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**Business Va'avanua:
Cultural Hybridisation and Indigenous
Entrepreneurship in the Boumā National
Heritage Park, Fiji**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

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in
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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways community-based ecotourism development in the Boumā National Heritage Park was negotiated at the nexus of Western entrepreneurship and the *vanua*, an indigenous epistemology.

In 1990, the Boumā tribe of Taveuni, Fiji established the Boumā National Heritage Park. A growing dependence on the market economy and a desire to find an economic alternative to commercial logging on their communally-tenured land, led to their decision to approach the New Zealand government for assistance to establish the Park. The four villages involved have since developed their own community-based ecotourism enterprises. Despite receiving first place in a British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award category in 2002, there was a growing sense of social dysfunction in Boumā during the research period. According to my participants, this was partly due to the community-based ecotourism development process which had paid little attention to the *vanua*. Largely through *talanoa* as discussion, the people of Boumā have become increasingly conscious of references to the *vanua* values in their own evaluation and management of the projects.

This thesis draws on Tim Ingold's (2000) 'taskscape' as, like the *vanua*, they relationally link humans with other elements of the environment within their landscape. This contrasts with a common Western epistemological approach of treating humans as independent of other cosmological and physical elements and as positioned against the landscape. Largely due to its communal nature, it may be argued that the *vanua* is incompatible with values associated with Boumā's Western, capitalist-based ecotourism models. However, in this thesis I argue that despite numerous obstacles, the Boumā National Heritage Park is one example of a tribe's endeavours to culturally hybridise the *vanua* with entrepreneurship to create a locally meaningful form of indigenous entrepreneurship for the wellbeing of its people. The Boumā people call this hybrid 'business *va'avanua*'. Informal *talanoa* is presented in this thesis as a potential tool for political agency in negotiating issues surrounding community-based ecotourism and business *va'avanua*.

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