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Groundwater, Graves and Golf: Layers of Heritage Tourism on a Fiji Resort Island

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Abstract: While island resorts in the South Pacific are primarily marketed as sun, sea and sand destinations, cultural dimensions value-add to and diversify the product for mixed audiences. Resort developments require, at minimum, the compliance with legally mandated environmental standards and adherence to national employment legislation. Socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable tourism concepts should exceed mandated environmental standards and be characterised by a close involvement with and respect for the expectations of local host communities who may hold land and/or traditional usufruct rights. But do resort developments comply? Using an example of a resort established on free-hold land during the pioneering days of resort development in Fiji, the aim of this paper is to provide a deliberation of the tension between organic resort development and sustainable tourism on private land. It will show that, where cultural and environmental planning controls were absent, development not only could progress unfettered but also that changes to tourism philosophies are not necessarily reflected in changes to a resort. The island of Malolo Lailai (Viti Levu, Fiji) has a rich and multi-layered history and heritage (Fijian, European and Chinese plantations, resort development) that provides an opportunity to value-add to the tourist experience. In reality, however, the ongoing resort development extinguishes past histories in favour of a post-occupation, twentieth-century colonial settler narrative, where heritage sites are merely allowed to co-exist provided they do not impact on resort development objectives. It demonstrates that, in the absence of external regulatory controls, the resort owner’s philosophy dominates and shapes the tourist experience.

Keywords: tourist resort development; sustainable tourism; heritage tourism; heritage interpretation

1. Introduction

The last quarter of the twentieth century saw a boom in the development of beach and island resorts in many parts of the world, driven by affluent residents of first-world countries, as well as of emergent markets in South Korea, China and India. The primary drivers were the classic 3S (sun, sea and sand) tourism [1,2], supported by intensive and extensive marketing [3]. This encompassed the whole range of accommodation and experience options, ranging from mass market resorts operated by hotel chains to off-grid, Robin Crusoe-style beachcomber accommodation [4,5]. For several island destinations, the 3S tourism remains a major focus of marketing and development [6,7]. While the national economy of many small island states welcomed this development, hoping that tourism would lead to poverty alleviation [8], national tourism boards became increasingly concerned that an over-reliance of the three “Ss” might expose their nation’s destination to competitors in novel locations [9,10]. As the market became saturated and/or the clientele’s expectations changed [11], resorts, as well entire destinations, had to adapt [4,12,13].

Not surprisingly, national tourism boards in the Pacific Islands looked at value-adding to the offerings by expanding nature-based opportunities in niche markets, such as diving or surfing [14,15] but also by capitalizing on the opportunities presented by the local culture and by the interpretation of Indigenous, colonial and World War II (military) places.
both on land [16–21] and underwater [22,23]. This effort was supported and promoted by airlines [24,25] and by private publishing enterprises [26,27]. Since then, heritage tourism has diversified both as a concept and in terms of market differentiation [28], ranging from the traditional consumptive (e.g., site visits) [29] to participatory and immersive experiences [29,30].

Fiji was no different in that regard [31–35]. In his seminal study “Creating Resort Islands”, Brian King examined resort developments in Fiji’s Mamanuca Islands and contrasted them with resort developments in Australia [9]. Building on earlier work [32], King argued that resort developments on the Mamanuca Islands had the potential to diversify their offerings and focus, *inter alia*, on the opportunities of cultural heritage tourism as facilitated by the archaeological and historical sites as well as the traditional, living heritage [9].

In parallel, the tourist market has become more diversified and also more discerning, increasingly concerned about the environmental and social impact they may cause. The last quarter of the twentieth century saw the rise of the concepts of sustainable tourism and ecotourism. For tourism to be sustainable in the longer term, operations need to meet the “triple bottom line” of being socio-culturally, environmentally and economically sustainable [36,37]. The underlying tenet was that the development should benefit the host community and aid in poverty alleviation and not just benefit foreign-owned corporations [34,38]. There is a large body of literature that considers the delivery of sustainable tourism on a global scale [39–41], as well as on a regional basis, such as in the Pacific Islands [42–44]. Resort developments have been the focus of several studies [45,46], *inter alia*, in the Pacific [9].

Fundamentally, for tourism to be fully sustainable, it must not be detrimental to or exploitive of the assets it relies on, be they the physical, the social or the cultural environment [40,47]. In some of these, resort developers are governed by legally defined externalities, while in others, resort developers are only subject to their own ideology and philosophy. While resort development, overall, is subject to national policy settings [48], the environmental impact of a specific resort development, i.e., its infrastructure and the management of utilities (e.g., freshwater procurement, general waste and sewage disposal) [49,50], for example, are subject to regulatory regimes imposed by the host nation’s environmental protection authorities and planning departments [51–53]. Development applications can be rejected, and contraventions to approval conditions can be prosecuted [54]. Likewise, the impact of the operations of the resort, through the actions of their clientele, can be constrained through nature preservation regulations stipulating limits to reef access or fishing [15]. The management of other environmental parameters that are not governed by the government regulations, or that exceed the minimum requirements, such as a resort’s carbon footprint or its landscaping and planting with exotic species, tend to be solely framed by the resort developer’s ideology and philosophy.

Social sustainability, on the other hand, is usually never legislatively mandated and, thus, subject to a resort developer’s ideology and philosophy and the receptiveness of the community owning the land and/or living in the surrounding area. Here, the nature of the land tenure comes to the fore. Where the resort’s land is leased, the resort developer will be required to negotiate with the local community or communities that holds land and/or usufruct rights of the resort lands and, thus, can, at least theoretically, exert some level of control over the development [55,56]. The extent of that control depends on the nature of land tenure (feudal, communal), the nature of the rights to the land and its resources (usufruct right, rights to marine resources) and the nature of the community (unified, fractious, polarized) [56–58]. In addition to direct payments, lease conditions for resorts can include community development aspects such as direct employment in the resort, employment as suppliers of goods and services (e.g., tours) and community infrastructure development (i.e., sharing fresh water supply and wastewater disposal systems [59]. While there are examples of demonstrable community benefits [60], there are also numerous instances of low benefit [34] and even potentially detrimental outcomes [61] such as
cultural change [62] and disruption of both the immediate host community [63,64] and further afield. For example, while communities can act as suppliers of produce to a resort and thus generate income [65,66], and while traditional foods can value-add to the tourist experience [67,68], the required quantities, as well as demands for specific types of foods, will cascade down the supply chain, eventually altering planting preferences [69]. Similarly, the provision of labour to the resorts will have cascading effects through the community.

A different situation can develop, where the resort’s land is freehold and thus not subject to community obligations. In this case, the resort developer’s ideology and philosophy are the sole modulators of social sustainability unless externalities come into effect, such as labour laws, for example, which may prescribe the nature of staff a resort can employ.

Building on King’s work, this paper will focus on the intersect between sustainable tourism and heritage tourism in a resort setting. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the Yasawa and Mamanuca Islands off the north-western shore of Fiji’s main island, Viti Levu, developed into an eco-tourism destination [1,5,70–72]. The question arises to what extent resort development and resort offerings in Fiji actually took up the opportunity to capitalize on the diversification offered by heritage sites and how they managed any heritage places encountered on their lands. Rather than carrying out a quantitative and qualitative of the resort industry in Fiji, this paper will focus on a single island, Malolo Lailai. Located off the north-western tip of Vitu Levu, Malolo Lailai is the home of three resorts, which target different markets and clientele, as well as a residential (retirement) community.

In the following, we will examine the historic background to the island, highlighting the largely unseen, but not invisible, cultural and historical heritage sites that exist on the island and place these into the context of the development of this tourism destination and subsequent actual resort management actions. The resort development as interpreted on the island forms part of a colonial settler narrative extinguishing past histories in favour of a post-occupation narrative. Using Malolo Lailai as a case study, the paper is a deliberation and reflection on actual tourism resort development and associated narratives, and on the opportunities of inclusion of heritage and culture narrative into future resort development and more broadly to sustainable development.

2. The Location

Malolo Lailai is a 2.4 km² island located in the Malolo Group northwest of Fiji’s main island, Vitu Levu (Figure 1). It is separated by a narrow and shallow passage from the larger Malolo Island to the north. Topographically, Malolo Lailai is defined by low ridges in the southwest and northeast that rise a maximum elevation 55 m [73]. These ridges, which are comprised of exposed volcanic rocks and tephra-derived soils, are joined by an expanse of sandy soils of 1 m to 2 m above MSL (Figure 2).

Malolo Lailai is freehold land, which has been developed into a resort island complex with three distinct resorts (Musket Cove, Plantation Island and Lomani) along the northern shore. The southern and eastern shore on the island currently remains largely undeveloped but shows evidence of prior land management in the form of remnant coconut plantations (Figure 3).
During a recreational stay on Malolo Lailai island (Mamanuca Group, Fiji) in January 2018, the author was made aware of the presence of a Chinese cemetery, which was marked on a promotional map provided by a bicycle rental outlet [74]. Upon enquiry, the resort administration could not provide any additional detail beyond the fact that the graves belonged to Chinese who had held the previous lease. On occasion of a visit to the site, it was noted that some of the graves had been dug into a mound, on the surface of which a number of subfossil shells as well as some fragments of pottery were exposed. Cursory observations at the edge of the adjacent pond showed an exposed midden with a range of...
shell species. As far as can be ascertained, no prior heritage-related and tourism-related work has been carried out on the island of Malolo Lailai, with the exception of a cursory examination by Dawson [75]. A return visit vacation in November 2019 provided an opportunity to examine the issues in more detail.

Figure 2. Aerial photograph of Malolo Lailai Island showing resort locations discussed in the text. Aerial photograph DigitalGlobe, 10 m contour data Directorate of Overseas Surveys [76].
Figure 3. Aerial photograph of Malolo Lailai Island showing heritage locations discussed in the text. Aerial photograph DigitalGlobe, 10 m contour data Directorate of Overseas Surveys [76].

3. Historic Context

Even though Malolo Lailai is a major tourist destination with three resorts, very little has been researched and published on the island’s history. What can be found in tourist guides is limited to unsourced data in promotional materials, e.g., [77,78] and is often marred with erroneous information, e.g., [79,80]. The resort literature claims that the Nadroga chief Ratu Kini sold Malolo Lailai in 1872 to a John Thomson who wished to establish a cotton plantation. Following Thomson’s death in 1876, the island was reputedly sold to Louis Armstrong, who soon after became insolvent, with the mortgagee, the Mortgage Agency of Australasia Ltd., resuming possession.

The asset was offloaded in November 1891 to the prominent planter James Borron, who then leased the island to the “Wongket family” for a period of 70 years to develop a copra plantation. In the late 1960s Richard Smith, Reg Raffe and Ian MacFarlane acquired the freehold after the Chinese lessors allowed the lease to be cut short. Initially renamed “Leeeward Island”, three resorts were developed on the island: Plantation Island in 1969,
Musket Cove in 1976 and Lomani in 2004 [77,78,81]. As will become clear, this is both incomplete and inaccurate.

3.1. Fijian History

Little is on record about the traditional history of the Mamanuca Islands before European visitation [82]. During the mid-19th century, the Malolo Islands were under the control of the Nadroga chiefs. When the United States Exploring Expedition under Cmdr Charles Wilkes visited Fiji in 1840, two villages existed on Malolo Levu: Solevu (Wilkes: “Sualib”) on the southern coast and Yaro (Wilkes: “Arro”) on the north-eastern coast. Malolo Lailai, itself, was uninhabited.

3.2. Early European Presence

The coastline of Malolo Lailai was mapped by the United States Exploring Expedition on 22 July 1840 [83]. A cultural misunderstanding of both protocol and risk lead to the death of two U.S. officers on Malolo Levu [83]. Wilkes exacted fierce retribution by burning the two villages on Malolo, by destroying all plantations and canoes, leaving in its wake 57 dead Fijians, including two leading chiefs [84]. Using his personal connections with Ratu Kini, the paramount chief of Nadroga, John Thompson of Nadroga purchased Malolo Lailai in 1872 as freehold land, with the aim of establishing a cotton plantation [84]. It seems to have been worked by an overseer until Thompson’s death in 1876. The island was then bought the Levuka hotelkeeper Louis Armstrong. Following the latter’s bankruptcy in 1879, the island was managed by the Mortgage and Agency Company of Australasia until that company’s insolvency in 1890. Malolo Lailai was then acquired by James Borron, a major player in Fiji’s plantation industry [84]. It is unclear what, if any, plantation business Thompson, Armstrong, the Mortgage Agency of Australasia and Borron actually carried out on Malolo Lailai. Irrespective, it can be surmised that a conversion of the island into a viable plantation of any description would have entailed considerable investment in labour and that any plantations would have been on the flat ground now built on by the resort development.

3.3. Chinese Lease Hold

Borron may have begun to develop Malolo Lailai into a copra plantation, or he may just held the island for future use. According to Osborn [85], the Chinese Wong Ket, storekeeper in Lautoka, leased the island from Borron in 1903 for the duration of 70 years. Assuming that at the time no sizeable copra plantations existed on the island, Wong Ket’s lease was a long-term investment, as the first crop would not have been ready for harvesting for five to eight years after planting [86], and peak production would only commence after ca. 15 years. Wong Ket must have engaged in an aggressive development because by 1921 his Chinese workers had reputedly planted “some 30,000 coconuts”, which were all free of coconut scale [87]. Based on an analysis of available census data, it appears that the Chinese workers’ presence on the island was seasonal and ranged between 10 and 20 individuals [88].

Today, there are two residual sections of that plantation laid out in a gridded fashion, one in the northeast and one in the southwest of the island (Figure 3). Much of the previously planted land has undergone clearing for resort construction as well as for the development of the airport/runway and the golf course. Looking at the topography of the Malolo Lailai (Figure 3), the total available area suitable for coconut planting is approximately 124 hectares, which equates to a total of 13,500 palms based on an estimated density of 109 palms/hectare with a spacing of six Chinese paces (歩, bù). It is highly likely that the 1921 inspection team misheard the Chinese overseer’s stated quantity of “some thirteen thousand” and noted it down as “some thirty thousand”. The Wong family seems to have run the Malolo plantation over several generations as an ancillary income source business as it continued to operate its Lautoka business [89,90]. They allowed the lease to be bought out in 1966 when the copra market collapsed. When the lease was cut short, all
Chinese workers had to leave on short notice. Some 700 bags of copra apparently remained on the island on the day of settlement and were sold by the new owners [90].

Residual elements of the Chinese heritage on Malolo are remnant sections of the copra plantations in the southwest and northeast of the island, the copra shed (now part of the dining area of the Plantation Island Resort) and the Chinese cemetery (Figure 3). The latter is the only known purely Chinese plantation cemetery in the Pacific Islands.

### 3.4. World War II Period

During World War II, Fiji was first provided with defences against an anticipated Japanese invasion and later developed into an Allied forward base. A number of sites are associated with this period [91], including the development of an observation station on Malolo. A concrete pad serving as an aircraft spotter platform exists on Malolo Lailai [92].

### 3.5. Resort Development

In early 1966, the Australian Richard Smith, who had already developed nearby Castaway Island [93], Reginald Raffe and Ian MacFarlane (founder of Southern Pacific Petroleum) acquired the freehold after the Chinese lessors allowed their lease to be cut short [94]—a decision that was partially motivated by the slump in copra prices at that time and an associate trading recession in Fiji [95,96]. At the same time, tourism was seen “as a means of economic salvation” [96]. The period of the late 1960s saw the beginnings of small-island resort development in Fiji, especially on islands where the acquisition of freehold land allowed for unfettered development. After acquisition, Malolo Lailai had informally been renamed “Leeward Island”, a name that was dropped again once the Plantation Island resort had been opened in late 1969 [77,97] and had begun to attract visitors. The initial market were budget travellers prepared to accept primarily gender-separated dormitory-style accommodation [72,98]. An airstrip was levelled in 1971 [99], operational by September 1972 [100] and furnished with a short section of narrow-gauge railway (for passenger and luggage transport), with rails and rolling stock purchased from the Colonial Sugar Refining (CSR) Co or its successor the Fiji Sugar Corporation [101]. During that time, until 1973 when water shortages became an issue, Malolo Lailai was apparently used for open quarantine by the Fiji Department of Agriculture [102]. Resort development accelerated with the opening of Musket Cove Resort (originally “Dick’s Place”) in October 1976 [80,103] and Lomani Resort in 2004 [78]. A nine-hole golf course, designed by Ananda Madhwan, was added in 1996–1997 (opened 12 July 1997 plaque in coral boulder at golf course). In 2002, Ian MacFarlane’s share was sold to the other two investors [104]. Emulating developments in the Caribbean, in 2005, parts of Musket Cove were sold off as a marina-type development with a lifestyle enclave of private residences [105].

The resort developments focused on the northern shoreline with predominately villa-style accommodation set in a network of pathways, augmented by peripherally sited support infrastructure and workers accommodations. Buildings and infrastructure were continually redeveloped and upgraded. By 2020, the three resorts had a combined total of 250 rooms (Plantation Island, 165 rooms, ca. 600 guests; Musket Cove, 55 rooms, ca. 195 guests; Lomani 30 rooms, 60 guests) [77,78,103], with an annual volume of over 100,000 guests (the company-owned ferries annually transport 120,000 passengers (including resort staff and day visitors) [106].

### 4. Tangible Heritage Evidence

The site, located in the southern part of the island (Figure 3), is a palimpsest comprised of multiple layers of occupation and land modification (not in chronological order): a pond, a cemetery, a Fijian village (midden) site and a golf course. These elements shall be discussed in turn.
4.1. Chinese Pond and Cemetery

The pond is an artificial depression penetrating the groundwater lens (Figure 4). The bottom depth varies from approximately 1 m in the northwest to $\geq 2$ m in a L-shaped channel along the southern and eastern margins. The excavated spoil was heaped into the soil mound into which some of the burials were dug. During the resort period, the pond was widened, with some the spoil distributed across the golf course to form undulations and small (now vegetated) mounds delineating the fairways.

![Figure 4. The pond, looking south. The soil mound is to the left of the image. The midden deposits are exposed along the entire profile.](image)

The cemetery is located at the southern side of the soil mound. As the cemetery has been discussed elsewhere in detail [88], a brief summary can suffice. The first row of burials is interred in the northern face of a 1.5 m (north) to 2 m (south) high soil mound, which measures about 13 m in width (east–west) and 19 m in length (north–south) (Figure 5). The second row, which is set about 8 m to the south, is interred on flat ground. The graves are marked with concrete foot stones as well as grave surrounds marked off with coral boulders (Figure 6). The last grave to be dug (1951) is lined with a concrete fence-line surround. Seven of the eight grave markers carry fully or partially legible inscriptions (Figure 6). Six of the identifiable burials, with identifiable dates from 1914 to 1929, belong to members of the Huáng (Wong) family who worked the plantation. At least five of the interred men stem from Zhōngshān (山中) in the Pearl River Delta of Guǎngdōng Province, Canton [88]. One burial belongs to Guān Yūshèng Jūn, who operated a trade store on the island until his death in 1951 [90].
4.2. Indigenous Fijian Sites

Cursory, unsystematic observations of the midden site and surrounds noted primarily undiagnostic pieces of ceramics as well as midden material exposed in the cut edges of the pond; on the surface of the mound into which the burials had been dug; at various planting beds on the adjacent golf course, as well as in spoil excavated from a culvert near
the western margin of the runway; and at an exposure along the beach at the southern end of the runway. In view of the pottery composition, the midden most likely dates to the Vuda phase (1000–1800 CE) of Fijian history, most likely after 1500 [107].

A number of human bones were reputedly encountered when the end of the fairway and the green for hole nº 4 were shaped during the development of the golf course in late 1996 or early 1997. As the Lautoka police determined the bones to be (pre-)historic, they were collected and reburied in the same small hill as the Chinese graves. Apparently, no archaeological or heritage investigation or assessment was undertaken at the time [90].

4.3. Site Genesis

Based on these observations, the genesis of the Malolo Lailai site occurred in the following phases. An unfortified village was established on the sandy ground between the small hills in the northeast and southwest of Malolo Lailai during the Vuda Phase of Fijian history (1000–1800 CE). It can be surmised that the hills with their cover of volcanic ash-derived soils would have been used for gardens and plantations. The village site had been abandoned well before Wilkes’ visit, as no indications of a village or its remains were noted in 1840. During the early period of Chinese plantation development, a well was dug to expose the groundwater lens. The soil from that excavation, which contained midden material from the village site, was piled into a spoil heap on the southern side. The village site was further impacted by the levelling of the runway to the northeast, and then further reshaped by the fairway partitions and bunker developments for the golf course. The required soil for these developments was sourced by enlarging the L-shaped well into a triangular pond, thereby creating an additional water hazard.

5. Discussion

As King has shown, many of the resort developments have the opportunity to value-add to the tourism experience by drawing on archaeological and cultural sites on the island they are located on [9]. Moreover, the inclusion of community culture and heritage in the tourism product are deemed essential ingredients of eco- and sustainable tourism, with awareness of potentially detrimental social impacts on the host communities. In most instances, tourism and resort development occurs of land leased from local communities with land use caveats, retention of some usufruct and marine resource rights and local employment levels, as well as the supply of local community-sourced goods and services stipulated in many lease agreements. While the local community can act as custodians and advocates of the heritage sites within a resort based on lease hold land, heritage custodianship is based on social relevance to the present generation [108]. Thus, the local community may attribute different values to places of their own cultural past as opposed to that of the colonial powers [109,110], while tourists may project different values [111]. The development and operation of sustainable tourism resorts is perpetually caught in the tension between the needs to develop and offer a sustainably profitable product that, at the same time, remains socially and environmentally sustainable irrespective of changes in service expectations by the tourist clientele and delivery expectations by the host community.

There are, however, occasions where the entire resort space, bounded by ocean, is privately owned as freehold land and where any relationships with the local community are limited to shared marine resources. Such scenarios provide both opportunities for comprehensive overall resort planning that can include an island’s culture heritage sites within the resort property as part of a value added the tourism experience but that can also lead to intentional neglect and even abuse. Malolo Lailai is such a case.

From a resort management perspective, Malolo Lailai differs significantly from other resort developments in Fiji, as the island is one of the few places which “had been bona fide bought by or given to Europeans and other foreigners prior to cession [in October 1874]” [112]. Moreover, it is an island that it owned in its entirety. By virtue of being bounded by water, Malolo Lailai not only shares no land boundary with neighbours who might have potentially competing land use interests, it also confines the movements of
guests. This provides the owners with freedom to develop the island on a long-term business trajectory with a cohesive and comprehensive resort development plan.

5.1. The Extinguishment of Past Histories in Favor of Twentieth-Century Settler Narrative

At least in theory, the owners had the ability to develop an inclusive tourism experience that extends beyond the sun, sea and sand experience and more along the lines suggested by King [9]. Clearly, that opportunity has not been taken up so far. All physical development followed the three “S” dictum, with the more recently added element of a retirement community (Figure 1). In fact, none of the environmental features are interpreted in any shape or form, nor is any pre-resort development, heritage which seems to be studiously ignored. The “library” of Plantation Island Resort carries a number of fish and shell identification books but does not have any information on the island’s cultural or environmental history, even though this is not that difficult to compile [84,88]. The provision of historic context of the pre-resort period as provided by the three resorts is limited to references in the resort “literature”, i.e., the promotional materials, e.g., [77,78,103], which are not only cursory but also factually incomplete. Of concern is that that modern media marketing, as well as websites and Facebook posts by visitors, pick up any easily accessible material and uncritically perpetuate the myth [113,114] and very often verbatim plagiarize the text provided by the resort [115].

Apart from the minimal reference to the Chinese copra lease in the resort “compendia”, there are no other references, let alone interpretative material, related to the plantation operations. The main dining area at Plantation Island resort is called the “Ole Copra Shed”, but there is no contextualization or explanation. From the perspective of a visitor staying at the resort, the island (apart from the obvious resort developments) appears to be a virgin, natural space disembodied from history. In the perception of most tourists, tropical islands are anyhow studded with coconuts, and, thus, coconut palms growing in the interior do not trigger any understanding of prior land use.

With the passage of time and the loss of eyewitnesses to the resorts’ development, historic “realities” prove to be fluid. Consequently, the physical heritage of the Malolo Lailai is subject to re- and misinterpretation. A good example is the short section of narrow-gauge railway track that was laid in conjunction with development the airstrip was levelled in 1971 [99,101]. As the railway fell into disuse, the remaining tracks, which can be found protruding along a path parallel to the runway (Figure 7), have now been conjecturally reinterpreted as remnants of a former copra train [116].

A map of the island provided by the bicycle rental agency Bula Bikes [74], labelled a number of primarily natural points of interest without further explanation, including the “Chinese Cemetery [sic]”. The A4-sized, single-paged map, still distributed in January 2018, was no longer available in November 2019. The orientational signboards displayed in the resorts are limited to the layout of the main resort accommodation and do not encompass the cemetery or other parts of the island. The cemetery is also not mentioned in any of the resort “compendia”.

The Musket Cove Guide, which is the most detailed, contains limited text on Fijian culture but makes no reference to the island’s sites [103]. Likewise, the overwhelming majority of photographs and other images decorating the walls of the “Trader’s Café” at Musket Cove are generic Fijian imagery with little if any relevance to Malolo Lailai. Yet, the Trader’s Café has on display a number of objects, such a Morgan TF sportscar and an array of suitcases, all being Dick Smith’s erstwhile property. Some of these items are displayed behind glass in a museum-like setting, which, coupled with photographs of Richard Smith († 2012) in his Australian days, manifest the personal aggrandizement and heroicisation of Smith and essentially represent a founder’s mythology for Musket Cove and its permanent retiree population. Essentially, the “real” history on the island began in 1966.
This mythology of carving a resort out of nothingness dovetails with the “heroic” status of Smith and Raffe as pioneers of the resort tourism industry in Fiji during the terminal years of British colonial rule (until 1970) [116–119]. It extinguishes past histories in favour of a post-occupation, twentieth-century colonial settler narrative. As such, it strongly echoes how primarily Anglo–Celtic settler societies in Australia and North America constructed their identity [120,121], as well as a euro-centric bipartite history, divided into a before and an after arrival period, with the former part either totally ignored or heavily devalued. This is a narrative where the heritage sites of the “before” are merely allowed to co-exist—provided they do not impact resort development objectives. It can be posited that the original resort developers were, consciously or subconsciously, imbued with a similar settler mentality and that, in the absence of any social controls and external influences, this narrative was allowed to be consolidated.

The author’s second stay coincided with the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the resort development. Setting aside some comments made online via the resort’s webpage [122], which repeats the minimalist the detail in the brochures, none of the publicity material made available on island, on public notices or announcements made any reference, let alone provided an acknowledgement of the pre-resort history or heritage of the island. The anniversary celebrations reinforced this now dominant narrative, which has been embraced by the retirement community that is developing on the island.

5.2. A Developer’s Moral Compass and the Autonomy Derived from Unfettered Ownership

The point was made earlier that, while the environmental sustainability of the resort development is subject to legal standards imposed by the host nation’s environmental protection authorities and planning departments, all parameters which are not governed by these, or that exceed the minimum requirements, are framed solely by the resort developer’s philosophy. The fact that Malolo Lailai has been freehold title since 1872 [84] meant that the island’s owners could develop their resorts without the need for any traditional approval
but also without the need for any external consultation and input, whatsoever. This is in contrast to neighbouring resort developments [123].

The autonomy to develop is derived from unfettered ownership and reinforced by legislative practice. While planning regulations and environmental standards are not static but are subject to political and administrative change [4,124,125], most legislation is not retrospective. Consequently, while breaches after the promulgation of the legislation can be prosecuted [54], developments that had occurred before relevant standards or tourism development polices had been introduced tend to remain exempt from compliance. In addition, malevolent actors can achieve environmentally detrimental development outcomes when the development is carried out incrementally and, under the guise of “maintenance”, often stays below the approval threshold.

Indeed, while jurisdictionally part of the Malolo District of Nadroga-Navosa Province (Western Division), legally enforceable planning controls were absent. Moreover, until the 2005 passage of the *Environmental Management Act*, no development required a formal impact assessment, and even under that Act, provisions are not very strong [126]. Moreover, in the absence of any formal archaeological or heritage survey, sites were not known to exist and thus escaped attention of the Fiji Museum as administrators of the *Preservation of Objects of Archaeological and Palaeontological Interest Act* (1940). That the three resort owners and developers had little interest in respecting, let alone preserving, Fijian heritage is evidenced by the fact that a pre-19th century Fijian cemetery was reputedly levelled to make way for the golf course development.

Avenues to exert external social pressure to comply with current standards are absent in settings where the resort is located on freehold land. Unless resort ownership is held by a larger group of private or public listed investors on whom pressure to comply can be brought to bear, a single person or small collective owners will be able to exercise unlimited autonomy derived from their unfettered ownership. Moreover, unless a deficit is blatantly obvious, the majority of a resort’s clientele will remain oblivious, even though, in general, they may be favourably inclined to embrace change [1,127].

In the Fijian setting, the meanings and values attributed physical and the socio-cultural environment are closely intertwined [64,128]. Since Malolo Lailai is freehold land without a resident Indigenous Fijian community, the iTaukei Land Trust Board has no jurisdiction over the management of the island and its relations with Fijian communities [9]. Traditional Fijian culture, in the context of Plantation Island resort, is reduced to commodified presentations of kava, a repertoire of “classic” Fijian songs during dinner (e.g., “Isa Lei”), occasional dances by resort staff and some mat weaving demonstrations with audience participation (mainly children). Upon arrival, visitors are welcomed with “classic” Fijian songs and a “traditional” shell necklace. The latter is a mass product imported from the Philippines or Indonesia (Figure 8) as is the majority of the souvenirs. There appears to be no obvious input into the program from the Fijian community of the neighbouring Malolo or adjacent islands.

In the absence of a comprehensive national strategy [126], there is no national and unified approach to and guidance for cultural heritage tourism, leaving any implementation to a resort owner’s individual ideology and philosophy [129].

In theory, the multi-layered heritage of Malolo Lailai affords the owners with a unique opportunity to diversify and enrich the visitor experience by value-adding the traditional triple “S” product with the addition of cultural and historic components. The leisure environment of the resorts would allow for a sensitive interpretation of cultural conflict, as exemplified by the events of 1840 across the bay; by the mutual opportunism displayed by Ratu Kini and John Thompson with the land transaction 1872; by the economic imperialism of James Borron capitalizing on the sell-off of the insolvent Mortgage and Agency Company of Australasia; and by the entrepreneurial ambitions of Wong Ket and, later, the three investors of the resort.
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Figure 8. “Authentic” Fijian necklace (“lei”) made from *Nassarius* sp. molluscs and imported from the Philippines or Indonesia (length 90 cm).

As noted, the autonomy derived from unfettered ownership provides an opportunity for the development of a meaningful interpretation of the heritage sites on the island as a value-adding component of tourism [130], if not to a wholistic positioning of the resort in its historic and physical environment. There is a risk of the commercialization of cultural heritage and associated historical knowledge, in particular where the interpretation does not take appropriately into account the meaning and significance of cultural heritage to the originators of that heritage. Any utilization of heritage sites is always at risk of being exposed to an over-exposure by the tourist gaze by associated dangers of commodification and selective falsification [5,131–133].

Clearly, in its present state, the Fijian village midden site with its exposed pottery is not suitable for interpretation, as a loss of cultural materials is likely during subsequent visitation. One the other hand, site stabilization measures, such as simple revegetation of the perimeter of the pond’s edge, would obscure the midden, thereby limiting losses to material exposed in the flower beds of the golf course.

Such considerations do not apply to the elements of plantation Chinese heritage. While it is not surprising that non-ethnic heritage tends to be sidelined in many situations of post-colonial cultural and political self-affirmation and self-determination [110], the lack of interpretive attention given towards the Chinese heritage elements requires more explanation. It appears that scant attention has been paid to the history and role of Chinese shop keepers, traders and planters [134,135] and that, throughout Fiji, no sites associated with Chinese heritage have been listed, protected or interpreted. While there is no evidence of overt racism in Fiji (unlike in Tonga) [136], the Chinese community is nonetheless marginalized. As such, then, the treatment of the Chinese heritage sites on Malolo Lailai conforms with the general “norms”. The Chinese plantation heritage presents a unique opportunity to address this imbalance rather than perpetuating marginalization towards the mainly Australian and New Zealand clientele of the resort. To what extent this can be realized depends on the resort developer’s moral compass.
That compass appears very much limited, however, without much indication of change. In this context, it is worth noting that resort management deemed a recently identified plain concrete pad for a WWII era aircraft spotter position to be of heritage value worth developing into a “war memorial site” [92]. Resort management is quoted as stating that “we have a lot of Australians and New Zealanders staying with us and we can already see how such a site could hold great meaning not only for them but for our Fijian soldiers” [92]. While the site precedes the twentieth-century settler narrative mentioned above, the fact that this site is singled out for interpretation is congruent with this as it a manifestation of a euro-centric colonial heritage narrative.

6. Conclusions
The initial resort development of Malolo Lailai occurred during the largely unregulated pioneering days in the late 1960s and early 1970, giving free reign to unfettered concepts. As environmentally and socially sustainable tourist developments sprung up elsewhere in the Mamanucas and the nearby Yasawas, nothing has changed conceptually on Malolo Lailai, which still relies on the “tried and true” sun, sea and sand model.

Rather than drawing on the extant heritage sites as present or future assets, the sites are merely allowed to co-exist, provided as they do not impact resort development objectives. As such, the resort development is a variation of an Anglo–Celtic colonial settler narrative extinguishing past histories in favour of a post-occupation narrative.

The preceding deliberation and reflection on the resort development and associated narratives on Malolo Lailai has highlighted the pivotal role of an individual’s agency in situations where a resort’s land is freehold and thus not subject to community obligations and where its foundational development occurred at a time when there was a vacuum of environmental protection and planning controls. In such settings, any environmentally and socially sustainable tourism development relies on the moral compass and development philosophies of the developer. Impervious to external controls, the only avenue for direct change is through pressure by the tourist clientele or through change of ownership.

In the light of the discussion in this paper, a case can be made that future changes to environmental planning legislation that affect resort developments may want to consider provisions that allow, at the least, a reassessment of resort practices with obligations for rectification if required. The bill for a Heritage Act, submitted in 2016 and again in 2021 [137,138], only covers sites registered under the World Heritage Convention [139], and this has no transformative value. This it may be advisable to strengthen the provisions of the Environmental Management Act (2005) and, in particular, those of the Preservation of Objects of Archaeological and Palaeontological Interest Act (1940).

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