

**NAIGANI HISTORY** The island of Naigani was named after a mysterious lady of long ago, and the Island's legends still survive. Naigani's ancient hillside sacred fort, sacred bay, ancient grave sites, and cannibal cooking cave (with its roof still marked with soot from burnt human flesh), are relics of Fiji's fascinating and sometimes terrifying pre-european history.

**LAPITA POTTERY (C.1590BC-600BC)** In 1981, during construction site work on Naigani Resort, Lapita pottery fragments were unearthed and dated to C1590 BC, evidence supporting the fact that the Lapita people, thought to have had their origins in southern China or Taiwan, migrated to Fiji via Indonesia, and thus were a part of Fiji's pre-history. The original settlements of the Lapita people are said to be on nearby Moturiki Island (off Ovalau), approximately 10 Kms from Naigani Island. These archeological artifacts link Fiji to other far-flung Lapita sites including the island of New Britain, on the north-east coast of Papua New Guinea. The Fiji Museum has conducted further excavations on Naigani and has confirmed contact between the Lapita pottery people of north-west Melanesia and Fiji, over 3,000 years ago. Among the discoveries at the digs, were small anthropomorphic clay figurines in human and animal forms, which are thought to be ancient toys. A number of adzes in varying stages of manufacture or repair were also found. A large percentage of the excavated materials are foreign to Naigani and connect Naigani to other Lapita sites around Fiji dating back C2,500-C2,000 years. Prior to the Naigani Lapita discovery , only three other sites belonging to the first 1,000 years of Fiji's human history had been discovered. This discovery places Naigani at the very top of list of important pre-historical and archeological sites in Fiji.

**LUTUNASOBASOBA (C.1000 AD)** The oral history of the indigenous Fijians of today was recorded by a number of the early settlers and Colonial-era historians and administrators.

African chieftain Lutunasobasoba led one of three migrating groups from the Lake Tanganyika (in Fijian "Taqani-ika" or "landing of fish") sailing eastwards towards the rising sun, from modern day Tanzania, aboard the giant ocean canoe Kaunitoni. Rounding the tip of India, onwards they sailed through Indonesia and Melanesia leaving settlements along the way, but no place pleased Lutunasobasoba until he arrived at Viseisei in Fiji.

The oral traditions of the indigenous people of Naigani Island trace their origins to a time when Lutunasobasoba's war canoe was beached at Canabuli for repairs, which took a number of months to complete. Thus Canabuli beach was so named from this incident, ("ca-na-buli" meaning the "buli" or "ketch" is broken). The canoe was anchored to a stone (which still can be seen) on Canabuli beach - Naigani Resort's picnic beach. A settlement was established on the leeward side of the island in a sheltered bay, the present day site of Naigani Island Village. The Island's name "Naigani" was possibly drawn from the name of one of Lutunasobasoba's two wives, Naivodre.

Lutunasobasoba's mother, an Egyptian woman, died whilst the group were stranded on Naigani, and was buried on the summit of Naisoli ("the gift"), the larger of the two small islands directly in front of Naigani Island Resort, and a location selected as the best vantage point to greet the morning sun as it rises to the east of the island,

according to the religious customs of her people. A tradition was thus started, and a small cemetery was established on the beach nearby for the purpose of burying the Island's chiefs. This cemetery is still in use today.

**MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY (1789)** The famous (or infamous) Lieutenant William Bligh, victim of the mutiny on the 'HMS Bounty', sailed past Naigani and in so doing, gave the nearby sea its name "Bligh Waters". \_\_\_\_\_ **GEORGE RILEY (C.1800-1840)** George (?) Riley an Irish, Catholic lay-preacher, arrived in Fiji from Australia in the early 1800's. George formed a profitable strategic alliance with the high chief of Verata, married the Chief's daughter, and acquired extensive land holdings including the whole of Naigani Island, and parcels at Natovi landing and around Londoni. The bulk of Naigani Island was gifted back to the indigenous Naigani Islanders and remains under Native Land tenure, and all of Riley's holdings on Viti Levu were gifted to the Catholic Church - who is still the owners of these freehold properties to this day. On the freehold portion of Naigani Island not bequeathed to the indigenous landowners, Riley developed a copra plantation, which was converted into Naigani Island Resort in the 1980's.

Naigani Island folk lore tells a more colorful tale of "Na bete Riley" - "the preacher Riley" - an Irishman who left England's prisoner colony of New South Wales in Australia, arriving in Fiji during the time of the cannibals. Riley used his superior knowledge of European weaponry and methods of warfare to help the High Chief of Verata successfully prosecute a number of tribal wars, also supplying him with guns and ammunition. So valuable was his contribution, that Riley was given extensive parcels of land and the Chief's daughter's hand in marriage in return, thereby "bringing him into the family" with this payment of a substantial dowry, and establishing a feudal warlord to shore up Verata's eastern defenses in the Lomaiviti group.

Following George's settlement on Naigani, three later generations of Riley's: Mathew (son of George), David (son of Mathew), and William (son of David), were born, died or buried on Naigani. Thus the Riley family, with their roots at Naigani Island, were a cornerstone of the early Colonial history and development of the Lomaiviti group of Islands in Fiji.

The shell of the original Riley homestead dating back over 100 years, still stands today, and has been retained on its original site and in remarkable condition, forming the core of the Resort's Bar and Restaurant complex - named of course, "Riley's".

**COLONIAL PAST (C. 1800's - )** The signing of the Deed of Cession at Levuka on the neighboring island of Ovalau on October 10th 1874, brought Fiji under the protection and Colonial rule of Queen Victoria's Great Britain.

Levuka Town was thus established as the first Capital of Fiji in 1874, however despite the Town possessing the highest concentration of Europeans in Fiji, it was quickly realized and decided that the geographical features of Levuka were too restrictive, given its offshore island setting and the treacherous surrounding reefs with narrow harbor entrances, for the Levuka to remain Fiji's Capital. Thus a

new Capital was planned in Suva in 1877.

Naigani was frequented during this period by sailors, whalers, and sandalwood traders, as well as the odd scoundrel or two. With its fresh water springs, young green coconuts, and superb fringing reef fishing, Naigani provided back then as it does today, a welcoming stop to all its visitors on their epic voyages and adventures.