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A CASE STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF

TOVULAILAI: A VILLAGE IN FIJI

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by

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"..... I determined to experience and
to go that it might be told that I
made the voyage and saw with my eyes the
things hereafter written, and that I
might win a famous name"

Ferdinand Magellan (1520)

This piece of work is dedicated to my only brother, Panapasa, who died of witchcraft at the prime age of 40, only eight months after my field study.

ABSTRACT

The 'Rural Development' programme in Fiji began about 1969, the eve of our independence, with the principal aim to raise the standard of living in the rural areas, in particular those who live in the villages. Consideration was given to involve the rural people closely and meaningfully with the planning, decision making and implementation of the programme. To date, because the need for development in rural areas is so great and due to the severe lack of skilled manpower, Fiji cannot do everything she requires especially in the areas of feasibility studies and research. This is why most of the works done in this areas were done mainly by expatriates who were in many instances, total strangers to the local scene and who may not have fully understood or appreciated the complex nature and the interwoven intricacies of the Fijian way of life. Compounding this problem is the lack of Fijian scholars who are interested in the areas of social research.

The basic aim of this present study is to examine the development of the village people and also to stimulate Fijian scholars to become interested in studying the development of their own people, especially of those who are in the disadvantaged rural sector.

This paper presents a case study of the socio-economic development of Tovulailai: a village in rural Fiji. The present study is an attempt to observe and explain the influences of the multiple outside forces, in particular those exerted by change agents and how these village people have responded and adapted to these social forces which are impinging upon them.

The needs which the people of Tovulailai felt and expressed were fully identified together with the various problems why these needs were not being fulfilled. People in this village needed to raise their general standard of living; improve their level of education; their health and general sanitation; to facilitate their access to urban markets; need to increase their sources of income; the need for adequate housing; the need for transportation and communication and

other infrastructural facilities. But, they cannot easily satisfy these needs because of the problems inherent in the present system. These problems are: the lack of good leadership; lack of education lack of good cultivable land; lack of access to urban markets; lack of good housing; lack of technical skills; lack of goods and services; lack of scientific agricultural techniques and low level of technology in the rural villages.

The non-structured intensive interview and observation research methods were used by this study in its attempt to examine and explain how the people of Tovulailai village are responding to the impact of social change agents in their attempt to meeting their pressing needs as expressed above. Furthermore, an attempt is made to determine how change agents themselves achieved results and how the mechanism of change within the client system functioned in diffusing and communicating the process of social change and how clients attain their goals in passing from one social state to another. All these processes are fully discussed in the text.

The implications of the study which can be used in other situations in Fiji are discussed in the concluding section of this paper. It is apparent that the central issue which emerged in the study is the very effective interaction between the change agents, the client system and the mechanism of diffusion of social change within the system to achieve the desired objectives in socio-economic development at the village level.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Theoretical Approach	3
	Initial Plans	8
	Research Methods and Techniques	9
	Organization of Field Work for Pilot Study	11
	Major Areas Covered in the Master Questionnaire	12
	Value of the Study	13
	Format of this Paper	14
	Conclusions	16
II	THE FIJIAN CONTEXT—SETTING THE SCENE	18
	Geographical Location	18
	Physical Structure and Relief	19
	Climate	19
	Population Composition and Structure	20
	Fijians in the Cultural Context	22
	National Economy, Employment and Income	29
	International Trade	31
	Foreign Aid	32
	Commercial Agriculture in Relation to Economic Development:	
	i. Sugar	33
	ii. Copra	33
	iii. Bananas	34
	iv. Rice	34
	Other Crops	35
	Livestock Farming in Fiji	35
	i. Beef Cattle	35
	ii. Dairy Cattle	36
	iii. Pigs and Goats	36
	iv. Poultry	36
	Manufacturing	37
	Conclusions	37

Chapter		Page
III	TOVULAILAI: A VILLAGE IN FIJI	
	A Brief History of Tovulailai and its People	38
	Village Organization	42
	Cash Economy of Tovulailai	44
	Man/Land Ratio	49
	Manpower and Supporter/Dependent Relationships	50
	Agriculture	58
	The Influence of Agricultural Extension Officers	60
	Further Reasons for Low Agricultural Production	61
	Educational Development	63
	The Role of the Church	64
	The Chief	66
	The Role of Ceremony in the Village Way of Life	67
	In Summary and Conclusions	69
IV	THE ROLE OF CHANGE AGENTS	
	William Baker's Entry into Tovulailai Development	71
	Village Development Phase One:	
	The Baker Housing Scheme and How He Achieved Results	73
	Goal Attainment	78
	Phoenix Effects of the Baker's Scheme	78
	The New Concrete Housing Scheme 1975	80
	Summary	81

Chapter	Page
Village Development Phase Two:	
The Co-operative and its Benefits	84
Tabusoro Co-operative Society:	
Mainspring of Phase Two Village Development	85
i. The 'Adi Talei'	85
ii. The Municipal Market Stalls	89
Secondary School Hostel at Levuka	91
The Development of Tovulailai as a Service Centre	95
Financial Position of the Tabusoro Co-operative	98
Summary	104
Conclusions	114
V LEADERSHIP AS A MECHANISM OF SOCIAL CHANGE	116
Dual Leadership	118
The Dominance of Ilaitia Radravu in the Mechanism of Social Change at Tovulailai	126
The Modernized Village Organization Promoting the Efficacy of the Mechanism of Change	140
Conclusions	151
VI REVIEW AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS	154
The Nature and Situation in Tovulailai Before Change	155
Main Factors Which Changed the Situation in the Village	156
Factors Which Facilitated the Development in Tovulailai	159
New Socio Economic Level Which Results from Development	165
Generalization for Theory	167
What Can be Learned from the Study of Tovulailai Which can be Applied in Other Situations in Fiji	168
Conclusions	172

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND APPENDIXES

Figures	Titles	Page
Fig. 1.1	The Administrative Structure under the Fijian Affairs Ordinance 1945-53	25
Fig. 1.2	Diagram showing the Position of the Fijian Administration in the Government of the Colony, 1953	27
Fig. 1.3	Modified Council Structure 1967 to Present	28
Fig. 3.1	Large Map of the Fiji Group (Nairai Island Encircled)	39
Fig. 3.2	Shows Nairai Island and villages which used to form the old <u>tikina</u> of Nairai	41
Fig. 4.1	Shows a Photograph of Tovulailai village taken during the Survey in January 1979	79
Fig. 4.2	Showing the Retail Section of the Tabusoro Co-operative 1979	86
Fig. 4.3	Showing Hostel Stage I and Stage II taken 1978	93
Fig. 5.1	Shows a sketch of Tovulailai village - houses	142
 <u>Tables</u>		
Table 1.1	Population Growth, 1966-76 by Ethnic Category	21
Table 3.1	Mataqali of Tovulailai	43
Table 3.2	Sources of Gross Income: Average earned on each item in 14 Households 1978 in Tovulailai	44
Table 3.3	Average Total Expenditure Patterns of 14 Households in Tovulailai (1978)	45
Table 3.4	Age Distribution in Tovulailai, 1979 and the words used by villages to describe the major categories	51
Table 3.5	Manpower and Dependency - <u>mataqali</u> Naivini	54
Table 3.6	Manpower and Dependency in <u>mataqali</u> Sauturaga	55
Table 3.7	Manpower and Dependency in <u>mataqali</u> Sauni	56
Table 3.8	Manpower and Dependency in <u>mataqali</u> Ramasi	57
Table 3.9	Office Bearers of the Church at Tovulailai, together with the <u>mataqali</u> to which they belong (1979)	65

Tables	Titles	Page
Table 4.1	The Task-Leaders in the Baker Housing Scheme (1952-56)	74
Table 4.2	The Daily Work Timetable during the Baker Housing Scheme	75
Table 4.3	Fees paid by each child attending school at Levuka and residing in the Hostel, 1978	94
Table 4.4	Expenditure, Debts and part of the Income paid to the co-operative by members of <u>mataqali</u> Naivini, 1978-79	100
Table 4.5	Expenditure, Debts and part of the Income paid to the co-operative by members of <u>mataqali</u> Sauturaga, 1978-79	101
Table 4.6	Expenditure, Debts and part of the Income paid to the co-operative by members of <u>mataqali</u> Sauni, 1978-79	102
Table 4.7	Expenditure, Debts and part of the Income paid to the co-operative by members of <u>mataqali</u> Ramasi, 1978-79	103
Table 4.8	Shows the trend of increasing indebtedness at the co-operative in <u>mataqali</u> Naivini for two consecutive financial years 1977-78 and 1978-79	105
Table 4.9	Shows the trend of increasing indebtedness at the co-operative by shareholders in <u>mataqali</u> Sauturaga for two consecutive financial years 1977-78 and 1978-79	106
Table 4.10	Shows the trend of increasing indebtedness at the co-operative by shareholders in <u>mataqali</u> Sauni for two consecutive years 1977-78 and 1978-79	107
Table 4.11	Shows the trend of increasing indebtedness at the co-operative by shareholders in <u>mataqali</u> Ramasi for two consecutive years 1977-78 and 1978-79	108
Table 4.12(a)	Debts accumulated by senior co-operative employees 1977-79	110
Table 4.12(b)	Debts accumulated by junior co-operative employees 1977-79	111
Table 4.12(c)	Debts accumulated by 29 shareholders who are not employed by the co-operative 1977-79	112

Tables	Titles	Page
Table 5.1	Heads of the various committees in Tovulailai 1979	143
Table 5.2	Manager and crew of 'Adi Talei' 1979 ..	143
Table 5.3	Names, <u>mataqali</u> , salaries and wages of officers manning the co-operative	144
Table 5.4	Shows the distribution of wealth and human resources in relation to employment at the Tabusoro Co-operative 1979	148