

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Cansu Yersal, B.A.

Tabu (1931)

F.W. Murnau (1888-1931)

OVERVIEW

Auteur: Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was a German film director, screenwriter, and producer. Murnau had an obsession with film since his childhood. He studied philology at the University of Berlin; and art history, and literature at the University of Heidelberg. In WWI, Murnau served as a company commander. He joined the Imperial German Flying Corps and flew missions. After the end of WWI, he established his film studio with Conrad Veidt. His noteworthy films are *Der Januskopft* (1920), an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *Phantom* (1922); *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922), an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; *The Last Laugh* (1924); *Faust* (1926); *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927); *City Girl* (1930); and *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* (1931), a docufiction. Murnau died in a car accident in 1931.

Film: *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* is a 1931 American silent film directed by F.W. Murnau. The film was Murnau's last film as he died after an automobile accident on March 11, 1931, which was a week before the film's premiere in New York City. The film is a docufiction, meaning a cinematographic combination of documentary and fiction, and is split into two chapters: The first chapter is called *Paradise*. The second one is called *Paradise Lost*. The first chapter is about two lovers living on an island until they are forced to flee it because the girl is chosen as a holy maid to the gods. The second chapter is about the couple's life on a colonized island and their exploitation by Western civilization. Floyd Crosby who was the cinematographer of the film won the *Academy Award for Best Cinematography* for his work.

Historical background: *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* is a docufiction. A docufiction is a film genre that tries to capture reality as it is but also introduces fictional elements in order to strengthen the representation of reality. The title of the film comes from the Polynesian concept of 'tapu' which denotes something holy or sacred with "spiritual restriction" or "implied prohibition". It involves rules and prohibitions. The English word taboo is derived from this concept and dates to Captain Cook's visit to Tonga in 1777.

CHARACTERS

The boy Matahi: A young boy from the island of Bora Bora who is in love with Reri
The girl Reri: A young girl in love with Matahi, who is chosen as a maiden sacred to the gods
The old warrior Hitu: An aged emissary who brings a message from the chief of the island of Fanuman
The policeman: A western man reporting the events that happen on the island
The captain: The captain of the ship that arrives on the island of Bora Bora
The Chinese trader Kong Ah: The man who make Matahi sign all the bills

SYNOPSIS

Emissary Hitu arrives on the island of Bora Bora on an important mission. He brings a message from the chief of the island of Fanuman. A sacred maiden has died and the girl Reri has been chosen as the new maiden sacred to the gods. She has been chosen because of her royal blood and virtue. Because she is now a sacred maiden, she is *tabu* which means that men must not touch her or cast upon her the eye of desire. If this tabu is not obeyed, the penalty is death. This news is devastating for Reri and the boy Matahi because they love each other and do not want to be separated from one another. Matahi sneaks Reri off the ship late at night and eventually they reach a French colony. There they start a new life where Matahi is a talented pearl diver. Because Matahi does not understand the concept of money, he signs bills for everyone during a celebration. The local policeman receives a document from the French government that promises a reward for the return of the two. Matahi bribes the policeman with one of his pearls who then leaves them alone. Later on, Hitu arrives on the island. He demands that Reri come back

with him or Matahi will be put to death. Reri does not tell Matahi about what happened. Instead of telling about what happened, Reri decides to buy schooner tickets. When Matahi goes to buy the tickets, however, the staff takes his money as a partial payment of his previous debt from the celebration. Hitu returns with a spear and threatens the two once more. As Matahi is asleep, Reri agrees to return to Bora Bora so she can save his life. In the morning, Matahi decides to go dive in a *tabu* region of the island where he can find pearls to pay his debt in full. While he is diving to find pearls, Reri writes a farewell letter to him. Then she leaves with Hitu. When Matahi comes back to the hut, he finds out that Reri has gone with Hitu. He starts swimming after their boat. He manages to hold a rope of the boat, however, Hitu cuts it off. Matahi courageously swims after them. However, he eventually drowns in the sea.

PLOT

First Chapter: Paradise

Fish hunting The story takes place in a land of enchantment remote in the South Seas, the island of Bora-Bora still untouched by the hand of civilization. The film starts with a group of young islanders fishing. They all seem happy with their spears ready in their hands. One of the young men called Matahi throws a spear at a fish that gets caught. The men take the fish out of the sea. Matahi prepares to throw another spear into the sea. Another fish gets caught. He throws the spear again a third time and one more fish gets caught.



Play in the waterfall After fishing the young men go to a waterfall. The waterfall refreshes them. Matahi puts on a flower headpiece. Then they walk further among the bushes. Behind the bushes, there is another waterfall where the girls are bathing and having fun. The young men join the girls and they start swimming together. Matahi sneaks around and catches one of the girls. The girl takes the flower headpiece that he is wearing and throws it to one of the girls who seem to be enjoying the young man's joke. The two girls start fighting each other in a friendly manner. The young man comes to tease them apart.



Matahi consoles Reri One of the girls called Reri sits by herself, apparently downhearted. Matahi consoles her. The young man gives flower headpieces to the sad girl.



LOVERS SEPARATED

The arrival of a ship from another island Suddenly, a man shouts about the arrival of something. The young men gather and take out their boats and rows. The whole village gathers and starts running. Out on the sea, there is a ship that is approaching the island. The young men and women start rowing their boats to get closer to and welcome the ship. At that moment, one of the small children with a piggy in his hand calls out to the boats.



Native men and women's message from Fauna On the ship, there are old, native men and women sitting on the ground. One of the old men starts reading a statement on which it is written: 'Greeting from the chief of Fauna to his chief of Bora-Bora brought by Hitu worthiest of my subjects.' Meanwhile, Reri who is holding on to the ropes looks at Matahi who is bringing the small child and his piggy by his boat.



The young girl Reri is chosen as the sacred virgin The old man continues to read the letter: '...Upon you and your people, I confer the highest honor known to our islands. The virgin sacred to our gods has passed away and I decree that from your island shall come her successor. One I have chosen for her beauty, for her virtue, for her royal blood she who is named Reri.' Everybody starts congratulating Reri, the young girl. However, she has a sad look on her face. It is further written in the statement that: 'No law of the gods is more to be feared than that which guards the sacred virgin. Man must not touch her or cast upon her the eye of desire. For in her honor rests the honor of us all.' At that moment, the young man arrives at the ship and throws her a flower headpiece. However, one of the old women takes it and throws it away. Reri looks particularly sad and gloomy. The statement continues: 'Sacred is Reri. From this time forth she is *tabu*. To break this *tabu* means death.' 'Hitu who bears this message shall bring the sacred maid to me for her safety. He will answer with his life. I have spoken.' The young man takes the headpiece that the old woman has thrown away.



Women try to console Reri There is another announcement. Heaps of flowers are brought in and women start separating the heaps of flowers. Meanwhile, Reri is crying near a woman who is trying to console her. Other women also gather around her to console her.



The young man is sad The young man is sitting by himself, looking sad. A small boy comes and tries to give the man flowers and puts flower pieces on his head. The young man hugs the small boy. The boy ties the skirt of the young man so that he can join the dancing ritual.



The rituals There is another announcement. The girls gather and put their flower headpieces on their heads. The man who came from the other island gives Hitu a cup of holy drink. Then a ritual dance begins. During the dancing, Matahi puts a flower headpiece on the head of Reri who looks depressed. However, when he tries to put on another flower headpiece, the old man makes it clear that he does not approve of such behavior. Then the young man runs away from the place. The man near Hitu puts one of the flower headpieces on Hitu's head.



The sadness of the young man

We see the young man walking in a sad mood. The young man collapses to the ground.



Joyful dance

It is time for Reri to join the dance ritual. When she dances, two young men join her. Matahi hears the dance and gets up immediately to dance with Reri. Reri starts smiling when she sees him. They dance together joyfully and enthusiastically until the old man puts his headpiece down in an angry way to stop the dance. Then the young girl prepares to leave the island.



LOVERS ESCAPE

Matahi and Reri escape It is late at night. The young man secretly takes a boat and goes near the ship. Soon someone blows a trumpet and there is chaos ensuing on the ship. People sail on their boats and search the island for traces of Reri who has gone missing.



Report of the western man We see a western man writing in his diary. He writes that: 'the whole island is still in an uproar. The girl Reri has been stolen. The awful power of the Tabu will fall upon the Island if Reri is not returned unharmed. She will be hunted down and sacrificed; Matahi, too, will die, and old Hitu himself will share their fate. I shall not leave till I learn what the village is going to do.'



Old Hitu is insistent on Reri being found There is a ceremony on the ship. Old Hitu is sitting and listening to the ceremony. They bring another girl to Hitu as a sacred virgin but he does not accept her. He reads once again the scroll that he had read before: 'No law of the gods is more to be feared than that which guards the sacred virgin. Man must not touch her or cast upon her the eye of desire. To break this tabu means death.'



Second Chapter: Paradise Lost

Another Island 'Feeling the vengeance of the tabu, the guilty lovers fought their way over leagues of open sea seeking some island of the pearl trade where the white man rules and the old gods are forgotten. In their frail canoe through storms under a burning sky thirst-crazed and starving always driven on by fear—fear of the avenging tabu.' We see Reri and Matahi on a boat. They look exhausted and worn, possibly because of fighting the sea waters the previous night. People of the island come and take them to the island.



Celebration People of the island love Matahi. He dives, finds, and gathers pearls. They carry him on their shoulders, celebrating his success in diving for pearls. They enjoy themselves and drink to their hearts' content. They all seem very happy about their lives. Soon Matahi and Reri start their traditional dance. Matahi pays for everyone's drinks.



Report of the policeman Later, we see a western man writing and reporting what happened: 'The couple found in their wrecked canoe, as already reported, recovered quickly. The boy, it develops, is a born diver, the best we have ever had on the island. But it seems only play to him. He evidently does not yet realize what money means.'



A ship arrives Then a ship arrives on the island and people run to welcome the ship. The ship has come to look for Reri and Matahi. They run and hide in their huts.



Matahi and Reri are wanted Soon the official comes, and he has a report from the French government in which it says: 'But the girl was stolen before the ship left Bora Bora. As the government desires above all things to avoid conflict between the islands under its rule, it demands the arrest of this man and woman wherever found. For their arrest, the government offers a reward of five hundred Francs.' Matahi bribes the official by giving him one pearl. At first, the official breaks into a peal of laughter. However, he accepts the offer and tears the arrest order paper. Then he leaves them. Matahi and Reri see the ship leaving and hug each other.



Hitu appears However, soon the old Hitu appears. Matahi does not see Hitu, nevertheless Reri does. Reri starts crying. Matahi consoles her. The second time Reri looks at where old Hitu stood, she does not see him and is relieved to see that he disappeared.



The policeman reports about the Tabu area The official keeps on reporting: 'I have to report an unfortunate accident which just happened on the lagoon while most of the population were ashore at a feast. There is a spot in the lagoon, the richest in pearl beds of any in the South Seas. But this spot is *Tabu*. Natives will not go near it. Today, a diver, defying the superstition...' Then we see a diver diving into the sea to gather pearls. The other natives disapprove of him. However, he dives anyway. A shark is guarding the lagoon area and it attacks the man and kills him. The official continues: 'They all fled terrified, and a long time passed before the boldest dared approach the dreaded spot. An enormous man-eating shark guards these pearls, the natives believe. Today's tragedy proves this is no superstition: the shark is there!' 'I trust I have the government's approval in putting up a sign forbidding further diving this place.' Next, we see the sign *Tabu* standing in the middle of the lagoon.



Hitu appears to Reri once again At nighttime, Matahi and Reri are sleeping. Reri wakes up and it seems that she sees the old Hitu again. However, soon the scary figure of Hitu disappears. Hitu has left her a note written on a plant: 'Tabu. Three days I give you. You return with me or Matahi dies. Three days. Hitu'. Reri buries the note in the sand. She is very sad but does not tell Matahi anything.



POVERTY

Reri and the Ships Agent Reri goes to a Ships Agent where tickets to all island ports are sold. She looks at a ticket on which it is written: 'Schooner Hinano arrives in two days (June 24th) and leaves for Papeete the following morning. Price of two tickets Fcs. 130.00' Reri is relieved to have found a way out. However, soon the old Hitu appears again in front of their huts.



Matahi consoles Reri Meanwhile, Matahi is diving to gather pearls. Women from the island gather on the shore and call for Mahari. On the shore, Reri is in a very bad state and is collapsed on the ground. Matahi comes to console her without understanding what has caused her to become depressed.



Matahi goes to buy tickets It is 24th of July. Schooner Hinano has arrived on the island. Matahi and Reri look very happy. They take out their money and Matahi goes to the ticket office to buy the tickets. However, Matahi owes the shopkeepers money for the drinks he ordered for the people at the celebration. On a piece of debt note, it is written that: 'Matahi owes Kong Ah. Bills rendered (wines, champagne, etc. served villagers at the feast) Francs 3200.' His 165 Francs comprise a partial payment of his debt.



Reri plays the guitar As Matahi comes near Reri, she plays the guitar out of happiness, thinking that Matahi has bought the tickets to their freedom. Matahi does not tell her anything.



Old Hitu appears with a spear At night, Matahi thinks about going to the taboo lagoon area so that he can dive and gather pearls with which he can pay his debts. He falls asleep later on. Reri wakes up. The old Hitu appears in front of their huts with a spear. Reri stands in front of Matahi to protect him from the spear. Reri accepts to come with the old Hitu. She falls to her knees. The old Hitu leaves. Then she goes near Matahi and cries. As he wakes up, she pretends to be sleeping.



Diving for pearls in the tapu region Matahi goes pearl-diving in the taboo lagoon area. When he dives, he encounters the shark. However, the shark does not hurt him and he finds pearls. After he reaches the surface, he directly sails away from the lagoon area. The pearl Matahi finds is a black pearl.



Reri writes her goodbye letter Meanwhile, Reri writes a goodbye letter to Matahi: 'To Matahi, my love, I must go. Hitu is here and waits for me. You will die if I do not obey. I will go so that you may live. The *Tabu* is upon us. I have been so happy with you far more than I deserved. The love you have given me I will keep to the last beat of my heart. Across the great waters, I will come to you in your dreams when the Moon spreads its path on the sea. Farewell.' Reri boards the boat with Hitu.



Matahi drowns When Matahi comes back to the island, he goes to the hut to see Reri. However, he sees the farewell letter that Reri has left for him. He decides to sail after them. Then he swims with all his power to catch them. Hitu sees that Matahi is swimming to reach them. Matahi holds a rope of the boat, however, Huti cuts off the rope. Matahi tries to swim after them but he drowns eventually.



CHARACTERS

Matahi: (*Courageous, Ignorant/Naïve, Loving*)

Matahi is a young boy from the island of Bora Bora who is in love with Reri. He is both a fish hunter and a talented pearl diver. After Reri is chosen as a sacred maid for the gods, his life completely changes.

Courageous: Matahi is a courageous person. He cannot accept the state of affairs when Reri is chosen as a sacred maid. Therefore, he sneaks Reri off the ship and they escape the island. He is not afraid of the harsh consequences that await him as he frequently breaks the social and religious rules of the island community. For him, the concept of *tapu*, that is spiritual restriction or prohibition, does not hold much importance. His love for Reri is more significant to him than his duties toward the other members of the island community and religious principles. When Hitu finally takes Reri with him, he swims after them with the hopes of reaching them and saving Reri. But Hitu cuts off the rope that he grabs, so he cannot survive. Nevertheless, we can conclude that his rebellious courage is seen in many instances of the film.

Ignorant/Naive: He is rather ignorant when it comes to modern life. He does not understand the concept of money, bills, or debt. So, he signs the bills for everyone's drinks in the celebration. However, little does he know that he will have to pay off the debt later on. The debt that he has to pay off means that he will not be able to buy the tickets for the ship so Reri and he can escape the island once again.

Loving: Matahi loves Reri deeply. He is in love with her and is always there for her. He consoles her when she is in a bad mood. His dance with her after she has been chosen as a sacred maid makes her smile once again. He sneaks her off the ship so that they can be together again and so that she will not be given as a sacred maid to the gods of the islands. He is of a good-hearted and kind nature which always makes Reri feel safe with him.

Reri: (*Loving, Courageous, Sacrificing*)

Reri is a young girl from the island of Bora Bora who is chosen as a sacred maid to the gods of the island. She is a lively and happy girl who is in love with the young man Matahi. When she learns the news that she is chosen as the sacred maid who will serve the gods of the island, she becomes really sad as she knows she will have to be separated from Matahi. She is, from that point on, *tabu*; that is, she must not be touched by men or looked upon with the eye of desire.

Loving: She is a loving girl. Her loving-kindness is seen in her facial expression and her gentle nature. She is deeply in love with Matahi. In her sad moments, it is Matahi who makes her smile and become happy again. She is also very protective of him.

Sacrificing: Reri is a sacrificing girl. The reason for that is there is nothing she cannot do to protect Matahi. When they escape the island and arrive at a French colony, Hitu appears soon and disrupts their peace. One night, Hitu even comes with a spear to kill Matahi. However, Reri throws herself in front of the sleeping Matahi which shows us the viewers how much she cares for him and that she is even ready to sacrifice her life so he can live.

Courageous: She is courageous. She accepts her fate as a sacred maiden but she does everything in her power to escape that fate nevertheless. First, she escapes with Matahi to another island and builds a life there. Secondly, when Hitu comes to take her away, she does not tell him about what happened to Matahi, possibly because she does not want to upset him. Nevertheless, she makes plans to escape by buying tickets to a schooner. She is courageous even in the most hopeless-looking circumstances. Her throwing herself in front of Matahi to protect him against Hitu's spear is another act of courage that she shows.

Hitu: (*Religious, Unforgivin*)

Hitu is an aged emissary who brings a message from the chief of Fanuma to the chief of Bora Bora. As a maiden sacred to their gods has died, there needs to be a replacement. That replacement will be Reri who has been chosen because of her blood and virtue. Reri is decided to take her to the island of Fanuma. He is not happy about the relationship between Reri and Matahi. Matahi's striving to save Reri is juxtaposed against Hitu's aim to bring her to the island of Fanuma as a sacred maiden.

Religious: Hitu is a deeply religious man. He believes in the Polynesian concept of *tapu* which means a spiritual restriction or prohibition. It is the law of the gods that Reri has been chosen as a sacred maid and she should be protected from the eyes of desire laid upon her. As Hitu's conviction in this belief is firm, he is decided to do everything to take Reri and bring her to where he has come from to offer her as a sacred maiden.

Unforgiving: Hitu is a strict man. He does not show any mercy when it comes to the religious principles believed by the communities on the islands. He sees the escape of Reri and Matahi as a violation of the religious rules and regulations and a deep flaw on their part. Therefore, for him, anyone who looks at the sacred maiden with the eyes of desire is deserving of death. That is why he comes with a spear to the hut of Reri and Matahi so that he can kill Matahi. Another instance where he is unforgiving is when he cuts the rope trailing from the ship that Matahi has grabbed because he cannot accept or tolerate any case where the *tapu* is not respected.

Policeman: (*Unprincipled*)

The policeman is someone who observes and protects the island. He also reports what happened in his journals.

Unprincipled: The policeman is an unprincipled person. He does not act per moral principles. We witness this immoral behavior when he comes to arrest Matahi and Reri as per the arrest paper by the French government. He is decided to arrest the young couple, however, when Matahi bribes him with a pearl he accepts it. So, he is both unprincipled and opportunistic.

Chinese trader: (*Opportunistic*)

Chinese trader is the man who makes Matahi sign all the bills for the drinks at the celebration.

Opportunistic: Chinese trader is aware that Matahi is unfamiliar with the concept of money. He uses thus Matahi's naïveté as an opportunity to make him sign all the bills for the drinks. The fact that he does not let Matahi know what exactly he is signing, shows us the viewers that the trader's intentions are not all benevolent.

THEMES

SOCIETY (Religion)

Religion Religion is one of the important topics of the film, if not the most important one. Reri's fate changes as she is chosen as a sacred maiden for the gods of the islands. She becomes *tapu*. This means that other men cannot touch her or look upon her with the eyes of desire. Both for Matahi and Reri, this is a devastating situation as they are a couple who are deeply in love with each other. However, for the members of the island community, her being chosen as a sacred maiden is an honor that must be respected. In particular, for the aged emissary Hitu, it is of crucial significance that she be brought to the island of Fanuman. What Matahi does as he sneaks Reri off the ship is thus an immoral act that must be repaid with the death of one or both. In the end, religious values win against the love of the couple. Hitu takes Reri to his boat and they sail to the island of Fanuman. Matahi tries to swim after them. However, the rope of the ship that he grabs is cut by Hitu. This act might look unforgiving and rather cruel to modern viewers who do not hold religious convictions. However, from the point of view of Hitu, what

Matahi tries to do is against the religious principles of the island. As Reri mentions in her farewell letter to Matahi, 'the tapu is upon them'. Thus, Matahi pays for his immoral behavior with his very life at the end of the film.

RELATIONSHIP (Love)

Love The entire film can be seen as a love story between Matahi and Reri. Their love for each other is visible from the first moment they are seen together. Their love for each other is visible in particular when they dance together. Reri's face which is rather sad and gloomy-looking shines when Matahi comes to dance with her in the ritual ceremony. Moreover, their love is of such a nature that they even go against the sacred, spiritual values of the island by yielding to Hitu. At the end of the film, it is *tabu* that wins against love. The lesson that we viewers receive is that transgressing the sacred, spiritual values always has consequences. Nevertheless, throughout the film, we see the struggle of Matahi and Reri against powers bigger than themselves which proves the strength and truth of their love.

PSYCHOLOGY (Sadness)

Sadness Sadness is another recurring theme of the film. Reri is deeply saddened when she learns that she will serve the gods as a sacred maiden. The reason for her sadness is that for her to be a sacred maiden means that she will have to be separated from Matahi whom she is deeply in love with. Matahi is likewise very sad, but he tries everything he can so that they can escape the island for another one. Things get better on the second island they arrive at until Hitu comes and things take a turn for the worse. When Hitu appears to Reri, she is saddened but she tries not to show her sadness to Matahi. She knows that things are hopeless and she will have to leave Matahi. Thus it can be said that the recurring theme of sadness that we witness in the film is because those who love each other will have to be separated as per the religious rules of the island.

FLAW (Ambition)

Ambition Being of an ambitious nature is one of the characteristics of Matahi. However, his ambitions are not in line with the religious values of the society he finds himself in. His love for Reri causes him to engage in acts that are against the spiritual values such as Reri being a tabu that should not be looked upon with the eyes of desire. However, Matahi does not think that the religious ideals of his society hold much significance. Thus, he sneaks Reri off the ship and they escape. Their ambition to be together seems to bear its fruits for a short while before Hitu appears in front of Reri. Because they have a lot of debt they need to pay off, Matahi dives into the taboo lagoon which is protected by a shark. His disregard for religious values and his ambition is thus once again witnessed by the viewers of the film. After Hitu takes Reri, they sail toward the island of Fanuman. However, Matahi cannot give up his love. His ambition and desire are to be with Reri forever. Thus, he swims after them with the hopes of reaching the ship. Unfortunately, after Hitu cuts the rope that he grabs, he cannot hold on much longer and soon drowns in the sea. Therefore, it can be said that his ambition and desire to be with Reri cost him his very life.

QUEST (Explore)

Explore The whole film can be seen as an exploration of the South Seas and the people living on the islands. Most probably, most of the viewers who see the film, are not familiar with the South Seas. Thus, it is for us an exploration to view the film and witness the journeys of the characters. The characters of Matahi and Reri explore the areas they inhabit too. First of all, they need to escape the ship and the Bora Bora island so they can reach somewhere safe where the old gods are forgotten. When they arrive at the French colony, their exploration of the island begins. They become the inhabitants of the island and celebrate with the others. Matahi becomes a talented pearl diver who is appreciated by the islanders. Matahi dives and thus explores the deep sea. Diving for pearls is an exploration of the seas. When Hitu appears to Reri and threatens her, Reri comes up with a plan so that the couple can escape once again. Thus, she explores the possible opportunities which can save them from the hands of fate or *tabu*. Moreover, when Matahi dives into the taboo lagoon to find pearls so that he can pay off his debts, he explores the taboo area, an area that is protected by a shark. His exploration is one that he deems

necessary so that they can pay off their debts and finally leave the island for somewhere better where Hitu will not be able to find them. It can therefore be concluded that the film consists of a series of explorations of the South Seas and the islands.

APPEARANCE (Dishonesty)

Dishonesty There are several instances of injustice and dishonesty in the film. One of the instances is when Matahi bribes the western policeman so that he does not arrest them following the announcement of the French government. Another instance is when the Chinese owners of the bar make Matahi pay for all the bills, exploiting his naïveté and not understanding the concept of money. These instances showcase that not only modernized people but also native people engage in acts of immorality for selfish reasons.