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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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SIGATOKA RESEARCH PROJECT
Preliminary Report

Bruce Palmer,
Fiji Museum

The Sigatoka Research Programme was commenced in July 1965 with the aim of investigating the prehistory of the entire Sigatoka Valley, one of the major river valleys of Viti Levu. It was planned that there would be many phases of this project, each dealing with particular aspects which in their totality would enable a time and space appreciation of the region's prehistory. This has proved to be a major task and although the first year of the programme has provided promising results, much remains to be done before the whole of the fifty miles of valley can be covered even to a modest degree. This progress report summarises the slow but necessary mapping of sites.

DESCRIPTION OF SITES:

The following notes are not meant to be interpreted as being part of a final classificatory record but are reported on here in descriptive terms merely for convenience.

Ring-ditch Sites:

These are fortified sites constructed in the form of a circular ditch or trench enclosing a habitation area. Most of these are located on the alluvial flood-plain of the main valley and various tributary river flats, with a minority of them on the hill peaks and small benches. In their simplest form they comprise a single ditch and outer bank, with four opposing causeways, enclosing an area of house mounds. A feature of the Sigatoka ring-ditch sites as compared with the eastern Viti Levu sites of a similar nature is the proportion of sites with a double ditch. Naduri, VL 16/21, shows another feature of interest, a double ditch with alternately placed causeways between the two ditches, in far greater number than has been seen elsewhere. Namaliwa, VL 16/52, again has a double ditch with a supplementary double ditch extending out as a loop on the western side. This tendency to proliferate the defensive system finds fullest expression at the amazing Lawai site, VL 16/57, where internal ditches have been cut as a loop into the central portion of the main unit from the inner ditch to enclose some mound. Beyond the outer defences of the apparent main unit is a maze of ditches and banks which form separate defended areas within which are house mounds. This extending and extensive area forms virtually a twin double ring-ditch with further units reaching out to the foothills. In its treatment of separate yet corporate units this site is unique in Fiji and makes an impressive field monument in the finished map.

A similar tendency is noted at Vatumali, VL 11/1, where two separate ring-ditches merge into a third unit. This consists of sixteen low mounds or solid areas, inter-linked with causeways over what is now a very wet and boggy area, so that all the linked mounds grade abruptly into mud and marsh vegetation.

The association of linked mounds with ring-ditch sites is further seen at VL 16/39, situated high in the hills SW of Narewa village. The site shows in the aerial photograph as a complex system of linked mounds within a strongly defined ditch and bank system. A weaker expression of this can be seen in the finished map of VL 11/2 in the upper Sigatoka where the bank is simply a slight rise in the ground around the linked mound system. It has not been possible up to the present to define the exact development of linked mounds as some such sites occur that are not tied to defensive systems. It does appear, however, that they generally occur in situations where there is a high local water table and they seem to be deliberately placed in such localities, so that the causeways could be tentatively regarded as a response to environmental circumstances.

The internal looped ditch at Lawai is recalled at VL 11/1a where the loop has been dispensed with but some of the major mounds have been given massive surrounding ditches that would appear to be partly defensive. There are numerous ring-ditch sites yet to be investigated and the coming year's work should clarify many of the points mentioned here. In summary, it could be said that at present, the Sigatoka ring-ditch sites show these features when compared with windward Viti Levu: -

- (a) a higher proportion with a double ditch.
- (b) more use of outer defensive systems appended to the main units.
- (c) more causeways per ditch unit.
- (d) internal ditches within the main defensive unit.

Sites of Tongan origin:

Towards the end of the 18th century a party of Tongans under Finau Maile landed at Korotoga after leaving some of their number at Serua Island. After moving a little inland from Korotoga they established a village at Mahevu close by the present village of Nawamagi which is populated by Tongan descended peoples, some of whom remember Tongan being spoken in their childhood. Indeed, some of the elders still understand it. In June 1966, 14 people from Nawamagi, Malevu and Naroro returned from Tonga after having attended the final ceremonies in connection with the late Queen Salote. Mahevu, VL 16/53, is an open village site on the eastern bank of the Sigatoka River and consists of several low earth mounds of rather indeterminate shape, although they have the appearance of being rounded rectangular almost to the point of being oval. The original site at Nawamagi, 16/54, has been almost destroyed but a few mounds on the northern and eastern flanks of the low hill are said to be original Tongan ones. The grave of Finau Maile is on a low hill to the south of Nawamagi called Serua and is a rectangular mound with rounded corners, stone faced along an alignment at the base of the mound. The grave area has been planted with various ornamental shrubs and the whole area is regularly weeded and cleaned.

Korokune, 16/13, is a hill fort of the Tongan community and is situated 2 miles inland from Reef Lodge Hotel. It is a ridge-fort with diminutive ditch and bank cut through the southern ridge with grassy mounds strung along the ridge to where it falls sharply away on the western side. Long grass, bamboo and bush cover made examination of this site most difficult. Much more impressive is Site VL 16/11 called Tavuni (see attached map), located on a ridge above present day Naroro Village on a great bend of the Sigatoka River. This magnificent site, extending several hundred yards along the ridge has 37 mounds and 20 terraces, mostly stone-faced with midden fill, many of which encircle a large citadel towards one end of the site. The mounds vary from oval to rectangular ones with rounded corners; one mound has a stone-paved fronting platform also seen in single examples at Volivoli 16/26, Nabociwa 16/24, Togovere 16/50, Nalali 16/45 and a related variety at Nalovo 16/31. In one section of Tavuni a natural outcrop of limestone consisting of two parallel lines of slabs, has been filled to form a ramp from one part of the site to another. There is heavy midden deposit over much of the site and one suspects that the site must have been inhabited for much longer than tradition suggests, although surface pottery seems to be modern in appearance. One other site called Driudriumata, also said to be of Tongan origin has yet to be examined; likewise the mound called Waya inland from Korotoga and another site near Serua hill have not been inspected.

Sites on limestone peaks and ridges:

At many points in the Sigatoka Valley there are jagged limestone peaks, difficult of access, which reach 1500' in places. These have been used to form fortified sites, some of which were said to be impregnable in the pre-firearms era. The greatest cluster was seen around Koroiemalu where some fine sites had been created by using all natural defences possible and by making supplementary barriers in the form of stone walls wherever serrated limestone outcrops became less of an obstacle. Nabociwa 16/24 is a very fine site backed by an impassable cliff over 100' high and fronted by steep slopes on which stone walls have been constructed. Apart from the large cluster of mounds within the walled area, one of which has a long ramp leading to it, there are outside the walled defences, a flight of stone-built terraces which show great care in construction with alternating rows of vertically and horizontally placed stones on some faces. Its situation suggests a function not associated with warfare and no signs of structures were visible on the terraces.

An unusual form of fortification, said to be fenced too, was a site called Qoroqorovakatini, 16/32, which is approached by a hidden defile leading up a limestone cliff face, at the top of which is a large flat, sunken area several acres in extent. This flat is surrounded by vertical faces and is completely hidden from view down on the floor of the Sigatoka Valley. This site was the old fort of modern Tawatawadi Village and Ratu Epeli from that village kindly guided us there. There are 24 mounds mostly of oval shape although a few tend to be round and nearly all are stone-faced. There are a few stone-faced earth terraces and countless niches and shelters in the limestone surrounding the site which are full of potsherds. Much of this pottery appeared to be the Kuro Balavu type or elongated cooking pot typical of that made at Nakoro in the upper

Sigatoka Valley. Above this site on a higher peak to the north is Korovuholo, VL 16/34, which is extremely difficult to approach from most points. Series of mounds are positioned within stone-walled defences, some of the latter being only a few feet long although there is a long curved one on the northern flank.

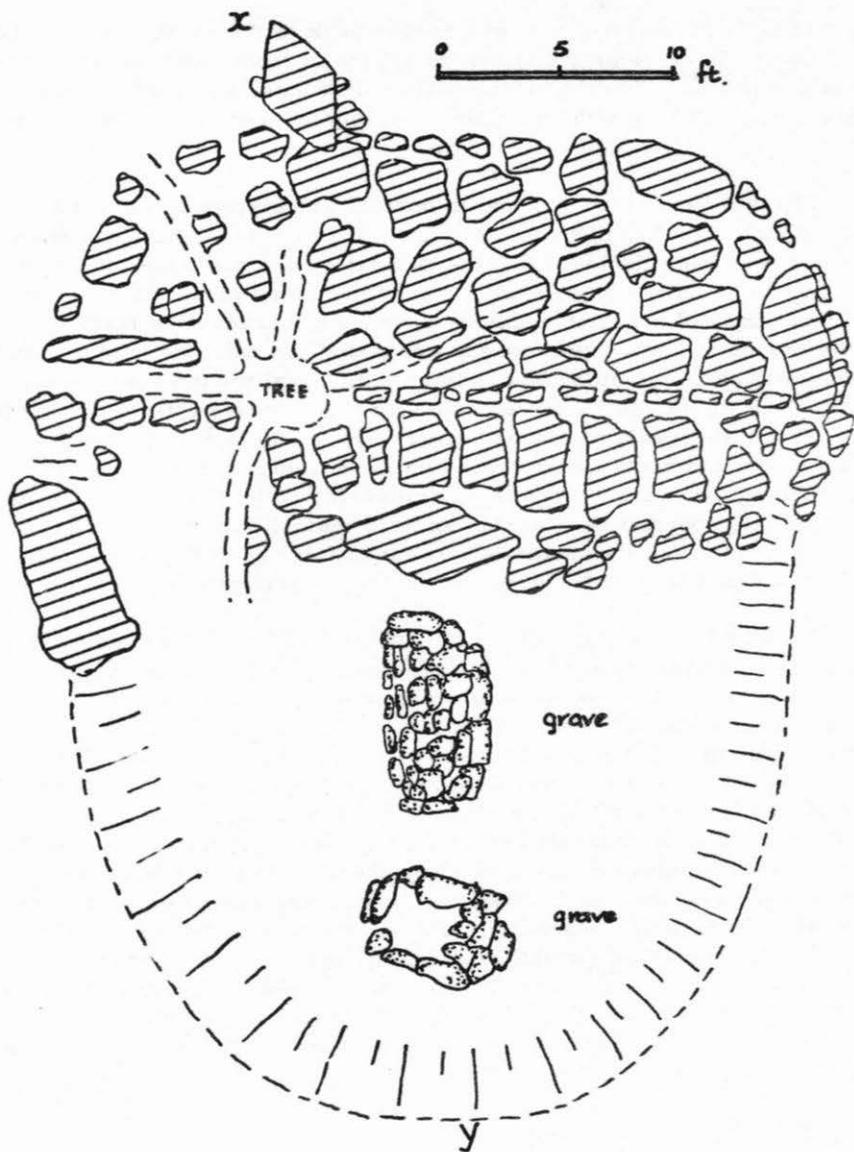
One of the most interesting and important ridge sites is VL 16/47 called Nokonoko, which is by tradition an old site. It consists of three prominent knolls which have been flattened and the natural slopes steepened into scarps, stone-faced on one unit. Each knoll has a stone-faced mound on top of it with the remainder of the flattened area forming a terrace-like feature around the mound. Two of the mounds are round to oval, one having four small pits on it while the other has another small oval mound constructed on it, giving the whole knoll a tiered appearance. Between these two knolls is a wide, flat area devoid of mounds while between them and the third knoll (which has a rounded rectangular mound on it) is a double row of mounds and terraces running around the ridge line, numbering 28 in all. The mounds vary from oval to rounded rectangular and are mainly stone-faced. At present, this site which lies some 800 or more feet above the main valley, is unique in Fiji and will be the object of further investigation.

Another highly important site is the twin site VL 16/45 called Nauluvatu and Nalali, lying inland from Yadua village near the mouth of the Sigatoka Valley. That part of it known as Nauluvatu consists of two concentrated clusters of mounds and terraces grouped around limestone outcrops and within a system of lateral and transverse stone walls. Although only 50 yards apart each cluster seems to have a separate entity and like two further separate clusters along the ridge to the east in the area known as Nalali, may well define Mataqali or Sub-clan groups. A most remarkable find in one area of Nauluvatu was a solitary sherd from a flat-bottomed dish with leaf impressions on its base. There were also several sherds of cross-relief (paddle-impressed) style from one part of the site. This suggests that the site could go well back into antiquity and may mark one of the first permanent hill sites in that part of Sigatoka. The Nalali mounds are on a flat ridge with no sign of defensive systems. The major mound system consists of round and oval mounds separated from the most easterly group by an area of oval pits whose function is unknown at present.

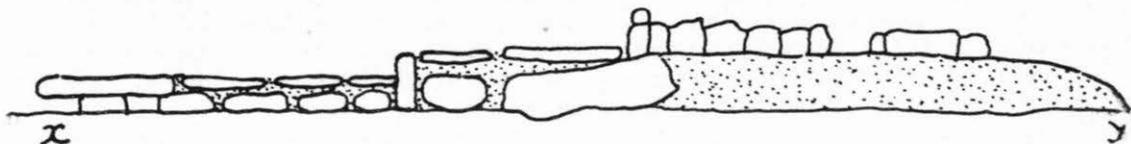
Miscellaneous Sites

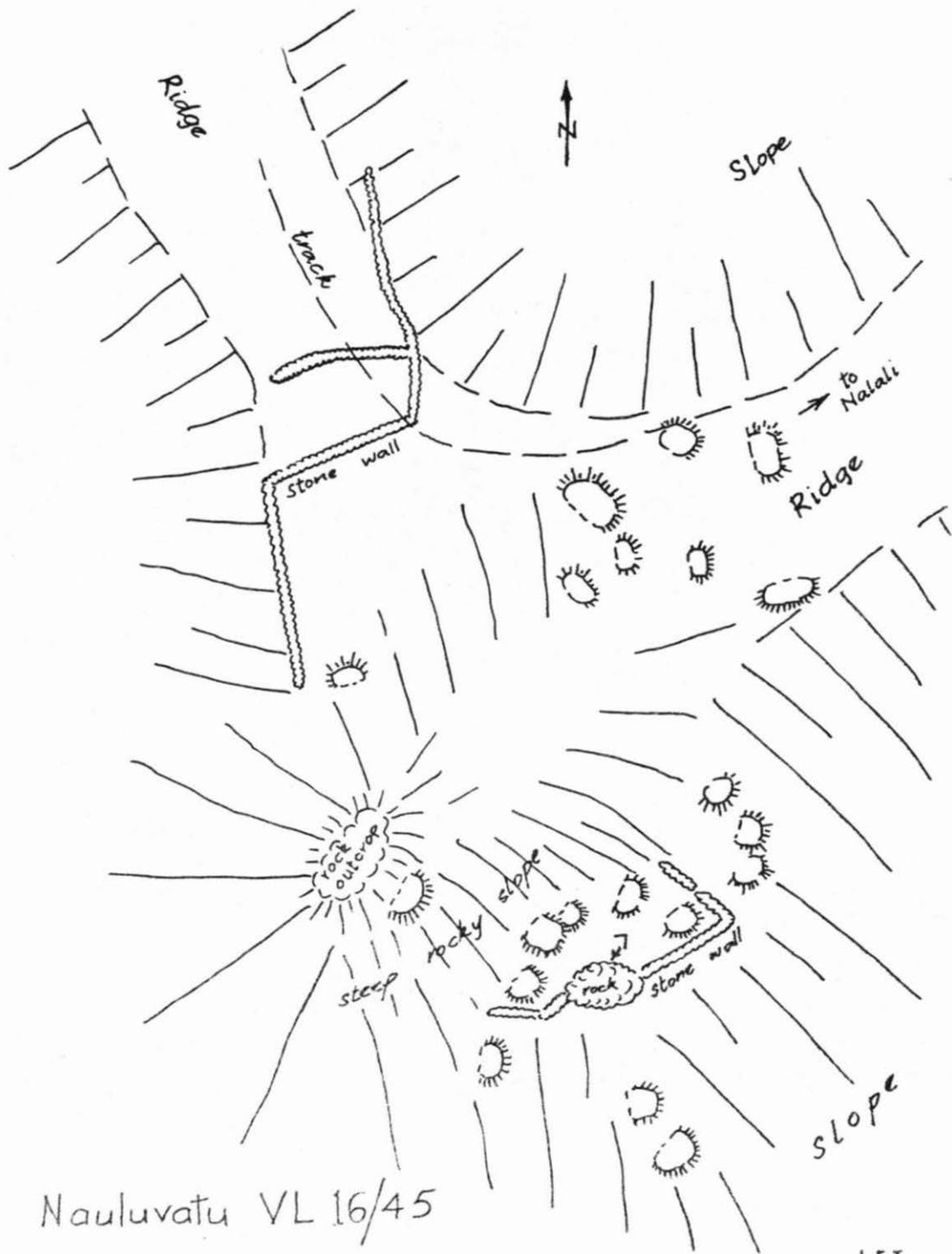
During the course of field work it became clear that there were a number of small sites, consisting of a few mounds or even solitary ones, located high above the floor of the main valley. These appeared to be deliberately placed in situations where they would be hidden from view from the valley floor. One site, VL 16/33, has a stone-faced platform partly paved above a change of level marked by a low stone scarp and has a stone cairn nearby. Nabawai, VL 10/1, comprises two stone-faced mounds in a hidden gully 1200' above the Sigatoka River.

fig. 1



Naruku mound: Site VL 16/26

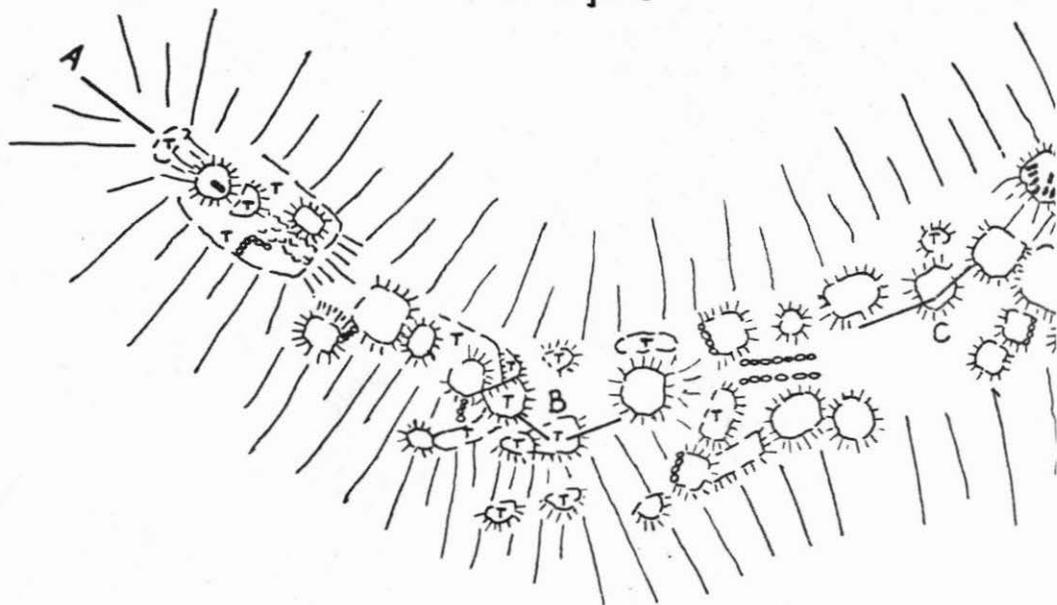




Nauluvatu VL 16/45

Tavuni VL 16/11

• = graves



Scale

1" = 100'



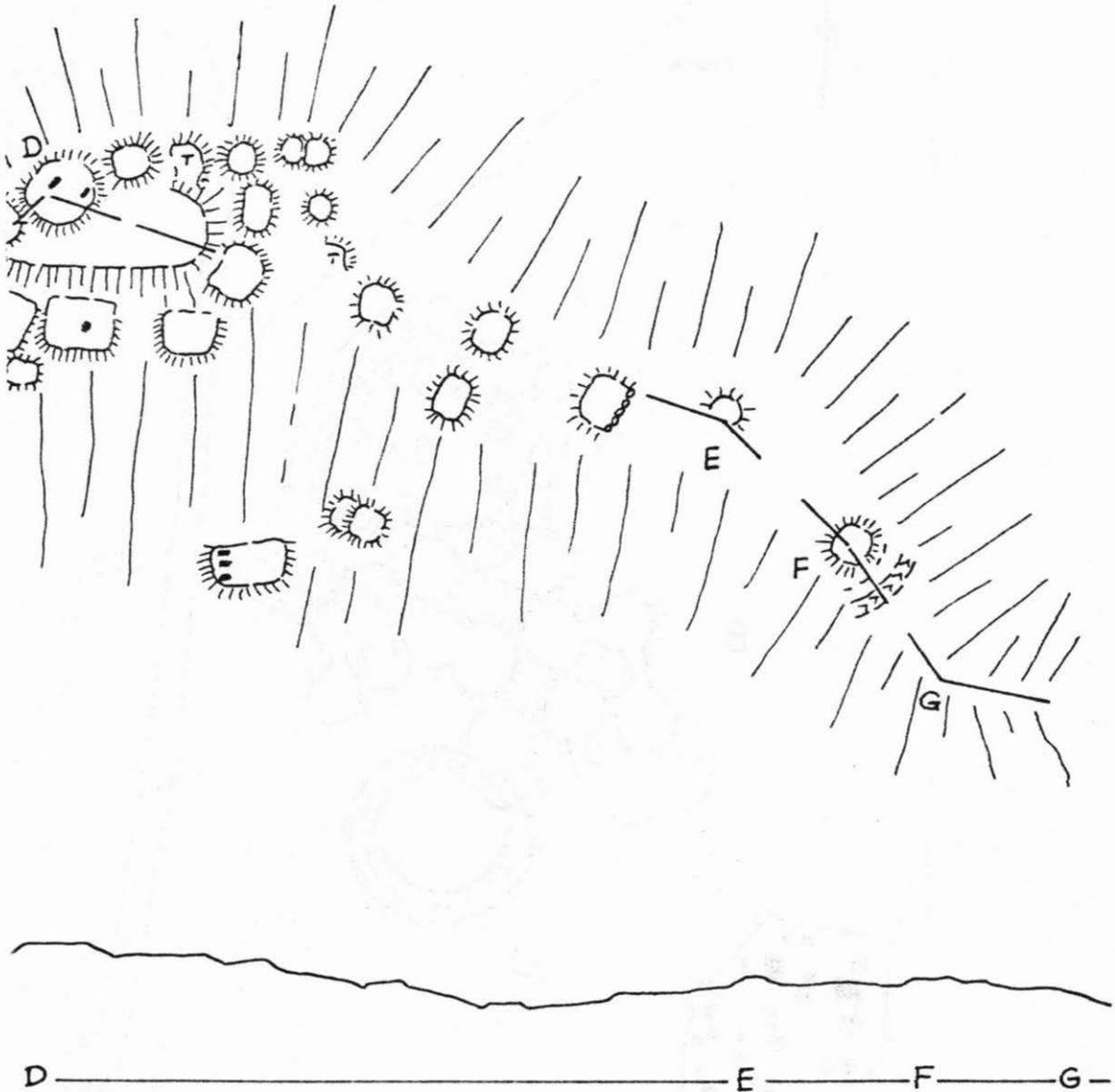
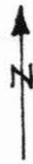
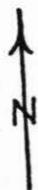
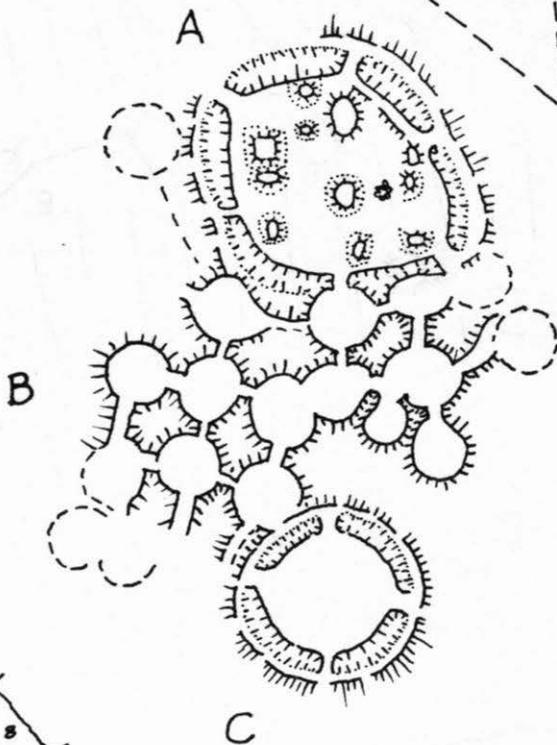


fig. 3

Scale 1" = c. 200' fig. 4



track



Key: Mounds Area A

to Sigatoka

Vatumali, Keiyasi • Site VL 11/1

Some open villages did not rely on altitude for advantage but were located some distance inland from the Sigatoka River, in places where stream meanders almost encircled the site. Togovere VL 16/50, proved to be one such site and the stream, combined with high(?) natural banks give the impression of a site which might well have been fenced at one time. This site is notable for the number of perfectly square mounds it contains. A twin site, it has to be described in association with Rewahali, a few hundred paces away and again on a meander-bordered flat. This small site has a line of rectangular and square mounds running along the base of the hill and in parts scarps have been cut to form the mound. One mound is a truncated cone constructed of stones and its function is unknown, unless it be a grave or a Mataqali boundary.

A single mound worthy of description is that called Naruku in Site VL 16/26 at Volivoli. It is basically a paved mound with fronting platform, rectangular with rounded corners to the point of being almost oval. The upper paved area is marked off by a row of vertically placed slabs and some of the paving appears to have been used to construct two modern graves in that rear portion of the mound which is earth. Abutting the frontal platform is a 6ft by 3 ft diamond shaped slab of limestone set horizontally on two short upright slabs to form a 'seat' (see attached figure and photographs). This is the first instance of such a seat recorded in Fiji although others similar are said to exist in the Yasawa Group in NW Fiji. In its treatment of stone paving and frontal platform the mound is stated (personal comm.) by Dr Yosihiko Sinoto to recall early Marquesan parallels and the Naruku mound could be a survival of an ancient tradition of mound building. Indeed, the great number of modern slab graves in the vicinity raises the possibility that other such paved mounds have been stripped of their paving in recent times.

Artefact collections:

Collections of surface pottery were made at all sites and while most of it appeared to be similar to modern Sigatoka pottery there were several clear points emerging from a study of the sherds.

- (a) Late Period Ra style sherds were found at Vatumali VL 11/1 a, high up the Sigatoka Valley. This distinctive combed pottery might be linked with the fact that upper Navosa district people are said to speak the Ra dialect.
- (b) Elongated pots (Kuro balavu) from Nakoro, again high up in the headwaters of the Sigatoka Valley, diffused as far as Qoroqorovakatini half-way down the valley.

- (c) At a number of sites from the middle and lower valley documented as being abandoned about 1876, there were dari or bowl sherds with applique nubbins or cleats around the rim. This differs from the standard shell-impressed designs done at the present time, and suggests that the latter might be quite a modern development.
- (d) At some sites, in association with sherds of modern appearance, were some with a thick collar around the outer surface of the rim and a rounded lip. By inference, they precede the modern sherds, which are out-turned with a flat lip, but the exact or even relative place in the pottery chronology of the collar rim has yet to be determined. At one site they occurred with a few specimens of paddle-impressed pottery and at another with these and flat-bottomed dishes. Since the collar rim does not occur in Level 2 of the main dunes (where paddle-impressed pottery is plentiful), the former would appear to be later. It should be noted that a few sherds showing this collar rim have been found at VL 16/3 near the mouth of the Sigatoka River and to the east of the site excavated by L. and H. Birks. This suggests a further line of investigation to be settled by excavation.

The main sand dunes then, while defining the early pottery chronology, might also be invaluable in assessing early habitation on hill top sites near the mouth of the Sigatoka River. It should be possible to obtain a relative date at least, for Nauluvatu, VL 16/45, and Koroiqara, VL 16/5, where dune pottery is present, although known only as yet from caves and shelters on those sites and not from structures. Likewise, the site survey might eventually allow the later part of the chronology to be determined.

- (e) Some sherds from Nokonoko, VL 16/47, show colour and coarse temper typical of many Level 2 sherds in the main dunes. This might well reflect the age of the site since it is regarded as a Yavutu or place of origin for some clans. Although the genealogical lines to the founding ancestors are not long, the sites could have been occupied for a long time prior to the circumstances which led to the existing traditions becoming dominant. The three knolls of the Nokonoko Site recall an artificial platform as the dominating feature of Koroicake, a fortified site in limestone country on Kabara in Southern Lau. Although of modest size they have a superficial resemblance to some Rapa - etc. hill sites to some degree and it remains to be determined what their functions and origins are.
- (f) Adze donated by Fijian people of Yadua village which were found at Nauluvatu and from near Yadua itself are plane - convex in section, completely polished with pointed pall. One from Navo Island, donated by people of Sanasana Village, was sub-rectangular in cross-section with a wide pall.

The only other artefacts found were hammerstones and a portion of a drilled pearl shell ornament, probably part of a breastplate. The latter was found in a rock over-bang on Nabaciwa, VL 16/24 and it is similar to whole pearl shells drilled for suspension which are found in Rotuma, Marquesas and Maupiti.

Future Investigations:

The site survey will be extended to cover those sites in areas of the Sigatoka Valley not mentioned in this report. It is also hoped, with the agreement of the Fijian people concerned, that a linked mound site, areas of certain hill sites and associated caves will be test excavated to assist in determining the pottery chronology and the overall potential of each type of site. If this prospect is achieved even in part only, then it should be possible to more accurately sketch in the outline of the prehistory of the Sigatoka Valley.

SUMMARY OF SITES RECORDED

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>SURVEYED</u>
Ring-ditch sites	18	6
Linked mound sites	2 (plus 3 above)	3
Ridge forts	6	5
Open village sites	7	5
Beach and dune sites	16	1
Sandy flats	8	-
Miscellaneous	10	3
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total:	67	23
Traditional sites yet to be investigated:	approximately	30
Sites on aerial photos yet to be investigated:	at present	30

INVENTORY OF SITES

<u>SITE NO.</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>SITE TYPE</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
VL 16/1	--	Sand-dunes	Excavated
16/2a-f	Naqarai	Sand-dunes	Six areas pottery
16/3	--	Sand-dunes	Pottery and Midden
16/4	Kulukulu	Sandy flat	Pottery scatter
16/5	Koroiqara	Village and caves	Linked mounds
16/6	--	Beach site	
16/7	Tubakula	Beach site	Pottery scatter
16/8	Muasara	Sandy flat	Pottery exposed
16/9	Muasara	Sandy flat	Pottery exposed
16/10	Makasiko	Sandy flat	Pottery in field
16/11	Tavuni	Ridge fort	Tongan site
16/12	Olosara	Clay source	Dari clay
16/13	Korokune	Ridge fort	Tongan site
16/	--	Ring-ditch	Canefield

SITE NO.	NAME	SITE TYPE	NOTES
VL 16/15		Ring-ditch	Canefield
16/16		Ring-ditch	Hill-peak
16/17		Ring-ditch	Hill-peak
16/18		Ring-ditch	Alluvial flat
16/19		Ring-ditch	Destroyed
16/20	From aerial photograph?	Ring-ditch	Alluvial flat
16/21	Naduri	Ring-ditch	Double ditch
16/22	Naqarai	Beach site	Excavated
16/23	Lawai	Mounds, terraces	On Knoll
16/24	Nabociwa	Ridge fort	Stone walls
16/25	Near Naruku	Mounds	In lake
16/26	Naruku	Ring-ditch and mounds	? Two sites
16/27	Volivoli I	Open Village	Mounds
16/28	Yanuca, Cuvu	Caves	Landing place of Wakanimoli- kula.
16/29	Yanuca, Cuvu	Sandy flat	Pottery scatter
16/30	Yanuca, Cuvu	Sandy flat	Pottery scatter
16/31	Nalovo	Open village	Well and temple
16/32	Qoroqorovaka-tini	Ridge fort	Mounds, terraces
16/33	Koroiemalu	Platform and Paving	Grave nearby
16/34	Korovuholo	Ridge fort	Walls, terrace
16/35	Tawatawadi	Defended area	Stone walls
16/36	Naduri I	Open village	Mounds
16/37		Caves	Pottery and Midden
16/38	Ebuto	Ring-ditch	Part natural defence
16/39		Ring-ditch	Linked mounds
16/40		Ring-ditch	On flat
16/41		Ring-ditch	River flat
16/42		Ring-ditch	On river flat
16/43	From aerial	photo only	Terrace near- by
16/44	Opp. Nabua	Sandy flat	Pottery and Midden
16/45	Nauluvatu	Ridge fort	Walls, mounds
16/46	Nubumarou	Open village	Pottery
16/47	Nokonoko	Ridge fort	Mound, terraces
16/48	Opp. Nalali	Shelters	Pottery midden
16/49	Below Nalali	Sandy flat	Pottery midden
16/50	Togovere	Open village	Mounds
16/51	Rewahali	Open village	Mounds

SITE NO.	NAME	SITE TYPE	NOTES
VL 16/52	Namaliwa	Ring-ditch	Loop on ditch
16/53	Mahevu	Open village	Tongan site
16/54	Nawamagi	Destroyed fort	Tongan site
16/55	Serua	Grave mound	Tongan site
16/56	Nasigatoko	Buried mound	Exposed in bank
16/57	Lawai	Ring-ditch	Multiple ditches
VL 11/1 a	Vatumali	Ring-ditch	Inner bank
11/1 b	"	Linked mound	Merges with a and c
11/1 c	"	Ring-ditch	Ploughed
11/2a-c	--	(?) Ring-ditch Linked mounds	Agric. terraces and outer works
VL 10/1	Nabawi	Open village	Hidden site