is possibly interesting. This modern evidence of an archaic social order, or rather the psychological result, could be of academic value but it has no place in our struggling existence in Fiji.

"However, our benign though bankrupt government apparently wishes to preserve the anthropological antiquity at the expense of the taxpayers of Fiji."

This letter was written at a time when an anthropologist was indeed living on Kioa (White, 1965). Tofinga and Mafalu, the two Vaitupuans employed by the Fiji Government, corrected the anonymous writer's absurd anthropological fantasies and discounted all allegations in their letter to the *Fiji Times* (02/11/1963) and asserted that "[t]he Kioan community under [Neli's] leadership have [sic] recently completed an order for over 4,000 super feet of timber, the proceeds of which, after payment of wages, will be used by the community for development."

But the unresolved issue of title and tenure continued to impede Neli's programs, although he never became quite aware of the extent to which failures in the European bureaucracy influenced the fate of the Kioa venture.

In October 1963 the (Acting) Governor of Fiji finally involved His Excellency's office in the tangle. He transmitted to the Resident Commissioner of the G.E.I.C. the revised text of a long letter drafted

in August by the Colonial Secretary, after the draft had been revised and amended by the heads of other departments of the Fiji Government concerned with what had become of the Kioa affair. The letter outlined a scheme (CS 9/24/2, p. 229) entailing the following steps: (1) identification of the "owners" of Kioa, (2) rectification of and amendment of the title providing for the Public Trustee of Fiji to hold the island as the Custodian Trustee for the registered owners and appointment of two persons resident in Fiji as Managing Trustees, and (3) grant of tenure to individual settlers by a lease agreement under Fijian law.

It took another 10 years of voluminous, at times acrimonious, correspondence between the different government departments before legal snags, administrative deadlocks, and jurisdictional haggling, could be overcome and this scheme implemented.

Meanwhile, the chaos on Kioa continued in spite of and to some degree because of Neli's efforts "to get Kioa 'going' on his own bat," as the D.O., Mr. Hughes, noted. Mafalu, for example, in his role as an inspector of the Cooperative Societies Department, observed in his report of January 4, 1964, to the Registrar of this Department (CS 9/24/2, p. 288): "The Chairman of the Island Council [Neli] seems to run things on the Island on his own authority without consulting the members of the Council."

This was probably true, but Mr. Hughes, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary (CS 9/24/2, p. 295; 02/07/1964) saw fit to explain that "Neli has been very instrumental at the Kioa level, in making possible the satisfactory settlement of the title and trust deed and has also been intimately involved with Government in the formation of the island's development policy, and its execution up to this stage. Indeed, without him, so much might not have been possible."

Yet, even Mr. Hughes, whose unfailing commitment to the welfare of the Kioa people was largely responsible for the actions the Government of Fiji finally did take, had reason to despair. In a letter written almost two years after this communication, he divulged to the Commissioner Northern Division (CS 9/24/2, p. 366; 11/08/1965) that "I must admit that, as my three year sojourn in this district draws to an end, it is rather depressing that the problem relating to the title to Kioa, despite the energy and writing expended on the subject, is not significantly nearer to a solution than when I first arrived."

In fact, the problems that Mr. Hughes had sought to help solve were inherited by his successor. Even though the process of clearing the title issue in accordance with the Governor's proposal kept mov-

ing ahead with bureaucratic tardiness, the people of Kioa and Vaitupu still did not understand their situation. The new D.O. Cakaudrove, explained the issue in a letter to the Commissioner Northern Division (CS 9/24/3, p. 422; 01/19/1967): "There is a considerable and understandable vagueness in the minds of many Kioans as to their status in Fiji. Many still retain deep feelings of attachment to their home in the Ellice Islands, and deep loyalties to their chiefs there. Because of this, some of them are often very reluctant to support any new activity or project on the island because it may offend these distant chiefs, of whose thoughts and wishes they are only sporadically informed. Others, typified by the go-ahead Neli Lifuka regard themselves as pioneering colonists who, having taken their chance, have largely severed their links with the homeland and wish to be left to work out their future in the development of the island and in ever closer identification with the Colony of Fiji. . . .

"I have gained the impression that the 'matai' in Vaitupu regard Kioa as a kind of Promised Land, an ample and fertile island which will be a retreat when land pressure becomes intolerable in the homeland, and the present inhabitants of Kioa are merely there as caretakers."

Whatever caretaker role the *matai* in Vaitupu had envisioned for the Kioa settlers, they were gradually weaned of this idea as they began to realize that they could do nothing to prevent the government-designed subdivision of the island into individual family blocks. Their big problem was to find out who among the Vaitupu and Kioa people was a rightful "shareholder." The number of *matai* mentioned in the files increased over the years. The list even included the Ellice Island Nanumanga for a brief period, until the G.E.I.C. Government ordered the cancellation of this "deal," by which the Nanumangans had bought themselves into the Kioa venture with £500 (GEIC 27/1/1, p. 121; 09/24/1959).

The dual tenure system of Vaitupu frustrated the District Commissioner for the Ellice Islands and the Magistrate of Vaitupu in their attempt, begun in early 1964, to obtain a definite list of *matai*. Uncertainties about a deceased *matai*'s successor and about the "representatives" of the *matai* who were absent from Vaitupu, including those in Kioa, delayed the production of the final list of 110 persons until January 1966. At last, on May 18, 1967, the *matai* or their authorized representatives signed the "Resolution Regarding Kioa Island," that approved the transfer of the title to Kioa to the Public Trustee as their Custodian Trustee and the appointment of Foua Tofinga and Mafalu Sakaio as Managing Trustees (RCS 10.49, p. 109).

When the Deed was executed in July 1968 (RCS 10.49, p. 123) it relieved the Fiji Government of the white elephant the Kioa question had become over two decades. The Kioa people, however, were still waiting for the papers granting them tenancy. They had to wait for another five and a half years! It took a year and a half for the Public Trustee to initiate the necessary action, involving, *i.a.*, a small amendment to the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Ordinance (LD 43/3/1, p. 61).

Finally, in December 1972, Tofinga handed out to the Kioa farmers their copy of the Instrument of Tenancy—along with a certificate of Fiji citizenship.

The inexplicable delays bothered the Kioa people to the point of despair. But how could they imagine the legal pitfalls, bureaucratic encumbrances and political implications in the transfer of title, if even the signature of so august a person as the Governor of Fiji had to be verified when he formally applied for a correction of the certificate of title (RCS 10.49, p. 120): “The signature ‘F.D. Jakeway’ was made in my presence and I verily believe that such signature is of the proper handwriting of the person described as HIS EXCELLENCY SIR FRANCIS DEREK JAKEWAY Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire of Suva in the Colony of Fiji THE GOVERNOR OF FIJI for the time being the Applicant and I certify that the contents hereof were read over and explained to him in the English language and he appeared fully to understand the meaning and effect thereof” [signed: Solicitor-General].

Thus came to an end the dramatic story of the title to Kioa, an island bought by entrepreneurial Vaitupuans and settled by their adventurous colonists. Unknown to the actors in the drama, irreconcilable ideologies concerning kinship obligations and land tenure existing between European law and native custom had sown the seeds of lasting distrust between the settlers and their patrons and amongst the settlers themselves. The failure of native Vaitupu customs to provide adequate support for the colonists exacerbated the dilemma.

NOTES

1. The German copra trade in the Ellice Islands is recorded in Morrell (1960). Neli's version of that pitiful phase in Vaitupu history, which occurred in the 1880s, accords with local oral tradition. Records indicate, however, that the Vaitupu people signed an agreement that allowed them to pay off their debts over several years. It also appears that rivalry between the resident agents of two German trading firms, Ruge & Co. and Weber & Co., both operating in the Ellice Islands from their headquarters in the then German Colony of (Western) Samoa, and the meddling of the Samoan pastors in their conflict, were responsible for the disaster (Roberts 1958). One Kioa resident, Gideon Nitz, who left Vaitupu in 1959, is the grandson of the agent for Weber & Co., which was not involved in the scandalous deal. Neli's version obviously confuses the original Nitz, who had married a Vaitupu woman, with his ruthless rival, a Mr. Williams.

2. Years later, Mr. Kennedy, whose more benign educational activities were to play no minor part in the development of the Ellice Islands, joined the Kioa colonists in an ill-fated attempt to assist them in their work. He also authored a monograph on the culture of Vaitupu (Kennedy 1931).

3. The London Missionary Society began proselytizing in Tuvalu in the 1860s and its Samoan pastors managed to implant Christianity and abolish native religious practices within two decades. They also established a secular dictatorship first in competition with and later with the support of local chiefs whose traditional base of power they had eroded. According to Maude "... the people eagerly embraced the new faith. The suddenness and extent of the change effected in the native life by the mission in the Ellice Islands, was, indeed, astonishing. The accessories of the old religion were grazed to the ground, European clothing introduced, old customs, games, amusements prohibited and abandoned, and almost at a stroke, the native society was changed to a theocracy with the Samoan pastor at the head and with a code of social conduct taken largely from the Bible as interpreted by him" (White 1965: 75).

4. The repercussions of this realization by the Banabans are described by Silverman (1971) in his aptly-titled study, *Disconcerting Issue*, which recounts the fate of the Banabans as one of the most blatant 20th-century examples of wholesale exploitation by colonial domination.

5. Tuvalu custom clearly distinguishes *pukenga* (adoption) from *tausinga* (fosterage). Each mode of affiliation has distinct legal implications regarding succession and inheritance (Grady 1970: ch. 5).

6. The situation in Vaitupu at the end of the war is vividly described in a memorandum from the District Officer Ellice Islands to the Secretary to Government in Tarawa. "During my . . . inspection of the village I had been disguised at much that I saw. The beach area was covered with night soil, much of it having been there for many weeks, the wells were dirty where a little repair work would have kept them clean, pigs were running throughout the village and Hospital

areas merely because the piggeries were not being kept in repair, rubbish was being dumped just outside each [house] and the flies and general lack of sanitation were a menace to the health of the community. Vaitupu is the worst village in the District and the sick rate far in excess of other islands." (GEIC 86/2/24, p. 4; 06/04/1945).

7. Neli's "clean-up" campaign had such lasting effect that the Office of the High Commission for the Western Pacific selected Vaitupu for a visit by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh during his 1959 Pacific tour.

8. Note Brady's (1970: 204) comment that "[i]deally the family of the groom is supposed to give more in quantity and variety than is received from the family of the bride. In actuality, however, the bride's family will try to reciprocate with as much, or more than, the groom's family can muster, thereby setting the stage for competition and a kind of subdued rivalry for the prestige that accrues to the most generous."

9. Neli's criticism of the church is shared by many educated Islanders. Isa Paeniu (1969: 65-67), an Ellice man from the island of Nukulaelae who worked for the GEIC Information Office, recorded this opinion: "The Samoan pastors, well trained to understand the Holy Book, did not hesitate to take advantage of . . . the people. . . . The pastor was regarded as 'sacred' and everything he did was supposed to be the will of God. . . . I can remember from my days . . . in the mission's village school . . . older pupils being kicked out of the classroom covered with blood. They had been caned for some mysterious deeds, which are regarded today as normal, and nobody, not even the parents, dared say a single word in protest!

"A pastor who had come from Samoa with twopence in his pocket, would in no time acquire tremendous wealth and live in luxury, far beyond that of big landowners. . . . While numerous hungry stomachs would go to sleep every night, fish and the best Islands dishes were left to rot in the pastor's food safe. . . . To donate to the pastor in cash, food and labour is more important than paying for the land tax which is used by the Island Council for island development in all fields. . . .

"In 1952, a pastor's revenue . . . would have been equal to an amount, if not more, to that received by the Resident Commissioner. [Although t]here have been many changes since 1952 . . . the church's administrative staff seems to be better qualified as politicians than as priests. . . . Today, two out of four of the House of Representatives elected members from the Ellice are pastors. . . ."

10. The regulation in question reads: "No native shall attend any meeting held to discuss or carry out an unlawful object or which, in the opinion of the Native Government is likely to endanger the public peace—Penalty for non-observance not exceeding 10s. or one month imprisonment" (Ellice Islands Regulations 1941, rev. 1947).

11. The pertinent law of the Ellice Islands Regulations (1941, rev. 1947) reads: "Any male native found within a dwelling house during the hours of dark-

ness, and having no claim of right to be in that particular dwelling house, any actual or implied invitation by an unmarried female normally residing in that house notwithstanding, is guilty of an offense.—Fine not exceeding 10/- or, at the discretion of the court, imprisonment for a term of not exceeding one month.”

12. The original purchase fund of the war-savings deposits of approximately 3,000 pounds had been enlarged by random donations from individuals, various clubs and committees, and by the sale of “shares” to the 99 *mataaniu* recognized at that time. The *mataaniu* were allowed to acquire a share each on behalf of their *puikaainga* in recognition of their contributions to the feast celebrating the return of the laborers after the war. Each *mataaniu* acquired his share by producing handicraft articles worth seven pounds which were sold to the Colonial Wholesale Society through the island’s cooperative store. In consequence of subsequent accessions to *mataaniu* status, succession disputes, and outright irregularities, the number of shareholders increased to 110 over the years.

13. The District Officer explained the circumstances of Neli’s suspension in his memorandum to the Secretary of Government in Tarawa: “My decision to suspend Neli was not an easy one. In many ways he has served Government and the people of his island well. He has however persisted in behaving in a very incorrect way in some matters over the past 15 months at least, until he had brought himself and his office into intolerable disrepute. You will recall that my Travelling Diary of 6th July, 1950, gave details of a vigorous demand of some of the Vaitupu Chiefs that he should go, then. On that occasion I flatly refused to accede to their demand on the grounds that I then scarcely knew Vaitupu or its magistrate. When leaving the island at the conclusion of that visit I warned Neli very clearly that if he gave fresh grounds for serious complaint I should probably not be able to resist a second time the wish of the people.

“On that former occasion one charge (out of several) was fully admitted as true by Neli: that he has been drinking Sour Toddy in the Court House with his Police. In an island which has no Sour Toddy licences that is, of course, quite contrary to law. The main charge voiced this time (admitted by Neli) was that he had been caught committing adultery in the Church. A second charge that he had been drinking Sour Toddy again was not proven. The six Chiefs who made the complaint this time made it quite clear that they do not consider Neli an example for the people which could be allowed to continue. My offer at one stage in a long investigation, to punish Neli by requiring him not to draw his salary for 3 months and to thus occasion loss to him of £6-15-0, and to give him a final warning, was not accepted by the Chiefs as any suitable substitute for dismissal.” (GEIC 86/2/24, p. 12; 04/25/1951).

However, subsequent communications between the Secretary, the District Officer, and the Resident Commissioner, who had to confirm the dismissal, indicate that Neli confuses the Resident Commissioner with the Secretary as his presumed protector. Even the protection is in some doubt because the delayed

confirmation was due to a technicality, though the D.O. may indeed have relayed sympathetic messages to his favorite magistrate. In any case, the Secretary minuted in his transmittal of the D.O.'s memorandum to the Resident Commissioner that "I do not see why the D.O. takes the advice of or deals with the chiefs instead of the Island Council who are the people's local representatives. He does not seem to have consulted them at all and while naturally he would listen to the chiefs I think that he should in all official matters like this, refer them to the Island Council who after all, have the power to suspend any other officers of the N[ative] G[overnment]. No doubt if he does so in this case the Island Council will be over-awed by the chiefs but I think principles should be held as far as possible and if he confirms that the Island Council was not consulted I suggest that he should do so on his next visit to Vaitupu . . ." (GEIC 86/2/24, p. 13; 05/04/1951).

The Resident Commissioner's handwritten reaction betrays considerable annoyance both with his stray magistrate and his D.O.: "N[ative] M[agistrate] Neli has evidently demonstrated his complete contempt for both church and state, and his dismissal is confirmed. On his own admission he turned the court into a flophouse and misused the church. . . . I agree with you that D.O. should in principle consult the Island Council and please so inform him, but in this case it was hardly necessary. The N.M. made it abundantly clear that he could no longer continue to occupy his responsible post on the island" (GEIC 86/2/24, p. 13; 05/06/1951).

But two days later the Resident Commissioner reversed his decision in this minute to the Secretary (*ibid.*): "We have spoken. Pl[ease] suspend above confirmation pending further information from D.O." (GEIC 86/2/24, p. 13; 05/08/1951). Consequently, further telegraphic exchanges were needed before the Resident Commissioner could confirm the dismissal of N.M. Neli on May 29, 1951.

14. In an interview with the author on July 10, 1969, the former manager of the Wholesale Society attributed Neli's success as a manager of the oil depot to his neverfailing concern for the personal welfare of his subordinate workers, for whom he acted as an advisor and mediator in personal and bureaucratic difficulties. He recounted a story told by the captain of the "Tungaru" how Neli had rushed about the ship in a bad storm—when a European administrator was found in prayer under a table—keeping upwards of 100 people calm with his singing and, in the midst of it, delivering the baby of a deck passenger.

15. Kaisami's lifelong hostility toward Kennedy derived from his resentment of the fact that Kennedy had had an affair with the girl who later became Kaisami's wife.

16. Kennedy's originally welcome interference in the affairs of the Kioa community had indeed lasting repercussions. However, the reasons for the political breakdown of community owing to Kennedy's presence on the island are unclear. At the time of the author's research two conflicting local histories had developed, whose initial formalization had already been observed by the anthropologist living on Kioa in 1962-63 (White 1965: 12-15). The majority attrib-

utes the fiasco entirely to Kennedy's self-interest (of which there can be no doubt), the minority believes that the trouble resulted from the people's constant breaches of community work agreements that they had voluntarily and, initially, enthusiastically made. Today, one visible result of Kennedy's plan is a small plantation named Tulipapalangi, "the expulsion of the European."

A letter written to Mafalu by three old men eloquently describes how bad the situation had become (CS 34/6, p. 7; 04/26/1952; translated from the Tuvalu language by Mafalu): "I suggest it is clear to you the course [cause] of this trouble, to divide the people into two sections and two councils. The course [cause] was the other party wanted to form a new government like Russian government, you have known very well those who call themselves communist that use to have secret meetings in cook houses. These meetings all occur to being wanting to be boss on the island and wanting to have jobs in the island." The letter goes on to accuse certain people of the "Russian council" of insubordination, theft, and embezzlement of community funds, and requests government intervention to stop the fighting by creating a Vaitupu-style native government, since "[n]o one at Kioa or Vaitupu could manage to put things properly again," and by enacting regulations "for the law to lead these bad people to civilization as they do not know what they are doing now."

The District Officer's attempt to restore order appeared to succeed with a peace agreement reached between the two factions in May 1952 during one of his visits (CS 34/6, p. 14). But the "peace" was merely an uneasy truce maintained by the exodus of the minority opposition. In November 1955, the former headman, Nika Taitai, reported in a letter to the Colonial Secretary (CS 34/6, p. 25) that most members of the pro-Kennedy faction had gone to live with Kennedy on his new estate, a small island near Kadavu, or elsewhere in Fiji and had made persistent efforts to bring him back to Kioa, a prospect as much abhorred by the vast majority of the people as it was rejected in a telegram from the "Chiefs and Old Men of Vaitupu" (CS 34/6, p. 34).

The role of Kennedy in the internal affairs of the Kioa community became the subject of a series of letters and confidential memoranda between the Office of the Colonial Secretary and the District Administration, some of which dealt with the request of the Chiefs and Old Men of Vaitupu to deport the supporters of Kennedy back to Vaitupu.

17. Although a lot remained to be done for the development of Kioa, the arrival of Neli laid the foundation for the gradual disentanglement of the legal and economic problems that had paralyzed the efforts of both the Fiji Government and the Kioa people to exploit the agricultural resources of the island. His future role in this process was soon recognized by the District Officer for the Cakaudrove District to which Kioa belongs. In a letter to the Commissioner Northern Division the District Officer wrote: "A new factor has now arrived on the scene in the form of Neli Lifuka. A recent arrival from Vaitupu where he was a Magistrate he is a strong character and with determined ideas about developing Kioa. . . . [I]t is quite possible that he has sufficient drive and initiative to get Kioa 'going' on his own bat." But the District Officer was also insightful

enough to "forecast a clash between the less energetic members of the society and Neli acting through the authority, such as it is, of the Island Council" (CS 9/24-1, p. 171; 01/14/1962).

18. Before this fundraising tour the Rabi and Kioa people had already exchanged similar visits as a means to collect money for particular construction projects (White 1965: 116-117).

19. In addition to political roadblocks the extreme lack of funds greatly hampered the development. According to an economic survey made by the Cooperative Societies Department in August 1968 (RCS 10.49, p. 130), Kioa had then 310 residents, half of whom were under 17 years of age. The total annual income from salaries, wages, and the sale of fish and handicrafts of the 54 registered blockholders was 2,744 pounds, representing an average yearly income per family of eight pounds seventeen plus slightly more than one pound in profits from the marketing of crops, mainly copra.

20. With the subsequent formal registration of leases the block numbers were changed.

21. In his enthusiasm for a seemingly practical solution Neli apparently overlooked the difficulties entailed in the dual land tenure system of Vaitupu and the absence of members of many *mataaniu* groups among the settlers. Still, records show that the idea of some exchange of resources had been brought up much earlier. Communications between the Commissioner and the District Officer Ellice Islands in April and May 1958 document that the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony attempted to persuade the Vaitupu *matai* to sell Kioa to "proper settlers," free to divide the island into individual family holdings.

22. The District Officer, Mr. Hughes, recorded the events of the meetings in his minutes to his superior, the Commissioner Northern Division (CS 9/24-2, p. 272). The minutes essentially confirm Neli's account but include the following observations: "In general, there seems to have been a feeling amongst shareholders at Vaitupu, that a movement is underway to exclude them from all interests in Kioa. They seem to have been unaware of the 'title-problem' or of the situation regarding the trust."

In the course of several meetings both on Kioa and in government offices in Suva the District Officer and other officers of the Fiji Government involved in the case managed to obtain an agreement of the delegates regarding the main point of the Governor's proposal and their consent to a subdivision of the island into units of 15 acres, but they could not find any understanding of Fiji's immigration policy.

23. Mafalu reported Lisati's election as his "appointment" in a letter to the head of his department, the Registrar of Cooperative Societies: "In order to have some one on Kioa to carry out plans approved by me and the Vaitupu people, I appointed my assistant by the name of Lisati Laupaana. . . . Lisati has

a fair experience on bookkeeping and I hope he will be able to keep the community finance properly and honestly," a hope in which he was later to be greatly disappointed (RCS 10.49, p. 77; 09/01/1964).

24. The lasting antagonism between Kaisami, Lisati, and Neli is, structurally speaking, a "family affair," because they are related by complementary consanguineal and adoptive links in a network that also includes Tofinga.

25. Neli's appointment did not, of course, meet the unanimous approval of the Kioa community. In a letter to Mafalu, Mr. Hughes complained that he was disturbed to find that Neli's appointment as sector officer had been met with opposition from some quarters, notably those led by Lisati, who "must be made to realise that his job is to unite the people, not to cause dissension and ill-feelings by encouraging rumours and criticisms of Neli and others on the island whom he regards as his opponents" (RCS 10.49, p. 80; 12/03/1964).

26. Kaisami resorted indeed to peculiar tactics. He entreated his former employer, a European in Taveuni, to write a letter to the Colonial Secretary, no less. The letter states that "Kaisami, the hereditary leader of the Kioa people . . . who, in view of . . . the fact that the District Officer is trying to upset the ownership rights of the purchasers of Kioa with the active assistance of Neli Lifuka, is most anxious that the whole legal position is made clear to him and the other owners that they may be able with some chance of success to fight for their rights" (CS 9/24-2; p. 338; 01/22/1965).

27. A simple form on which the block holders certified their acceptance of the subdivision.

28. Lisati's tactics were soon recognized by the government officers who tried to get the Kioa people to work on developing their blocks. In a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary, the Commissioner Northern Division noted, "A meeting held with the people during a visit to the island in May by the Assistant Colonial Secretary, in company with the District Officer Savusavu and myself, did clear up some misunderstandings but Lisati is prone to bend with whatever wind is blowing the strongest and I am not sanguine as to the prospects of his subsequent actions measuring up to his assurances" (CS 9/24-2, p. 362; 06/07/1965).

However, the C.N.D. also suspects that some other plans and collusions might be involved, when he mentions that "Mafalu appears to have promoted the idea among some of the residents that he proposes to run the island as an estate, under company management, with himself and Lisate [sic] as the Manager and Assistant Manager respectively. This would be most unsatisfactory and certainly not acceptable to the vast majority of the present residents."

29. Tofinga had actually drafted a revised certificate containing a clause that emphasized the ascription of sole ownership of Kioa to the *matai*.

30. Neli must have expressed his view on the pastor with considerable impact, because in a letter to the Principal Immigration Officer the D.O. recom-

mended that the application be denied for the following reasons: "(a) the island of Kioa is undeveloped and poor, and therefore cannot afford to support an unproductive family; (b) there is an intensive development programme underway, which would be interfered with by an increased activity of the church; (c) it is the Ellice custom to treat their Pastor like a Bugandan princess—i.e., he has every attention lavished upon him by his flock, regardless of expense; and in return, is expected to contribute no more to society than a few pious utterances and oracular pronouncements. His arrival, at the present time, would therefore be both economically and psychologically undesirable" (CS 34/6, p. 107; 06/30/1964).

According to census data for 1960-63, Tuvalu ranked highest in population density among the Polynesian islands (Newton 1967: 203); but Brady (1970: 151) computed the lowest score of "land hunger" among all islands belonging to the Tuvalu Group for Vaitupu.

31. While even several years after the appearance of Mr. Andersen, the Public Trustee, in Kioa, the people had no comprehension of the whole title and lease business, Mr. Andersen maintained in an interview with the author on July 21, 1969, that he had succeeded in explicating to the Kioa community the "fundamentals of the legally recognized system of land tenure in Fiji, which being based on the Australian Torrens system is the simplest in the world," that the people "fully understood the nature of the instrument to be executed as emanating from the ordinances applicable to their case and agreed to my intentions as set forth in my explanations," and that "frequent communications with Vaitupu have ensured that all interested parties are in full agreement about their respective rights and obligations."

The *matai* in Vaitupu were probably not aware of the powers they had signed over to their Custodian Trustee, nor was the anthropologist whom Mr. Andersen reprimanded for having visited Kioa prior to the interview without his permission. When, the following year, he inquired by letter which procedure he might use to avoid committing an act of negligent trespass and to obtain permission to return to Kioa from the Public Trustee, who held "the island in trust for and on behalf of the registered owners of the island," he received the following reply from Mr. Andersen: ". . . it is apparent that you are under a misapprehension as to who is the registered proprietor of the island of Kioa. The Public Trustee is entered in the Register Book in the Office of Titles as the registered proprietor, and by virtue of a Deed of Trust executed simultaneously with the Instrument of Transfer the Public Trustee declares that he holds the land upon trust for certain persons in Vaitupu. You may seek permission to visit the island in two ways firstly by writing direct [sic] to those persons on Vaitupu for whom or on whose behalf I hold the land or secondly writing to myself or the two managing trustees. If you write to me I consult the managing trustees and are [sic] guided by their decision. I have discussed the contents of your letter and my reply with one of the managing trustees who agrees that the procedure I have outlined is correct."

32. Neli's son-in-law is the author of an article on the demography of Tuvalu (Newton 1967).

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The Lifuka/Koch book can, in fact, be read with profit and delight by all interested in the Pacific islander of today, for in it we are told more about island life in a time of social and political transition than we can gain from a dozen textbooks. It is a welcome and opportune breakthrough in our regional literature, providing us with the first life history of a Polynesian villager, who has remained closely connected with village life. It will be welcomed by anthropologists, psychologists, and historians alike. Furthermore, Dr. Koch has prepared a case study of the legal difficulties and delays involved in the transfer of the title to Kioa Island which will be of value to all concerned with the reconciliation of customary tenure and European-based law, a matter that is still causing misunderstanding and controversy in some Pacific states and territories.

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