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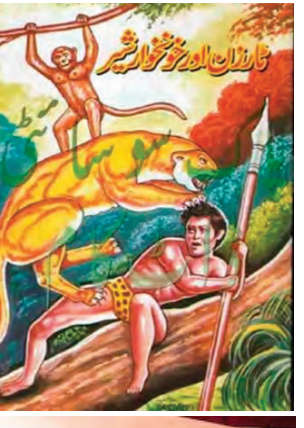

The Phantom Speaks Fijian: Cultural and Political Ambivalence in *Bera-na-Liva*

Thomas Vranken, Asela Tuisawau, and Paul Geraghty

In the early 1950s, a study by the Suva-based Educational Research Institute suggested Fijians had relatively little interest in comics--indeed, comics proved less popular among the Fijian villagers who were surveyed than vernacular religious material or even simplified English-language prose fiction (Gurrey, 1955: 114). Over the next 25 years, comics became increasingly prevalent in Fiji; but the comics that were available in the country during this period were globally syndicated foreign imports (such as Charles M. Shultz's "Peanuts" and Sydney Jordan's science fiction strip "Jeff Hawke") targeting the country's colonial expatriate class and urban English-literate elite.[1] As a result, when a copy of Lee Falk's *The Phantom* makes a cameo appearance, at the start of influential Fijian author Vanessa Griffin's 1974 short story, "Candles Glowing Orange," it does so as a discarded relic of the previous day's entertainments, abandoned under the bed of the story's white eight-year-old protagonist (Griffin, 1974: 61); and, aside from the occasional comic-pastiche advertisement for Colgate toothpaste, comics did not appear at all in *Nai Lalakai*, Fiji's main Fijian-language newspaper.[2] By 1981, however, Makareta Waqavonovono was able to report that comics were "widely read by people of all ages throughout the central Pacific," including in Fiji (Waqavonovono, 1981: 18). As Waqavonovono goes on to acknowledge, perhaps the most significant milestone in this shift was the publication, in 1978, of Fiji's first vernacular-language comic--a seven-issue translation of *The Phantom-Bera-na-Liva*.[3]

Kevin Patrick has written of *The Phantom*'s curious status as a comic, "all but forgotten in [its] American homeland," that "has enjoyed greater success and popular recognition abroad" (Patrick, 2017: 3). In fact, 1978 was also the year a Tok Pisin (creole) translation of *The Phantom* appeared in another newly independent Pacific nation, 3,000 kilometres to the west of Fiji, Papua New Guinea.[4] However, whereas *The Phantom*'s time in Papua New Guinea--and the highland shield decoration that the Tok Pisin edition of *The Phantom* inspired--has become somewhat legendary among *Phantom* fan communities (see, for instance, "Wantok"; and Williams, 2022), the comic's Fijian language translation has, so far, been largely overlooked.[5]

The transformation of *The Phantom* into *Bera-na-Liva* was a project devised, directed, and overseen by Ro Mosese Varasikete Tuisawau. Tuisawau was the oldest son of the paramount chief of Rewa (a major Fijian state centered on the Rewa delta to the east of Suva). However, Tuisawau occupied

a liminal social position, his title as paramount chief being recognized only unofficially by some in the iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) community. As a result, throughout his life, Tuisawau maintained an impressive array of professional roles, ranging from school teacher to local politician to indigenous land claims "bush lawyer," and, more generally, small businessman and entrepreneur. As a teacher, Tuisawau often employed comics as teaching aids, assigning them as texts for his students to translate as part of their assessment. For assistance on *Bera-na-Liva*, however, Tuisawau turned not to his students, but to members of his family, including this article's second author, Tuisawau's youngest daughter.[6]

Just as Tuisawau occupied a liminal status, so too the comic he created. Each issue of *Bera-na-Liva* proclaimed itself the product of an official sounding company, "Vitikomiks Publishers," of 92 Milverton Road, Suva. In reality, however, Vitikomiks maintained only one paid employee (Tuisawau's niece), and 92 Milverton Road was the Tuisawau family home.[7] Moreover, Tuisawau formally secured permission to publish a Fijian-language translation of *The Phantom* from King Features Syndicate, the American media organization that owned (and continues to own) the global rights to *The Phantom* and *Phantom*-related content; and, as a result, each issue of *Bera-na-Liva* was a direct translation of the *Phantom* comic books produced in Sydney, under a parallel license agreement between King Features and Frew Publications. However, the Tuisawau adaptation method was more underground or zine-like than corporate, and primarily involved Tuisawau family members handwriting Fijian translations onto stickers that were then used to cover over the printed English text found in the Frew editions. Finally, issues two and four of *Bera-na-Liva* reminded readers that they had been printed by The Fiji Times & Herald Ltd., and contemporaneous articles in *The Fiji Times* (Fiji's main daily newspaper) and *Nai Lalakai* reported that 25,000 copies of the first issue had been produced, in a country whose population was just over 600,000 at the time (*The Fiji Times*, 1978: 2; *Nai Lalakai*, 1978: 10). Again, though, in practice *Bera-na-Liva* was printed on *The Fiji Times*' machines at irregular hours of the night, and even then, only because Tuisawau enjoyed a personal friendship with the newspaper's editor, Vijendra Kumar.

Aaron Humphrey has written of the shift that took place in indigenous Australian uses of *The Phantom*'s characters and iconography, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. While these uses were initially community led, amateur, localized, and subversive, Humphrey suggests King Features soon reasserted its control over *The Phantom*, ensuring indigenous Australian manifestations of its intellectual property became increasingly official, authorized, and centrally controlled.[8] In Fiji's indigenous community, though, as this article will explore, *Bera-na-Liva* hovered simultaneously between these poles, being partly official and partly amateur, partly colonial and partly postcolonial, partly an extension of global culture and partly a

local subversion of that global culture.

A Speech from the Phantom

The first issue of *Bera-na-Liva* begins with a *vosa* (speech) in which Bera-na-Liva directly addresses the comic's readers (this speech was printed only in Fijian, so we provide first the Fijian original and then an English translation of our own):

> *Ni sa bula na turaga, marama, cauravou, gone yalewa kei kemuni na gone lalai e na vei yasai Viti. Au marau vakalevu me'u kidavaki kemuni yani e na drau ni pepa oqo. Au dau gadreva tu e na dua na gauna balavu me bau talanoataki vakaiyaloyalo vei kemuni na i taukei e Viti (ena vosa vakaviti) na veika au sa rawata oti e veiyasai vuravura e na noqu valataka na dina, dodonu kei na veika kecega e vinaka. Ia au sa vulica ka kila na nomuni vosa ka mani rawa kina me da veitalanoa me vaka ko sa wilika tiko oqo e ligamu … E sa tu talega e dua na i wase ni vola me baleti kemuni ka via tosoya nomuni vuli vosa vakaperetania. E rau na dau volai veitikivi toka e rua na mala ni vosa ka dua vata ga na kedrau i balebale. E dua e volai e na vosa vakaperetania ka dua e volai e na vosa vakaviti … Au nuitaka ni ko na taleitaka nai talanoa yaloyalo oqo ka vuli talega mai kina. Maroroya na nomuni dui vola me baleta ga na nomuni dui vuvale (vinaka sara me dau voli e rua na kopi) ka kakua ni veisoliyaka ka ni ko ni na rawa ni dau railesuva ena veigauna mai muri. Me da maroroya noda mataniciva ka kakua ni kolotaka vei ira na vuaka.* ("Vosa ko Bera-na-Liva," 1978a: 1).

> [Greetings gentlemen, ladies, boys, girls and little ones all around Fiji. I'm extremely delighted to welcome you all on this page. I have wanted for a long time to share this comic with the natives of Fiji (in the Fijian language) with everything I have achieved around the world by protecting what is true, right and good. Therefore, I have studied and understood your language so that we could converse just as you are reading this in your hands … There's also one section of the book for those that want to learn or further their understanding of the English language. There will be two words written adjacent to each other that have the same meaning. One will be written in English and the other in Fijian … I hope you will enjoy this comic and learn from it as well. Keep your copy safe within your family (it's best to have two copies) and do not give away your copy to anyone else, so that you can reread it in the future. Let's protect our pearls and don't throw them to the swine.][9]

In this opening statement, the reader's attention is drawn to the comic's bilingual glossary, at the back of the issue, in which English and Fijian words are brought together and placed side by side. But this statement also itself performs a broader juxtaposition of Western and Oceanic values, practices, and epistemologies.

On the one hand, this vosa is cast as an extension of Fijian oral culture: this is not just a "speech," but a speech that begins with Bera-na-Liva obeying the conventions of Fijian oratory, by addressing readers in descending order

of social status ("Greetings gentlemen, ladies, boys, girls and little ones"), just as a person would, traditionally, when delivering a speech at a large, mixed, Fijian gathering. Indeed, in his vosa, Bera-na-Liva refers to his relationship with the comic's readers as a *veitalanoa*: an informal mode of oral interaction, storytelling, and exchange (Cagivinaka, *et al.*, 2024: 537). At the same time, though, this opening "speech" is also highly self-conscious of its own materiality and of its existence as a piece of (foreigner-introduced) print culture: Bera-na-Liva's veitalanoa takes place "on this page," in a magazine that, Bera-na-Liva emphasizes, "you are reading in your hands." Moreover, while, in this strangely material veitalanoa, Bera-na-Liva nods to Pacific communalism ("I … share this comic with the natives of Fiji") he also maintains a lingering Euro-American paranoia about the need to maintain one's private property ("do not give away your copy to anyone else"). In his opening statement, then, Bera-na-Liva promotes a hybrid, Euro-Pacific, approach--urging the reader to possessively protect the comic, for the sake of their family, from the biblical "swine" who make up their broader community.[10] In these contradictions, *Bera-na-Liva* becomes like the fictional expatriate hero that it was named after: a *kaivalagi* (visiting or resident foreigner) with a foot in two worlds, belonging fully to none.

Lightning Is Slower

Issues of the Frew *Phantom* series that *Bera-na-Liva* was based upon routinely begin with the same one-page reminder of the Phantom's backstory. The Phantom, we are told in this opening, "For those who came in late," is the descendant of an Englishman washed up on the shores of Bengali (elsewhere "Bangalla"), a fictional country in Africa.[11] At the start of each fortnightly issue, spear-wielding members of the Phantom's tribe of "friendly pigmies" gather around a campfire, marvelling at the Phantom's supposed immortality. At their gathering, a member of the group breathlessly reiterates "The ghost who walks can never die," oblivious to the Phantom's existence as a costumed persona employed by a paternal succession of mortal Englishmen (see, **Fig. 1**).

As a title, then, "The Phantom" operates as a racist patronizing parody of supposed indigenous gullibility, ignorance, and superstition.

Immediately below Bera-na-Liva's opening vosa, readers find a seemingly insignificant two-paragraph feature--"The Universe"/"Na Vuravura ni Maliwa Lala"--that implicitly emphasizes the ways in which *Bera-na-Liva* (lightning is slower), as a reworked title, radically inverts the English title's politics and meaning. In the magazine, these paragraphs are provided in both English and Fijian. As page layout is an important element in our analysis, we provide an image of the first issue's entire first page (see,

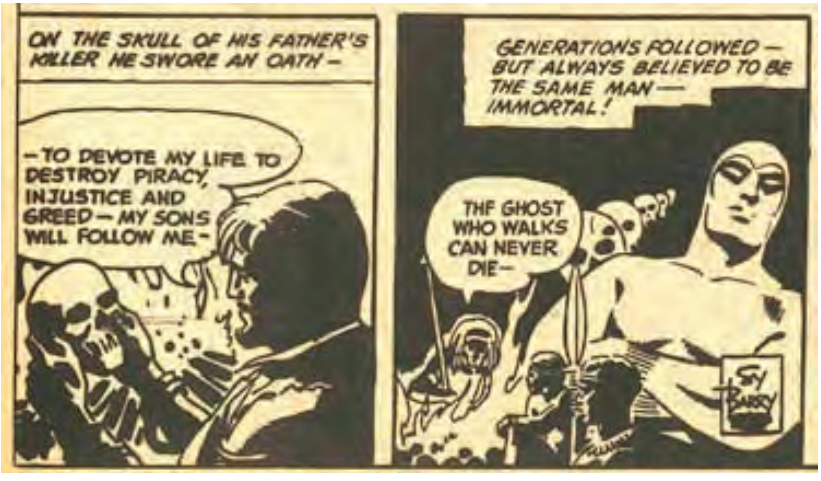

Fig. 1. Panels from the opening, "For those who came in late" section of a 1976 Frew *Phantom* (Falk, 1976: 3). Thomas Vranken's personal collection.

Fig. 2) as well as selected quotations from the paragraphs in question.

> When you look at the sky through a telescope or read what scientists tell you about the universe, three things will amaze you: size, distance and speed. For instance, the Sun is about 93 million miles from our own planet but it takes the Sun's rays only about eight minutes to travel this vast distance … It must be firmly kept in mind that radio broadcast and all light rays, whether from the Sun, stars, electric torch or light, ordinary fire, kerosene lamp or whatever, all travel at the same speed, namely 186,000 (one hundred and eighty-six thousand) miles in ONE SECOND ("The Universe," 1978: 1).

> Ni ko vakadikeva na lomalagi e na vakadodorairai lelevu se ko wilika nodra i vakamacala na kena dau na maliwa lala, e tolu na ka ko na kurabui kina; na kena vakaitamera, na kena yawa kei na kena totolo. Taura mada na kena qo: na yawa ni matanisiga mai noda vuravura e rauta tiko e 93 na milioni na maile … E dodonu me nanumi deivaki tiko ni rarama kece, veitalia se rarama ni siga, kalokalo, cina livaliva, buka, cina karasini se cava tale ka vakatalega kina na domo kacivaki ena retio era tauvata taucoko ga na totolo ni nodra cici, a ya, e 186,000 (dua na drau walusagavulu ka ono na udolu) na maile e na dua NA SEKODI ("Na Vuravura ni Maliwa Lala," 1978a: 1).

Just as comics rely on a collaborative hermeneutics of active connectivity--with readers unconsciously contributing to the meaning-making process by imaginatively bridging the narratological gaps literalized by the white gutter dividing the panels--so too periodical studies typically views the individual components of magazine issues as networked, relational, and mutually informing (see, for instance, Brake, 2013: 54; and James, 1982: 349).[12] Whereas *The Phantom*'s English title privileged Western epistemologies over a satirized European projection of indigenous epistemologies, *Bera-na-Liva*'s

Fig. 2. The first page of the first issue of *Bera-na-Liva* (1978: 1). Paul Geraghty's personal collection.

page layout ensures these paragraphs are radical in their equality, for these English and Fijian paragraphs are placed side by side--separated from one another by a thick black line (as if in nascent comic panels of their own), but immediately adjacent to one another and horizontally level with one another.

Moreover, whereas the hierarchy implicit within *The Phantom*'s

English title was based upon an underlying dichotomy of Western scientific rationalism versus indigenous "superstition," these paragraphs proclaim an indigeneity fully capable of comprehending the statistical intricacies of Western scientific understandings of the world. Reading *Bera-na-Liva*'s title in this context pushes us to notice the ways in which the Fijian comic's title performs a subject shift to do this too--inverting the English title's subject to make the focus not a product of darkness (a phantom), but a source of light (lightning). In the process, the comic's Fijian title infuses the comic with all of the cultural associations that accompany "enlightenment," the light of education, and the light of Christianity (in the sixth *Bera-na-Liva*, an entry on Louis Pasteur refers to "na rarama ni vuli kei na kila" [the light of learning and knowledge], ("Ko Louis Pasteur," 1978: 28); while the second *Bera-na-Liva* begins with both additional facts about the sun and the *me tu na … rarama* [let there be light] verse from Genesis, (*Bera-na-Liva*, 1978b: 2). As such, *Bera-na-Liva*'s title speaks to a kind of moderate Pacific postcolonialism: one in which European discourses of indigenous inferiority and ignorance are refuted, but in a way that still supports the colonial "civilizing" mission.

"Chief Leone, Can You See That This Treasure Is Returned to Its Rightful Owner?"

As mentioned in this article's introduction, the comics in the *Bera-na-Liva* series were translations of the Frew *Phantom* comics published in Sydney, in the years immediately preceding *Bera-na-Liva*'s release. In these translations, characters are provided with Fijian names, some detail is omitted, and the tone shifts slightly away from comedy and towards moralism.[13] As this article's third author, Paul Geraghty, has mentioned elsewhere, *Bera-na-Liva*'s translation also exists as a small but important example of the period's broader movement away from printing Fijian in an artificial foreigner-inspired "exonorm" and towards printing Fijian in a more idiomatic style (Geraghty, 2003: 8). For the most part, though, *Bera-na-Liva*'s translation was fairly faithful to Frew's *Phantom*. Perhaps more significant was Tuisawau's choice of which Frew stories to translate in the first place. Because *Bera-na-Liva*'s seven issues were anything but translations of seven consecutive issues from Frew; and, paying a structuralist's attention to the plots of the *Bera-na-Liva* stories, a pattern starts to emerge.

The first issue of *Bera-na-Liva* was a translation of the first story from Frew 620 and the second story from Frew 572: "The Stolen Ring" and "Little Girl." In "The Stolen Ring," a white man steals one of the Phantom's protection rings, and uses it to defraud native villagers out of their treasure; order is restored when the Phantom reveals the white man to have been an imposter, and the Phantom arranges with one of the native chiefs for the

stolen treasure to be restored to its rightful native owners (the quotation that forms this section's title is our translation of a line in this issue of *Bera-na-Liva*: *"Ratu Leone, rawa ni ko raica me ra dui suka tale nai yau oqo ki vei ira ka kena i taukei*" (*Bera-na-Liva*, 1978a: 17: see, **Fig. 3**). In "Little Girl," a young princess is kidnapped, in an effort to surreptitiously usurp her

Fig. 3. A panel from the first issue of *Bera-na-Liva* (1978: 17). Paul Geraghty's personal collection.

kingdom; order is restored when the Phantom uncovers the conspiracy and returns the princess to her rightful place on the throne. The fourth issue of *Bera-na-Liva* was a translation of Frew 610--"S.S. Blitz"--in which a gang of white criminals use overwhelming force to steal valuables from banks and jewelry stores across Bangalla, while remaining outside of Bangallan law enforcement jurisdiction by mooring their yacht in international waters; order is restored when the Phantom outwits the white gang and allows Bangalla's police force to arrest them. The fifth issue of *Bera-na-Liva* was a translation of the stories from Frew 624, "The Swamp Dragon" and "The Hunters." In "The Hunters," a group of white hunters invade the Phantom's prelapsarian island, "Eden," so as to prey upon the innocent animals that live there; order is restored when the Phantom apprehends the white hunters, ensuring the animals he watches over are returned to a state of peace and order. The sixth issue of *Bera-na-Liva* was a translation of the second story from Frew 607, "Joonkar and the Slavers," in which a black emperor is captured by foreign slave traders; order is restored when the Phantom rescues the emperor and returns him to his throne.[14]

Bera-na-Liva was published only eight years after Fiji gained independence from the United Kingdom. In this period, while producing *Bera-na-Liva* in his spare time, Tuisawau's primary focus was the settling of land disputes and the reclamation of native land lost to the colonial government (indeed, 15 years later, Tuisawau would become deputy leader of the Fijian Nationalist Party (Lal, 1993: 292). As such, it seems telling that the *Phantom* stories Tuisawau chose to translate and transform into *Bera-na-Liva* return obsessively to narratives of commodity reclamation and political restoration. Indeed, the *Phantom*'s fictional Bangallan setting ensured that *Bera-na-Liva*'s stories of native triumph took place in an uncannily Fiji-like nation, of traditional villages and modern cities, that had also only recently won its independence from the United Kingdom.[15] However, *Bera-na-Liva*'s postcolonial politics were always tempered by the Phantom's ethnicity--these might be stories that reinforce anticolonial narratives of native triumph, but they are also stories that inevitably reinforce colonial narratives of the paternal white protector.

Conclusion

The English title that haunts *Bera-na-Liva* ("The Phantom") invokes an entity caught between two worlds. In this article, we have revealed some of the ways in which *Bera-na-Liva* maintained a similarly liminal status, as a quasi-official cultural product, simultaneously Western and Fijian, that promotes a politics at once colonial and postcolonial.

However, while the *Phantom* stories that Tuisawau chose to translate into Fijian provided *Bera-na-Liva* with a latent, ambivalent, political didacticism, Tuisawau's earlier career as a teacher--at Queen Victoria School (an institution established, in the 19th Century, to educate the sons of Fiji's high chiefs) (Boladuadua, 2022)--ensured *Bera-na-Liva*'s didacticism is most overtly pedagogic.[16] Indeed, as we have discussed, the comics' first issue began with two paragraphs of scientific facts and a speech in which Tuisawau's comic implored its readers to "learn … from it" ("vuli … mai kina") ("Vosa ko Bera-na-Liva," 1978: 1); and, reading through the issues, one encounters with increasing frequency not just full glossaries at the back of the issue, but mini-glossaries in the comic itself, in which the Fijian words used on that page of the comic are translated back into English (see, **Fig. 4**). For, as if to epitomize the comic's ambivalence, *Bera-na-Liva* was promoted sometimes as a work designed for iTaukei wanting to learn English ("Vosa ko Bera-na-Liva," 1978: 1) and, at other times, as a work designed for tourists and those wanting to learn Fijian ("Did you Know the Phantom Speaks Fijian?" 1978: 2).

Fig. 4. A page bearing two glossary stickers, from the fourth issue of *Bera-na-Liva* (1978c: 14). Paul Geraghty's personal collection.

As Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey have noted, America's mid-20th-Century "anti-comics crusade" continues to maintain a significant hold over understandings of the medium and its social history in the United States and the West more broadly (Baetens and Frey, 2015: 27-53). In Oceania, conversely, comics have never inspired the kind of moral panic that they have

in other parts of the world. Instead, in the wake of *Bera-na-Liva*, the small number of indigenous Pacific comics that have been produced continue to operate within a pedagogically, morally, and culturally didactic mould, albeit with less ambivalent complexity (e.g., Vanuatu's *Kleva i No save Winim AIDS* (2005) and the various vernacular comics produced by the Bible Society of the South Pacific).[17]

Of late, though, manga has developed a particularly strong fanbase in the Pacific, and the authors of this article feel that comics hold great potential in this region. While Pacific literature has long been read as an extension of Oceanian orature, influential I-Kiribati scholar-poet-activist, Teresia Teaiwa, has provocatively argued against restricting Pacific literature's origins to orature alone. Instead, Teaiwa has drawn attention to the many forms of visual semiotics found across the precolonial Pacific: from symbolic *tapa*/*masi* designs, to tattooing motifs, to petroglyphy. "The logical extension of my proposition," Teaiwa proclaimed in sentiments we share, "is that Pacific literature is not just about writing but is more broadly about the visual … Liberating Pacific literature from a singular and oral genealogical origin opens it up to multiple sources of inspiration" (Teaiwa, 2010: 731, 735). Going one step beyond *Bera-na-Liva*, by building on the Pacific's visual semiotics, would make for a truly exciting addition to the comics medium.

Endnotes

[1] Somewhat surprisingly, despite being dominated by British perspectives in this period, the first comic to appear in *The Fiji Times* was the Danish pantomime "Ferd'nand," by Henning Dahl Mikkelsen ("Ferd'nand" began appearing in the newspaper in the late 1950s). In the early 1960s, the newspaper expanded its selection, and began serializing Bob Barnes' middleclass suburban American strip, "The Better Half," and Stan Cross' ocker Australian comedy strip, "Wally and the Major." By 1970, comics occupied the better part of a page in *The Fiji Times*, with each issue featuring three or four panels from "Peanuts," Alex Graham's "Fred Bassett," "Jeff Hawke," and Howard Post's "The Dropouts."

[2] This pastiche-comic advertisement for Colgate toothpaste--"E Tarova na Boi ca ni Nomu i Cegu na Colgate, Kei na ca ni Batimu" (Colgate Prevents Bad Breath and Tooth Decay)--features a once-spurned, vaguely iTaukei-looking, woman who learns the benefits of Colgate toothpaste in securing the attentions of a romantic interest. The advertisement appeared in multiple issues of *Nai Lalakai* in 1975 (see, for instance, *Nai Lalakai*, "E Tarova," 1975: 5).

[3] Waqavonovono writes, "The first of a locally-owned vernacular comic, a Fijian version of the popular Phantom series--*Bera-na-Liva* hit the market

in Suva in late 1978. It made popular reading for the non-English speaking population" (Waqavonovono, 1981: 18).

[4] The 1978 Tok Pisin editions of *The Phantom* were compiled from Tok Pisin translations of *The Phantom* that had been serialized in Papua New Guinea's Tok Pisin newspaper, *Wantok Niuspepa*, five years earlier.

[5] To date, the most extensive overview of *Bera-na-Liva* is a 200-word entry on <https://thephantom.fan>. *Bera-na-Liva*'s relative absence from popular and scholarly discussions is, no doubt, partly because of language barriers and partly because of the extreme scarcity of extant copies of *Bera-na-Liva*, today. For the purposes of this article, we were fortunate to be able to study those issues held in Paul Geraghty's personal collection: viz., issues one, two, three, four, and six. Unfortunately, we were unable to locate copies of issues five and seven. For generously providing us with scans of additional copies of issues three and four, thanks go to Eleanor Kleiber, Pacific Specialist Librarian in the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Hawaiian & Pacific Collections. For generously providing an additional scan of issue two, thanks go also to Frank, host of the fan website, "The Phantom: The Ghost Who Walks."

[6] So as to avoid complications arising from his, at times, somewhat precarious financial position, Tuisawau listed his wife (Leba Losana Tuisawau) and his oldest son (Ro Lutunauga) as "*Dairekita*" (Director) of the first issue of *Bera-na-Liva*, and then just his wife as "*Manidia Dairekita*" (Managing Director) of the comic's six subsequent issues.

[7] 92 Milverton Road is the address of Vitikomiks Publishers listed in issues 2 onwards. Issue 1 lists the company's address as 26 Robertson Road, the location of a family office.

[8] Humphrey tracks this shift from an "entirely unauthorised" appropriation of the Phantom--in an Indigenous-produced, "winkingly risqué," three-page comic (*Why Wanda Said No in Broome*), designed to encourage condom use during the era's AIDs epidemic--to fully licensed utilizations of *The Phantom* in campaigns targeted at indigenous Australians by Australian federal government bodies, such as the Australian Electoral Commission and the Family Court of Australia.

[9] With thanks to Ilimotama Waqanicakau for the first draft of this and the other translations provided in this article. These first draft translations were subsequently verified (and occasionally amended) by this article's second and third authors, Asela Tuisawau and Paul Geraghty.

[10] Waqavonovono's account, three years after the publication of *Bera-na-Liva*, suggests this directive may have been cheerfully ignored by many readers. "Like the vernacular newspapers," Waqavonovono reported in 1981, "the lifespan of comics is usually long and one can easily spot tattered comics still circulating from one household to another" (Waqavonovono, 1981: 18). The Biblical phrase "pearls before swine" had been further popularized in Fijian by a didactic song--"Na Mataniciwa au a Vakawaletaka"--in which

listeners are urged to appreciate the importance of education.

[11] The Phantom was initially set in "Luntok" (a fictional "British protectorate off the coast of Sumatra"). The comic's setting then became vaguely Indian, and Luntok was renamed "Bengali"; before, in the 1960s, becoming vaguely African, and being renamed "Bangalla" (Patrick, 2020: 102, 104).

[12] For a classic account of comics' hermeneutics of connection, see Scott McCloud's chapter on "closure," in *Understanding Comics*, "Blood in the Gutter" (McCloud, 1994: 60-93). For periodical studies, see, for instance, Laurel Brake's suggestion that, in magazines, "each piece is instantly and always contextualized, embedded in a matrix of other pieces which make up the issue in which it appears, and extend to the issues before and after" (Brake 2013, 54); see also Louis James' earlier assertion that, in magazines, "each element is modified by the whole" (James, 1982: 349).

[13] In the second issue of *Bera-na-Liva*, for instance, Frew's "Nick" and "Reema" become *Bera-na-Liva*'s "Niki" and "Kesa"; Frew's "Blue Dragon" bar becomes simply a generic "*Kalavo Otela*" ("club hotel"); and, at the end of the comic, when Kesa/Reema asks him how her grandfather knew he would be able to help them, Bera-na-Liva replies not "Because grandpas always know, Reema" (as the Phantom does in Frew) but "*Uasivi na gone vakaro rogo Kesa*" ("great are the children who obey Kesa"). Omitting detail was also one way of ensuring *Bera-na-Liva*'s handwritten Fijian text was able to fit into the space afforded by Frew's printed text.

[14] The second issue of *Bera-na-Liva* was a translation of Frew 590, while the third issue was a translation of Frew 528, and the seventh issue of *Bera-na-Liva* was a translation of Frew 558.

[15] As Robert Aman notes, Bangalla gained independence from the United Kingdom in the 1962 *Phantom* story, "The Mysterious Ambassador" (Aman, 2020: 27).

[16] Thus, one of *Bera-na-Liva*'s regular features was a bizarre Socratic dialogue, in which "*Selekomu*" (Sherlock Holmes) teaches scientific facts to "*Doketa Watisoni*" (Doctor Watson), *sans* pipe, deerstalker, 221B Baker Street, or indeed any reference to criminal detection.

[17] Most, if not all, of the comics that have been produced in the Pacific since *Bera-na-Liva* are either: a. thinly veiled public service announcements produced by government authorities or socially aware non-government organizations; b. efforts to transform traditional Pacific stories into comics, or c. a combination of the two. Examples include not just Vanuatu's above-mentioned Bislama (pigeon) comic, *Kleva i No save Winim AIDS*, but: Tui Ledua's *The Search for the Groovy Grotto* (2013) (commissioned by the Wildlife Conservation Society); Ledua's *O Teri kei Kalavo* (2015) (commissioned and published by the Fijian Government's Ministry for iTaukei Affairs); Clarence Dass' *Sala ni Yalo: Path of the Shades* (2023); and Netane Siuhengalu's *The First King* (unpublished)--Tonga's traditional

Aho'ietu story in the form of a comic (created during Siuhengalu's master's degree) that he describes as "a rich source of information in the field of education especially for the Tongan diaspora" (Siuhengalu, 2010: 4). More light-hearted comics can also be found in the University of the South Pacific's student magazine (which Thomas Vranken coedits), *Niu*: <https://www.usp.ac.fj/literature/niu-usp-student-magazine>.

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