

8. “A man of great energy and ambition”

The ruling by Consul Jones in February 1865 established Ma`afu's sovereignty over Vanuabalavu and nearby islands under both Fijian custom and English law. Although Ma`afu was now placed on a footing comparable to that of Fiji's most powerful chiefs, notably Cakobau and Tui Cakau, his status required more precise definition within the wider polity of Fiji. In the meantime, the Tongan Commissioners had yet to conclude their enquiries.

Before he returned to Tonga, David Moss further consolidated Tongan power in Fiji when a formal treaty between Tui Nayau and Tupou I, the latter represented by Ma`afu and Moss, was signed at Lakeba on 14 February. The treaty, similar to that made with Bua, provided for perpetual peace between Tonga and the Lakeban state. It formally granted Tongan subjects the right to visit Lakeba, a practice followed for many generations. Tongans were also permitted to receive land from Tui Nayau on which “to reside or plant”, while Tui Nayau's subjects were accorded reciprocal rights in Tonga. Most importantly, the treaty's third provision guaranteed that in the event of hostilities against Lakeba from any Fijian power, Ma`afu would provide rapid assistance to Tui Nayau, who was similarly sworn to assist Ma`afu in any dispute he might have against a Fijian power.¹ These provisions effectively separated the Lakeban state from Bau and Cakaudrove, where its traditional links lay, and placed it firmly within the orbit of Tonga. Yet, among all the treaties signed by Ma`afu and Moss, this one represented less of a break with tradition. Aside from the long history of intimate contacts between Lakeba and Tonga, Ma`afu was kin to Tui Nayau and was recognised as family by the Vuanirewa. Now he possessed an authority based more on the realities of power than on traditional ties of kinship. The various treaties to which he was a signatory finally laid the ghost of the 1859 agreement whereby William Pritchard had forced Ma`afu to renounce all his claims in Fiji.

All seemed to be moving in Ma`afu's favour during these months. On 2 March, Jones issued a Proclamation to all British subjects resident in Fiji, enjoining them “not to oppose ... Tui Cakau and Ma`afu in their lawful endeavours to establish peace and security”.² Jones was attempting to organise the long-projected meeting of Fiji's principal chiefs for 29 April, but was frustrated by Cakobau's persistent desires to be recognised as “king” and to drive the Tongans

1 Treaty between George Tubou, King of the Friendly Islands, represented by Henry Ma`afu and Tubou Ha`apai, and Tui Nayau King of Lakeba and its surrounding islands..., 14 Feb 1865, BCFP.

2 CRD, No. 382, 2 Mar 1865.

from Fiji.³ That the Vunivalu persevered in this attitude might be seen as a mark of his diminishing relevance, as the future directions of eastern Fiji were being decided by Consul Jones, Tui Cakau and the representatives of Tupou. Yet the blame was not entirely his, since he was constantly encouraged by “half-castes” in the belief that he would become Tui Viti once the Tongans were expelled. It was certainly “too late” for such aspirations, as Calvert noted. The missionary wrote, with some *naïveté*, of Cakobau’s enthusiastic response to professions of friendship and good will from Tupou and Ma`afu. When Ma`afu and Moss had called at Bau with their message of peace, the Vunivalu appeared “overjoyed, and wept in gratitude and gladness of heart, and immediately called upon Ma`afu to pray and thank God – and the three knelt and prayed and praised before the Lord”.⁴ But the mood inevitably passed, and Cakobau again withdrew into his contemplation of the chimera of genuine power.

“Governor Ma`afu is in charge”, Calvert declared. “He has engaged a scamp as secretary at £100 a year ... [a man] of bad renown ... educated, but a rogue for all that”.⁵ The miscreant was Robert Swanston. More importantly, Calvert was not sanguine concerning the approaching meeting of chiefs, which Ma`afu would also attend. Cakobau was reportedly preparing to ask the others to join him in a united effort to drive away the Tongans which, even if the chiefs were disposed, would have been impossible. Not only did several *matanitu* and districts already possess treaties with Tonga, but every chief, in true Fijian tradition, wanted “to be independent, and as large and influential as possible”. “Trouble” was anticipated once the people living on the Tongan lands felt the first impact of Ma`afu’s taxes.⁶ Of more immediate concern than the missionary’s musings were the “instructions” penned by Jones to “Ma`afu Governor of the Tongans” on 12 April. Jones’ attitude was apparent in his opening words:

I wish to impress on you the absolute necessity of proving your superiority in civilized ideas to the Fijians around you. You must decidedly separate yourself from their barbarous practices and degrading indolence...

Jones proceeded to offer Ma`afu several “counsels”, stating that “my friendship for you will depend on your following them”. The “counsels”, briefly stated, were:

1. Ma`afu’s people were to produce sufficient food for themselves and for sale.

3 James Calvert to Rowe, 4 Mar 1865, Personal Papers.

4 Calvert to GS, WMMS, 13 Mar 1865, WMMS ILTF. See also Calvert to George Stringer Rowe, 13 Mar 1865; Calvert, Journal, 13 Mar 1865; Calvert to James Nisbet, 18 Mar 1865, Nisbet Papers; George Lee, Journal, 24–25 Mar 1865.

5 Calvert to Rowe, 4 Apr 1865, Personal Papers. Three years earlier, Swanston had been described by another missionary as an “infidel” who was either married to, or kept, a “native woman” who had borne him one or two children. John Binner to Eggleston, 29 Jul 1862, MOM 165. For further background on Swanston, see R.A. Derrick, “The Swanston Papers”, *TPFSSI*, Vol. 3, 94–106.

6 *ibid.* See also Calvert to GS, WMMS, 5 Apr 1865, WMMS ILTF.

2. Cotton should be planted on an extensive scale.
3. Profits should be divided with the people, not retained by the chiefs, Fijian style.
4. Cultivation of coffee should also begin as soon as practicable.
5. Taxes should not be severe, since the people were "very poor".
6. Fijian chiefs should not be allowed to land on Tongan possessions with armed followers or to requisition property, as of old.
7. Ma`afu should administer strict justice. He was admonished for fining thieves £25 for stealing two bottles of gin, which Jones described as "tyranny".
8. Ma`afu was to avoid meddling in "the miserable little quarrels of the native chiefs".

Ma`afu was enjoined to prove to the Fijian chiefs that he was "the most enlightened governor in Fiji". If he reverted to the traditional Tongan ways in Fiji, Jones would become his enemy and withdraw all support.

Finally, Jones wrote "I wish you particularly to bear in mind that I have not written this letter in order that you should read it and throw it aside".⁷ Whatever the inherent merits of the programme devised by Jones, he was stepping well beyond the boundaries of his consular jurisdiction in issuing such a manifesto. He was attempting, in the interests of British trade and commerce in general, and of the resident British subjects in particular, to do what no man had ever done: to make Ma`afu dance to his tune. Ma`afu, however, possessed his own agenda and would heed the Consul or not, as best suited his interests.

Jones was similarly prompted by the rapid expansion of European commerce and settlement in Fiji in calling the assembly of chiefs. With cession to Britain a lost cause, Jones hoped that a federation of the *matanitu* would promote the stability essential for European interests. The meeting, which took place at Levuka on 8 and 9 May, comprised Cakobau as well as chiefs from Rewa, Cakaudrove, Macuata, Bua, Naduri and Lakeba. Eight resolutions were adopted:

1. The seven head chiefs would meet annually.
2. At each meeting they would elect a president from among their number.
3. A code of laws, to be modified only with the chiefs' consent, was to be in force in their domains.
4. Each chief was to retain existing rights in his own domains, including taxation.

⁷ Jones to Ma`afu Governor of the Tongans, 12 Apr 1865, BCFP.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

5. The boundaries of the states were to be defined.
6. Each state was to be self-supporting, with an annual stipend to be paid to the elected president.
7. No wars were to be permitted without the consent of the Assembly of Chiefs.
8. A national flag was to be created.

The next meeting was fixed for 1 May 1866.⁸ Cakobau was nominated as first president of the Assembly, a move which owed more to the immense prestige enjoyed by Bau than to his diplomatic skills. The nomination posed irreconcilable dilemmas for the future: would Cakobau ever be willing to yield the position, whose tenure was annual, to a lesser chief, and would other members of the Assembly acquiesce if the Vunivalu's tenure assumed an air of permanency?

The Assembly's unexpected unanimity seemed to promise much for the development of the new settler-based industries such as cotton, coffee and, fleetingly, wool.⁹ However, its inherent weaknesses were apparent even before the chiefs returned home. Apart from potential problems with the presidency, the most notable absentee was Ma`afu who, although he had been invited, arrived only at the end, just before the chiefs went their separate ways. He "appeared to rejoice" that the Tongan lands were to be left as they were, a matter in which the chiefs had no real choice. Ma`afu was "directed to withdraw the Tongans from other parts of Fiji where they are settled, and not to oppress the people he governs".¹⁰ His lack of participation in the Assembly's deliberations placed its resolutions on a very insecure footing. The chiefs' subsequent "directions" to him were devoid of any authority and could safely be ignored.

The 1865 Confederation, which fell far short of the kind of centralised government then existing in Tonga, represented the greatest degree of co-operation between the great chiefs then feasible.¹¹ Even so, the agreement was premature, since implementation of its resolutions required a degree of political sophistication which was beyond most of the assembled chiefs. They had been nurtured in a polity where chiefs acted solely in the interests of their own domains and co-operated with their rivals only when it suited them. The Confederation established no permanent organisation, beyond the envisaged annual assembly,

8 For the full text of the Confederation of 1865, see Edward March to Lord Clarendon, 18 Jul 1870, FO 58/118; G.C. Henderson (compiler), *The Evolution of Government in Fiji*, Sydney 1935, 17–18. See also Calvert to the Editor, *SMH*, 21 Aug 1865, 7. A detailed account of the Levuka meeting is found in Evidence of David Wilkinson in LCC R783A: Supplementary Nasavawaqa.

9 Calvert to Rabone, 9 Aug 1865, *WMN(A)*, No. 33, Oct 1865, 517–524. See also Calvert to Rowe, 20 Jun 1865, Personal Papers.

10 Calvert to Rabone, 9 Aug 1865.

11 Consul Jones acknowledged as much. See Jones to FO, 24 Nov 1865, FO 58/124.

to render effective the proposals apparently so heartily endorsed. Even aside from the growing menace of Ma`afu, the chiefs' resolutions were doomed from the beginning.

Jones, aware that the unity established by the Confederation was at best insubstantial, lost no time in reminding Cakobau where his priorities as president should now lie:

the White Settlers now look to you for redress of all grievances ... You must not think that your situation is simply one where you can enjoy your ease and be supported by other chiefs in lazy idleness ... If you are too old or indolent for the duties of your office, you had better retire from your position ... It is a scandalous matter that Fiji should remain weak and barbarous, merely through the timidity and obstinacy of one old man...¹²

Jones' letter, breathtaking in its arrogance, bespoke the Consul's ignorance of the extent of Cakobau's power and of the absence of any real authority residing in the post of president. Elsewhere in Fiji, evidence of Ma`afu's earlier *rapprochement* with Tui Cakau was noted by John Thurston, who arrived at Wairiki in June. Visiting Golea in company with Calvert, Thurston remarked "an immense canoe" which Ma`afu had recently presented to the chief.¹³ In similar vein, Ma`afu had apparently not objected to Golea's sale of the island of Naitauba to a European, even though Naitauba was included among the lands Ma`afu claimed to have been given by Tuikilakila.¹⁴ Ma`afu himself appeared to be following the straight and narrow at home in Lomaloma. A missionary visiting Vanuabalavu was impressed when he paid the Tongan governor a visit:

This man, so knowing, so powerful and resolute, seems to be now throwing all his influence into the scale of good, as he before threw it into that of evil. He must be either a really changed man or a most finished hypocrite, and I have seen or heard *nothing* to make me doubt his sincerity.¹⁵

The missionary stressed that he was referring only to Ma`afu's spiritual state and not to his political activities. Ever since his youth in Tonga, Ma`afu had sought to veil his actions with a veneer of sincerity and righteousness. That yet another missionary fell under his spell was a tribute to his powers of dissimulation.

Consul Jones believed that Tupou's supposed intention to make himself "master of Fiji" had been relinquished when the islands' cession to Great Britain was first

¹² Jones to Vunivalu, 7 Jun 1865, BCFP.

¹³ John Bates Thurston, *Diary of a passage from Rotuma to Fiji on Board the Brig "John Wesley"*, 17 Jun 1865, Thurston Papers.

¹⁴ LCC R9.

¹⁵ Unnamed missionary to Rabone, 4 Jul 1865, *WMN(A)*, No. 38, Jan 1867, 601 (italics in original).

mooted. He noted that resident Europeans opposed the Tongans because they were aware that Tongan rule would render land purchases immeasurably more difficult. He also mentioned the Tongans' "superior intelligence and courage", qualities which made them eagerly sought as allies. Repeating the laments of the missionaries over three decades, Jones observed that chiefs who engaged Tongan help usually regretted their actions, since their "rapacious allies seldom leave any district so long as it contains anything to excite their insatiable cupidity".¹⁶ While Jones engaged in rueful contemplation of Tongan "superiority", a visiting naval lieutenant was unabashed in his praise. Bouverie Clark, writing on board HMS *Esk*, at anchor in the mouth of the Rewa river, regarded the Tongans he encountered in Fiji as "much finer men than the Fijians", although he felt it advisable not to "get to leeward of them on a hot day". Ma`afu, who visited the *Esk* in company with Cakobau, appeared to be "a very fine man, but rather fat".¹⁷ Ma`afu's social call occurred during an apparent quiet period following Confederation, when the great dilemma posed by the islands' disunity remained shelved rather than solved.

Inspired perhaps by this atmosphere of uncharacteristic calm, Jones reassured the Foreign Office that, as a consequence of Confederation, peace now reigned in Fiji. More importantly, trade in *bêche de mer* along the Macuata coast was regaining its former importance. Cakobau, though, remained a doubtful quantity: Jones wrote of the difficulty for the Vunivalu to learn, at his advanced age, ideas of Government opposed to the old Fijian system of "spoliation and distortion".¹⁸ Despite the semblance of unity achieved by the chiefs, "the only laws that have any force among them are those relating to the privileges and prerogatives of the chiefs all having their origins in the caprice or personal vanity of these rulers". Jones, despite his attempts to bully and manipulate both Cakobau and Ma`afu, and his unrealistic expectations of the Vunivalu, was very much aware of the realities of power in Fiji. A growing problem was the settler community, which "[found] itself freed from the restraints of British law and [had] no respect for any other".¹⁹ In eastern Fiji, peace appeared to be threatened only on tiny Mago, owing to the return of some of the inhabitants removed by Ma`afu earlier in the year. Following complaints from the Ryders, Jones wrote to both Ma`afu and Golea urging them to remove the people yet again. Their "mischievous and thievish propensities" posed a threat to that small corner of European commerce in Fiji.²⁰ These minor difficulties aside, the Confederation, at the end of 1865, did appear to have achieved at least some measure of stability for Fiji.

16 Henry M. Jones, Report on the present condition of the Fiji and Tonga Islands, sent to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 17 Jul 1865, BCFP.

17 Logbook of HMS *Esk* Jun 1863 to Sep 1867, by [Lieutenant] Bouverie Clark, 21 Aug 1865.

18 Jones to FO, 4 Nov 1865, BCFP.

19 Jones to Lord Russell, 24 Nov 1865, FO 58/124.

20 Jones to Ma`afu, 5 Oct 1865 and Jones to Tui Cakau, 5 Oct 1865, BCFP.

As always when Ma`afu was involved, much depended on his response to the strictures he received from others in authority. Jones was moved to write to him again early in 1866, reporting that the returned Mago people had stolen yams and pigs from the Ryders. The Consul admonished Ma`afu: "You surely must be sufficiently powerful in your own territories to chastise the perpetrators".²¹ Jones appeared unaware of the facts concerning the Mago people who had returned to their home. When a party of about 200 arrived, they asked the Ryders "with great respect" for permission to recuperate for one month as they had no food at Lomaloma. The Ryders agreed, only to see the returnees build a defensive fence around one of the villages. Ma`afu had been away from Lomaloma when the party left for Mago. Hearing of the exodus three months later, he immediately sent a party of 50 men to deport them once again.²²

Anxious no doubt to promote the "peace" which he claimed as a consequence of Confederation, Jones sought to clarify once and for all the status of the Tongan land claims in Fiji. Hearing that George Henry had appealed to London against his decision concerning Vanuabalavu, Jones looked to Tupou's secretary David Moss (Tupou Ha`apai) for help. He suggested to Moss "that King George should draw up a full statement of the nature of his claims to lands in Fiji, the dates of surrender to him by Ma`afu and the steps taken by him to disallow the act of surrender made by Ma`afu".²³ Jones was anxious to secure his defence against further legal moves by Henry. Ma`afu himself was probably in Tonga at this time, since he was reported absent from Lomaloma for at least three months. His canoe was seen in Nuku`alofa in May, although there was no mention of him.²⁴ He was certainly back in Fiji by 12 September, when he faced growing antagonism from Fijian and European alike.

As was often the case in Ma`afu's life, it is impossible to define any direction or definite policy on his part during the period between the formation of the Confederation in 1865 and its final collapse in 1867. Throughout 1866, we know almost nothing of him beyond his activities on Mago and hints of a visit home to Tonga. Yet there might have been sinister undertones to his apparently quiet existence in the form of a plot against his life. An English traveller, Herbert Meade, who visited Nuku`alofa in October 1866, noted reports that a conspiracy against Ma`afu had occurred at Lomaloma. Ma`afu supposedly spared the conspirators' lives, sentencing them instead to banishment to different islands.²⁵ No evidence survives concerning the origin of the supposed conspiracy or the identity of the plotters. When Meade, continuing his voyage,

21 Jones to Ma`afu, 4 Jan 1866, BCFP

22 Ryder, George L., *Pioneering in the South Seas, being Reminiscences of G.L. Ryder, of Mango Island*, 36.

23 Jones to Tubou Ha`apai, 6 Feb 1866, BCFP

24 Lee, 1 May 1866.

25 Herbert A. Meade, *A Ride through the Disturbed Districts of New Zealand, together with some account of the South Sea Islands*, London 1870, 299.

reached Lomaloma in November, he described the village, under the dominion of Ma`afu, as “dirty and uninteresting”.²⁶ Ma`afu himself was then in Macuata.²⁷ During the same month, Jones wrote to admonish Ma`afu yet again for his unpaid debts. “This conduct is undignified in the extreme and unworthy of one who professes to be superior in civilization to those ... surrounding him”.²⁸ The year closed with something of a mystery: James Calvert, having left Fiji, wrote from Australia that Jones had been to Tonga and extracted a written agreement from Tupou to withdraw “the troublesome Tongans” from Fiji.²⁹ Whatever the facts behind this unsubstantiated claim, it was clear at year’s end that the two dilemmas long facing Fiji remained unresolved. Firstly, some form of union, which subordinated the great chiefs to a central authority, would be required sooner rather than later. Secondly, that union, whatever its form, must include Ma`afu who, as governor of the Tongans in Fiji, had to be accepted in the role of a Fijian chief himself.

The maintenance of traditional chiefly power and the lack of a centralised authority, significant weaknesses as they were, did not by themselves signal the end of the Confederation. On a practical level, the “refractory, overbearing and rapacious proclivities of the young Bau chiefs” and “their marauding aggressions” throughout the Confederation caused great resentment.³⁰ In any case, the agreement had only papered over the divisions between the *matanitu*, of which the most significant was the growing rift between the eastern and northern states on the one hand and the Bau dominions on the other. Lau, Cakaudrove, Macuata and Bua, with their various links to Tonga and with arrangements of some kind with Ma`afu, were always unlikely to admit of common cause with Bau. Following the treaties with Tonga and the consolidation of Ma`afu’s rule on Vanuabalavu, the division could not but widen. It was to assume a definite form on 13 February 1867, when Tui Cakau, Tui Bua and Ma`afu met to bind their respective realms in a new grouping, the *Tovata ko Natokalau kei Viti*, or Confederation of North and East Fiji, usually known in English as the Lau Confederation and in Fijian as the *Tovata ko Lau*.³¹ Although most of the *Tovata*’s provisions were never to be implemented, the new arrangement at least provided some measure of bureaucratic structure and appeared, in its provision for taxation and alienation of land, to be more reflective of the prevailing conditions in the lands under its control. Ma`afu was to be the first Chieftain

26 *ibid.*, 316. See also Julius Brenchley, Diary on board HMS *Esk*, c. 27 Oct 1866, Brenchley Papers.

27 Address by Robert Swanston to meeting of white residents at Lomaloma, 20 Dec 1870. *FT*, 7 Jan 1871.

28 Jones to Ma`afu, 20 Nov 1866, BCFP. The debts specified by Jones were \$200 to Thomas Ryder, for articles purchased in 1863, and \$12 to Horace Morrell in compensation for a cart that had been stolen by Ma`afu’s people.

29 Calvert to Rowe, 23 Nov 1866, Personal Papers.

30 David Wilkinson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 Dec 1905, FM Doc. 642.

31 For the full text of the Lau Confederation, see Appendix C. See also Henderson, 19–21.

Supreme.³² Consul Jones, apparently mindful of the realities of power, lost little time in expressing his support: "I have reason to expect that the energy and authority of Ma`afu assisted by honest and enlightened counsel will go far to ensure the security and prosperity of the Confederation of which he has been appointed supreme chief".³³

Many of the changes embodied in the new constitution were the creation of the two men who were to be the *Tovata's* secretaries. They were Robert Swanston, already secretary to Ma`afu, and David Wilkinson, secretary to Tui Bua.³⁴ Swanston had advised the Smythe Commission in 1862 that he "wished to see Ma`afu head chief in the Fijis",³⁵ a view unlikely to have changed five years later. The *Tovata* immediately created a focus of power to rival that of Bau and placed Ma`afu in a better position to assert a significant degree of independence from the Tongan crown. While his cession in 1855 of his Fijian lands to Tupou had been largely, though never formally, superseded by subsequent events, the acknowledged Tongan rule over those Fijian lands claimed by right of conquest had, by 1867, become centred on Ma`afu himself and on the power he had acquired. A newspaper report six years later would claim that Bua and Cakaudrove had withdrawn from the 1865 Confederation because of resentment over Bauan attempts to assert dominance.³⁶ The resentment emanated largely from Ma`afu himself, who had never been party to the earlier agreement. In the wake of the new alliance of February 1867, the most immediate concern was the attitude of Tui Nayau, who had not joined Ma`afu and the other two chiefs in forming the *Tovata*. Cakobau meanwhile was attempting, as so often, to adapt to a changed political landscape not of his own making. He was reportedly seeking to form a government "after the model of the Government of the Sandwich Islands with a fair prospect of success".³⁷ On Lakeba, missionary Lorimer Fison, a sepulchral voice of doom, "[did] hereby prophesy ... [the] day is not far distant where ... all Fiji [will fall] under Tongan sway".³⁸

32 Constitution and Laws of the Chiefdom of Lau, Fiji, Sydney 1871. The published Constitution referred to Ma`afu as Tui Lau, a title that did not exist in 1867. It was created, expressly for Ma`afu, in 1869. See also Wilkinson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 Dec 1905; Swanston to Cakobau, 28 Feb 1867, Swanston to Jones, 1 Mar 1867, Jones to FO, 15 Jul 1867 GB FO BCFP.

33 Jones to Swanston, 17 Apr 1867, BCFP. See also Jones to Tovata chiefs, 17 Apr 1867. This letter, which has apparently not survived, was tabled at a meeting of Tovata chiefs in May-June 1869. Minutes of Meetings of the Tovata chiefs, May 1869 and Aug 1870, no pagination.

34 Sir Arthur Gordon, Governor of Fiji 1875-1880, was to describe David Wilkinson as having "a far better knowledge of native affairs, and a far juster [sic] appreciation of them, than any other man in Fiji". Lord Stanmore [Sir Arthur Gordon] to John T. Arundel, 22 Sep 1897, John T. Arundel, Correspondence, chiefly with Lord Stanmore 1897-1912, PMB 493.

35 Report of a Commission..., 29, FO 58/108.

36 *FT*, 30 Aug 1873.

37 Brower to U.S. State Dept, 31 Mar 1867, USC Laucala 4.

38 Lorimer Fison to his sisters [fragment], Lakeba, Feb 1867, Miscellaneous Papers of Lorimer Fison 1865-1868.

Cakobau's ideas of forming his own government had arisen from a meeting of European planters at Levuka in April called by his American secretary Samuel St John. Resenting the collapse of the 1865 Confederation and apprehensive as always about Ma`afu's ambitions, Cakobau would have welcomed this revival of his political fortunes under European auspices. Among the "laws" of the new kingdom of Bau was a provision whereby he would receive a royalty of one shilling per acre on all land sales. This, the planters believed, would ensure his continued approval of such sales and provide for the protection of settlers.³⁹ The climax of this push for a pliable form of government under settler control came in an absurd "coronation" of Cakobau in the Levuka church on 2 May.⁴⁰ His designation as "King of Bau and its Dependencies" reflected the limits of his personal control.⁴¹ The U.S. Consul's support for the new Bau kingdom and its ruler provided Cakobau with some comfort in his efforts to accommodate Tongan power in the north and east of Fiji.

The proposed assembly of the new kingdom's chiefs never met, nor did the expected taxation revenue eventuate.⁴² Lack of revenue prevented the new "government" from making even a pretence of exercising its functions. The oath of allegiance to Cakobau, made by 297 chiefs at the behest of St John during the last week of May, was relevant only in European eyes. The chiefs already owed customary allegiance to the Vunivalu and needed no formal expression of that obligation.⁴³ While echoes of the "kingdom" were to reverberate for a few more years, the greatest political strength in mid 1867 lay with the *Tovata*. Its head, Ma`afu, was better placed than any indigenous chief to augment his existing power, although he received a setback on 28 May, after Swanston had gone to Lakeba with the text of the *Tovata* agreement. Tui Nayau wrote to Ma`afu to say that they could not federate "because we are a weak people and cannot confederate with powerful Chiefs; we wish to stand alone and serve ... God". No further reason was given, but in a minute dated 1 June, Swanston was to ascribe the refusal to the "interference" of Lorimer Fison. Swanston predicted that the *Tovata* would "fall to the ground" and that "Lau and Bua will hoist the Tongan flag".⁴⁴ Ma`afu was strongly opposed to any use of the flag, since it was to be his influence, not his country's, which should prevail.

39 Thurston to FO, 31 Dec 1867, FO 58/111.

40 For a detailed eyewitness account of the ceremony, see Frederick J. Moss, *A Planter's Experience in Fiji*, Auckland 1870, 26–27. For details of the ceremony inside the church, see Edward March, Report on State of Affairs in Fiji, enc. in March to Lord Clarendon, 31 Mar 1870, FO 58/118. See also Henry Britton, *Fiji in 1870...*, Melbourne 1870, 32–34; Colman Wall, "Cakobau's Flag", *TFS*, 1910 (unpaginated). For Swanston's reaction, see Swanston to Jones, 7 Jun 1867, BCFP.

41 The "dependencies" which Cakobau claimed to rule were Viti Levu, Kadavu, Ovalau, Koro, Gau, Batiki, Nairai and nearby smaller islands (Jones to FO, 15 Jul 1867). Over much of Viti Levu, he possessed no authority whatever.

42 For the text of the Bau constitution, see enclosure in March to Clarendon, 18 Jul 1870, FO 58/118.

43 For the text of the oath of allegiance, see Frederick J. Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea*, London 1889, Appendix E, 300–301.

44 Edward Tui Nayau, Lote Loganimoce [and] John Wesley to Swanston, 28 May 1867; Minute by Swanston, 1 Jun 1867, BCFP.

Swanston felt that the long-standing links which Lau and Bua enjoyed with Tonga had contributed to Tui Nayau's decision. Since Article 14 of the *Tovata* constitution forbade any member state's entering into alliance with a foreign power, Tui Nayau might have concluded that he could not ally himself with both northern Fiji and Tonga. With a choice to be made, he chose Tonga. It is significant that he saw a distinction between Tonga on the one hand and Ma`afu on the other. His decision can be seen as evidence that Ma`afu was now regarded as a power entirely in his own right in Fiji, one who acted independently of the Tongan government. Tui Nayau's rejection of alliance with that independent power was the most severe blow Ma`afu had received since his forced renunciation of the Tongan lands in Fiji in the days of Consul Pritchard.

It was not the only blow Ma`afu received during these months, a period accurately described as a time of "transition".⁴⁵ In June, USS *Tuscarora*, Captain Fabius Stanley, arrived in Fiji to renew pressure for payment of the American "debt". A bewildered Cakobau was forced to make yet another agreement to pay, this time in four annual instalments, the first of which would fall due on 1 May 1868. Three islands within his domain were liable to forfeiture if he reneged.⁴⁶ Cakobau sought to gain some advantage from his predicament by writing to U.S. President Andrew Johnson seeking American protection against Tonga for the four-year period covered by the new agreement. Acting Consul Brower supported the Vunivalu, acknowledging that the menace posed by Tonga acted as a hindrance to his ability to pay the indemnity.⁴⁷ Cakobau's fear of Tongan intentions appeared undiminished. When the *Tuscarora* called at Tonga the following month, Stanley advised Tupou not to permit any Tongan interference with the collection of the "debt" in Fiji and urged him to confine Tongan "raids" in Fiji within the Exploring Isles.⁴⁸ The captain's letter was timely, since the King still believed that Vanuabalavu, the Yasayasa Moala and Rabe "were his by right" and that he was justified in enforcing that right, "by force of arms if necessary".⁴⁹ Tupou's views on Tongan "rights" in Fiji were increasingly divorced from the actions of Ma`afu, who had formed the *Tovata* without consulting the King. It is likely that once Tupou became aware of the depth of American concerns, he saw the advisability of dissociating himself, and the Tongan government generally, from Ma`afu's activities in Fiji.

45 Carey to Thomas Williams, 25 Jun 1867, Carey Letterbook 1867-1874.

46 The islands were Nairai, Batiki and Moturiki.

47 Indenture made at Bau 12 June 1867 between Cakobau and Captain Stanley, signed by Cakobau and S.A. St John, Secretary of State, enclosed in Brower to SD, 25 Jun 1867, USC Laucala 4.

48 Fabius Stanley to George Tubou, King of the Friendly Islands, 15 Jul 1867, USC Laucala 4. The name "Exploring Isles" includes Vanuabalavu and the islands within its reef, principally Namalata, Susui, Munia, Cikobia, Sovu islets, Avea, Qilaqila, Adavaci and Yanuacaloa.

49 The King so informed visiting Wesleyan missionary Martin Dyson at Nuku`alofa in July 1867. (Martin Dyson, Papers, Vol. 6, Life History, no pagination, but 793 in ML photostat).

Ma`afu himself did not escape notice from the visiting Americans. Before the *Tuscarora* proceeded to Tonga, it called at Lomaloma, where Ma`afu was invited on board for a meeting with Stanley. The captain raised a number of minor claims brought against Ma`afu by resident Americans, involving in some cases unpaid debts. Ma`afu readily acknowledged them and, in an attempt to avoid liability, gave Stanley a draft payable by Tupou.⁵⁰ The claims included disputes over the ownership of the islands of Munia and Yanuyan within the Vanuabalavu lagoon. Ma`afu had claimed to be the owner of both islands by virtue of Tui Cakau's gift of levying rights and of Consul Jones' finding at the judicial hearing in 1865. Stanley informed him that since Americans had purchased both islands, their legal ownership had not been within Jones' jurisdiction. Ma`afu was forced to remove the inhabitants, who were later dispersed to Avea and to the village of Mavana on Vanuabalavu.⁵¹ The consequence of the enquiry on board the *Tuscarora* was a written agreement signed by Ma`afu renouncing in perpetuity all claim to Munia and Yanuyan.⁵²

Although Ma`afu regarded these two small islands as rightfully his, it is probable that he was not unduly concerned about their loss. In any case, Tongan involvement in eastern Fiji continued without reference to the wishes of either Ma`afu or Tupou. In June, a 600-strong Tongan war party descended on Lakeba, where the Tongan flag was temporarily hoisted. The only blood shed was that of numerous Lakeban pigs.⁵³ Whether this raid was a consequence of Tui Nayau's rejection of the *Tovata* a few weeks earlier cannot be determined. Ma`afu, however, following the loss of Lau to the *Tovata* and his treatment at American hands, appeared to withdraw in high dudgeon to his lair at Lomaloma, leaving the *Tovata* as a house built on sand. He articulated his reasons:

because of the continued outcry raised against me by many of the foreigners resident in Fiji, that I am the root of all evil in Fiji; and because the Lau chiefs have decided to abandon the confederation, and because Tui Cakau is wavering in his adhesion ... and because ... quarrels ... among the different chiefdoms of Fiji are imminent, I write to tell you that I intend never again to meddle in the management [of any chiefdom apart from Lau]. What I have done in times past in the political troubles of Fiji has been done with the desire to aid the chieftains in preserving order...⁵⁴

50 Brower to Stanley, 28 Jun 1867, USC Laucala 3; Brower to SD, 20 Jul 1867, *ibid.*; Evidence of Brower, LCC R930. Stanley had been reluctant to adjudicate the matter of Ma`afu's liabilities, but did so at the urging of Swanston, with Brower's support. See Swanston to Jones, 3 Jul 1867, BCFP.

51 Evidence of Ma`afu and of Koroniase, LCC R960.

52 Statement by Ma`afu renouncing claims to Munia and Yanuyan, 30 Jun 1867, LCC R952.

53 Fison to his sisters, 28 Aug 1867, Fison, Miscellaneous Papers 1865–1868.

54 Ma`afu to Thurston, 15 Sep 1867, BCFP.

So Ma`afu could not have his way and, as was his wont, withdrew from the sordid world of politics, nursing his wounded pride and purporting to wonder how he could have been so treated. But his withdrawal was tactical; within two years he would be recognised as Tui Lau, a new chief within the polity of Fiji and no longer simply governor of the Tongans under Tupou I.

He left further explanation to his secretary. Swanston advised Acting Consul Thurston that the "Confederation ... of Bua, Cakaudrove and Vanua Balavu [had] broken up", as a result of Tui Nayau's failure to participate.⁵⁵ Swanston thought that the main consequence of the *Tovata's* collapse would be "the direct political connection of Lau and Bua with Tonga". He regretted the change, since he had regarded the *Tovata* as an entity Tonga would have recognised and within which Ma`afu "could have acted more in accordance with his own views, which are far in advance of those held by Fijian Chiefs". He emphasised to Thurston that he so opposed the extension of Tongan political power that he could no longer support Ma`afu officially, since Ma`afu "by force of circumstances must now represent Tongan interests solely".⁵⁶ Although Swanston was apparently not aware, the time had arrived when Tupou had to weigh the merits of the Tongan lands in Fiji against his kingdom's relations with the encroaching wider world. His conclusions would leave Ma`afu very much his own man in Fiji.

For the moment, the man led a settled existence. In October HMS *Brisk*, Captain Charles Hope, visited Fiji. Hope wished to proceed to the island of Niufo`ou, in northern Tonga, "to call the natives to account for the ill-treatment of the crew of an English vessel". The captain took on board Thurston and Ma`afu, referring to the latter as "the proper heir" of Tupou. Hope also made mention of the tale of Ma`afu's banishment from Tonga for his "wild and lawless conduct" in his youth, a story which would follow Ma`afu well beyond the grave. On board ship, Ma`afu earned Hope's praise as a "gentleman" who was "respected by all who came in contact with him". On arrival at Niufo`ou, Ma`afu went ashore, extracted an apology and a fine from the erring chief and was treated with a deference befitting his rank by the inhabitants. On the return of HMS *Brisk* to Fiji, Ma`afu was left at Lomaloma, where he had commenced the cultivation of cotton.⁵⁷

Charles Hope was an interested observer of Fiji and produced a revealing account of the political circumstances he encountered there. He acknowledged Ma`afu's supremacy in eastern Fiji, remarking that although he and Cakobau were often regarded as great rivals, "the two chiefs have generally been on good terms and have exchanged friendly visits". Of the two, Ma`afu appeared the

55 John Bates Thurston had been given charge of the British Consulate on 18 Jul 1867, the day of Henry Jones' departure for England. (See Jones to FO, 18 Jul 1867, FO 58/111).

56 Swanston to Thurston, 25 Sep 1867, BCFP.

57 Charles W. Hope, Letter-Journals of Captain Charles W. Hope of HMS *Brisk* 1865–1868, 22 Oct 1867. See also Frederick Crowe, Letter to his father written on board HMS *Brisk* 1867.

more powerful: his influence, “if he chose to exert it, would now be all powerful throughout [Viti Levu]”. In view of the general support for Cakobau from the resident Europeans, Hope saw an urgent need for recognition of the Vunivalu as king “of Viti Levu and its dependencies”. Ma`afu’s “position with respect to [Lau should be] assimilated to that of Cakobau, and ... the succession [in Lau should be settled] on his eldest son”. Fiji could thus become two independent kingdoms, with the possibility of union in the distant future. “At present this is out of the question”, Hope believed, “as ... Ma`afu is not a man to play a subordinate part”. Significantly, Hope in his detailed survey made no mention of any menace, real or imagined, from Tonga.⁵⁸

While Ma`afu’s sovereignty in Vanuabalavu was now beyond dispute, George Henry continued his attempts to circumvent the 1865 judicial finding. In August he sought to “cajole” Ma`afu into handing over the deeds to Vanuabalavu, so that he (Henry) could undertake a fraudulent sale of the island to an American. This attempt was made despite Henry’s having signed a deed of renunciation of all rights to Vanuabalavu at the Consulate in June. Thurston called Henry into the Consulate again and required him to destroy a “deed” from Tui Cakau, recognising the validity of that chief’s original sale to Henry. A document from Cakobau also recognising the sale was similarly destroyed. Henry was threatened with deportation on the next British man-of-war to call. Ma`afu, while assured of the Acting Consul’s full support, was warned to stop his people from slaughtering Henry’s livestock on Adavaci.⁵⁹ The reality was that Henry had ceased to pose any threat to Ma`afu. The latter’s chief concern at the end of 1867 was the consolidation of his power in eastern Fiji, including especially the need for an accommodation with Tui Nayau, who still apparently considered Lakeba’s links with Tonga to be of primary importance. Hope had been right in stating that neither Ma`afu nor Cakobau would willingly place himself under the authority of the other. Of the two, it was Ma`afu whose power was in more urgent need of resolution.

From early 1868, the increasing numbers of European settlers in Fiji, mostly attempting to cultivate cotton, formed an element no contender for power in the islands could ignore. Reports of high prices being fetched for Sea Island cotton in England, sustained by favourable press comment in the Australian colonies, attracted great interest, with Sea Island cotton being successfully grown in Fiji, most notably on Wakaya. Ma`afu himself cultivated cotton on Vanuabalavu in partnership with Swanston.⁶⁰ In an editorial based more on hearsay than on

58 Charles W. Hope, Memorandum on the Fiji Islands, 21 Nov 1867.

59 Thurston to Henry, 2 Dec 1867, Thurston to Ma`afu, 5 Dec 1867, Henry to Thurston, 6 Dec and 19 Dec 1867, BCFP. Henry valued the losses to his livestock, occasioned by Ma`afu’s people, at \$850.

60 Karl van Damme to the Editor, *TA*, 8 Feb 1868, 7. For detailed discussions of cotton cultivation in Fiji during the late 1860s, see Evelyn Stokes, “The Fiji Cotton Boom in the Eighteen-sixties”, *The New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 165–177; John M.R. Young, *Frontier society in Fiji 1858–1873*, PhD thesis,

factual reporting, one Melbourne newspaper, *The Argus*, mentioned Tupou's reputed long-standing ambition to annex Fiji, an ambition thwarted only by the "policy" of the British and American Consuls. "If the whites will not take the sovereignty [of Fiji] the Tonguese are sure to do it", *The Argus* warned.⁶¹

Most residents of Fiji were not moved with such a sense of urgency. Thurston commiserated with Tui Bua over the collapse of the *Tovata*, while also assuring Swanston that Ma`afu was quite right to exercise a "proper and wholesome authority" over visiting and resident Europeans, provided his laws were "not in violation of civilised ideas". The new American Consul, Kintzing Pritchette, apparently shared Thurston's views.⁶² Ma`afu himself was well aware of the need, expressed the previous year by Captain Hope, for his power base to acquire a new and if possible permanent definition. On his return from a trip to Ra, he met Cakobau at Moturiki, where the Vunivalu bared his soul to his old adversary:

I was a fool to abandon you and Tubou, everything has gone wrong with me, and see where they have placed me. I lately received a letter from them stating that they would have nothing more to do with me, and the Secretary had left. I cannot pay the American claim.

Ma`afu appeared unmoved:

It is the result of your own folly. We had agreed before Mr Williams died that ... I should arrange with Tubou to help us and we would jointly and easily paid the claim, but you listened to Mr Pritchard, and where are you to-day?

True to his resolution of five months earlier, Ma`afu refused a request to advise some Rewan chiefs on certain matters, reminding them that he had informed the British Consul of his determination not to involve himself in Fijian affairs. Tui Bua and Tui Cakau were similarly rebuffed, despite the former's making a special voyage to ask Ma`afu personally. But Ma`afu did go some way towards revealing his hand to Swanston:

`You whites will never be able to do anything with the Fijians, they cannot understand you and you cannot understand them, and there never will be any confidence between you; towards us they lean ... we

University of Adelaide 1968; Young, "Evanescent Ascendancy: the planter community of Fiji" in J.W. Davidson and D.A. Scarr, eds, *Pacific Islands Portraits*, Canberra 1970, 147–175; Young, *Adventurous Spirits: Australian migrant society in pre-cession Fiji*, St Lucia, Qld 1984; Jules Girard, *La Colonisation anglo-saxonne aux îles Fidji*, extrait du bulletin de la Société de Géographie, Février 1874, Paris, 4.

61 *TA*, 15 Jan 1868, 5.

62 Thurston to "King George of Bua", 7 Jan 1868, Thurston to Swanston, 14 Jan 1868, BCFP.

can manage them, put us in the middle and let us work together and Fiji will be at rest; try and handle these people yourselves and you will have endless trouble’.

Ma`afu, who saw the future sovereignty of Tonga “as undoubtedly open to him, ... would decide at once on the Tongan throne with Lau annexed did he not believe in the probability of extended power in Fiji!” He wished to keep himself free of any complications in Fiji, so that no future option should be closed to him. With Swanston’s backing, he might yet gain the support of the whites, while his succession in Tonga would all but guarantee his sovereignty in Lau.⁶³

Swanston continued to further the cause of his employer and business partner by acquainting Consul Pritchette with Ma`afu’s background and present importance in Fiji. Quoting the maxim “the man in power is the man to be recognised”, he told Pritchette:

Ma`afu is no myth in ... local politics ... he is an incontestable fact ... He is a political necessity ... That Ma`afu means Tonga is a catchpenny cry, and those not acquainted with the subtleties of native politics, appear to hear truth on the face of it. Ma`afu is Tonga so far as we choose to allow it; and Ma`afu is not Tonga where we choose to object.

Ma`afu’s personal influence aided by the weight of his position as a Tongan ... has placed him and held him where he is ... this influence can be used to immense advantage, for Fiji at large and for our race. It is a power ... which is hopelessly beyond the farthest ken of the most insanely ambitious Fijian, and which any endeavour on the part of the whites to overthrow I view as a suicidal mistake.

For the two Consuls, entrusted with the interests of the vast majority of the Europeans resident in Fiji, Ma`afu was far and away the strongest force with which they had to come to terms. Swanston believed that, despite the earlier rebuff from Cakobau, Ma`afu would willingly pay the American claim, if the chiefs of Bau and Rewa were “disposed to meet [his] views”.⁶⁴ Meeting Ma`afu’s views would entail nothing less than a surrender of power.

Cakobau meanwhile seized an opportunity to surrender the American “debt”. A private limited liability enterprise, called the Polynesian Land Company, was formed by some Melbourne businessmen with a view to obtaining land in Fiji for cotton cultivation. Two of the company’s principals voyaged to Levuka in May 1868. There, they persuaded Cakobau to sign an agreement transferring 200,000 acres of Fijian land to the company and granting certain trading privileges. In

63 Swanston to Thurston, 29 Feb 1868, BCFP.

64 Swanston to Kintzing Pritchette, 13 Apr 1868, BCFP.

return, the company agreed to settle the "debt" in full and to pay the Vunivalu \$1,000 annually.⁶⁵ The land "granted" by Cakobau consisted of blocks in four different parts of Fiji, mostly areas over whose inhabitants he possessed no authority. The agreement was made unbeknown to Thurston who, as soon as he heard of it, obtained an injunction against the Company's men "to stay further action".⁶⁶ Thurston, fearing that the United States might gain possession of the lands offered by Cakobau, wrote to inform Commodore Lambert of the Royal Navy's Australia Station that the lands in question were not Cakobau's to convey.⁶⁷ He also protested to the Foreign Office, emphasising the threat the agreement posed to the existing investments of capital and labour by British subjects in Fiji.⁶⁸ Following the injunction, Cakobau repudiated the May agreement with further action concerning the Polynesian Land Company deferred until the expected arrival of Lambert in July.⁶⁹ The Company eventually failed to achieve almost all its objectives, owing largely to the impossibility of securing the 200,000 acres "granted" by Cakobau and to the eventual collapse of the cotton boom in Fiji. Its story is not among our concerns here since, during these early days, Ma`afu was in no way involved. His future was being decided in Tonga at the very time when the Company's representatives were negotiating with Cakobau.⁷⁰

Ma`afu had gone to Tonga to attend the fourth Tongan Parliament, which began its deliberations at Nuku`alofa on 21 May. Jone Waqaimalani and Lote Loganimoce, two leading Lakeban chiefs, also attended, as did Tui Bua. The assembled chiefs unanimously resolved, "that the Tongan government should withdraw from Fiji altogether, that all Tongan possessions in Fiji should be sold, and that Ma`afu should remain in Tonga". When the Fijian chiefs present protested against the last provision, the Parliament allowed that Ma`afu could return to Fiji to gather documentary proof that his presence there was welcomed by the leading chiefs, particularly those of Bua, Cakaudrove and Lakeba, the

65 CRD 917, NAF.

66 Cdre Rowley Lambert to Sir J.H.T. Manners Sutton [Governor of Victoria], 14 July 1868, Copies of Extracts of Correspondence relating to the Feejee Islands, in so far as the same relate to their Annexation to the Colonial Empire of this Country or otherwise affording Protection to British subjects resident in those Islands, 8 Aug 1871, GB PP [C.-5039]. Twenty-five years earlier, missionary Thomas Williams had predicted the interest in Fiji of "the speculating class of gentry ... we are shortly to expect a torrent of hungry emigrants ... I know enough to satisfy me that they are men of base principles". Williams to his parents, 25 Apr 1843, Thomas Williams Letters to his Father.

67 Thurston to Lambert, 1 Jun 1868, BCFP. See also Thurston to Stanley, 12 May 1868, *ibid*. Thurston's fears were not unfounded. *TA* of 4 Dec 1868 would quote an editorial in the San Francisco *Bulletin*, which expressed the view that U.S. Secretary of State William Seward might claim he was entitled to possession of the lands "by default of payment".

68 Thurston to FO, 1 Jun 1868, FO58/113.

69 Thurston to FO, 27 May 1868, FO58/113.

70 For the story of the Polynesia Land Company, see M.A. Quanchi, *This Glorious Company: the Polynesia Company in Melbourne and Fiji 1860–1881*, unpublished MA thesis, Monash University 1971. See also J.D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji 1858 – 1870*, London 1958, 52–55; Peter France, *The Charter of the Land*, Melbourne 1969, 81–83.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

states with the closest links to Tonga.⁷¹ The only one of the Tongan lands in Fiji to remain unsold was Rabe, since 1855 the private property of Tupou.⁷² Parliament passed a series of “resolutions relating to Fiji” which were designed to define future relations between the two countries. Chief among them were:

1. The Tongan flag hoisted at Lakeba in June was to be lowered when Ma`afu returned to Fiji.⁷³
2. The cession of lands and requested use of the Tongan flag by Bua was to be declined.
3. Ma`afu, if permitted to return permanently to Fiji, should not enter into any alliance with Fijian chiefs without the explicit approval of the Tongan government.
4. Ma`afu would be at liberty to establish laws in his Fijian lands according to his discretion, even if such laws were at variance with those prevailing in Tonga.
5. Ma`afu was at liberty to sell any Tongan lands in Fiji that the people were unable to cultivate.⁷⁴

In an accompanying Law relating to Governors, it was forbidden for any Governor to contract debts on behalf of the Tongan government without express permission.⁷⁵ This law was apparently prompted by the numerous debts Ma`afu had accrued on Tupou’s behalf and by the paucity of tribute he had sent home.⁷⁶

The writing had long been on the wall concerning these first formal steps taken by Tupou and his chiefs to disengage their country from Fiji. More than five years earlier, William Owen had written a courteous letter to Tupou, urging him to do nothing to disturb the existing friendly relations between Tonga and Fiji.⁷⁷ At the same time and in a very different tone, Isaac Brower had sent the King a belligerent message, advising that he would be held personally responsible if Tongan “agents” in Fiji interfered with measures taken to collect the American debt. Tupou was warned to abandon his “ambitious designs” on Fiji.⁷⁸ Although Tupou had informed missionary Martin Dyson in July 1867 that

71 Swanston to Thurston, 5 Jun 1868, BCFP.

72 Rabe was eventually sold to three Sydney men in 1870 for £1,300. See LCC R1; *FT*, 30 Jul 1870; Minutes of the Executive Council Siting for the Rehearing of Claimants’ Lands 1879–1880, Appendix C, 83B and 83C.

73 See above, n. 44.

74 For the full text of the resolutions, see Appendix D. See also Swanston to Thurston, 8 Aug 1868, enc. A, BCFP. For an account of the meeting of Parliament, see *The Fijian Weekly News and Planters Journal*, 21 Oct 1868; “Spectator” to Editor, 20 Feb 1874, *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

75 Swanston to Thurston, 8 Aug 1868, enc. B. For the text of the Law relating to Governors, see Appendix E.

76 Tupou Ha`apai to Thurston, 2 Apr 1869, BCFP.

77 William Owen to George Tupou, 31 Jan 1863. See Ch. 7, n. 82.

78 Isaac Brower to George Tupou, 31 Dec 1862. See Ch. 7, n. 83.

he was still prepared to use force to protect Tongan interests there,⁷⁹ the visit of USS *Tuscarora* during the same month, with further warnings from Captain Stanley against "interference", left its impression on the King.⁸⁰ Following the resolutions of June 1868, the Tongan lands previously considered to be under the rule of Tupou were permanently assigned to Ma`afu. Further, if Ma`afu could demonstrate that the chiefs of Fiji welcomed his permanent presence among them, Tupou would not stand in his way.

Ma`afu remained in Tonga for at least a month and, following his return, appears to have been occupied in efforts to secure the support of the eastern and northern chiefs. Thurston, preoccupied with the Polynesian Land Company, devoted no attention to Ma`afu's concerns.⁸¹ The Acting Consul wrote to the governors of New South Wales and Victoria, informing them of the impossibility of the Company's gaining title to the proffered 200,000 acres. He also emphasised that Cakobau lacked the authority to protect European settlers who might come to occupy the lands.⁸² Largely because of Thurston's energetic opposition, Cakobau on 23 July signed a new charter describing him only as "King ... of the Bau Dominions" and offering the company monopoly rights and freedom from taxation, rather than legal title, over the land.⁸³ Neither investors in the Company nor its directors knew the true extent of Cakobau's rule, while for the Vunivalu himself, relief to be rid at last of the American "debt" remained his principal concern. His later claim not to have understood the contents of the instrument he signed in May cut no ice with Thurston.⁸⁴ Ma`afu became involved when Cakobau wrote to him in August concerning Beqa, which formed part of the lands "granted" to the Company by Cakobau. Since the island owed allegiance to Ma`afu, Cakobau wrote asking him "if Beqa is really yours, give it to me so that I may give it to the Europeans".⁸⁵ This request, as James Calvert noted, was "an acknowledgment on [Cakobau's] part that Ma`afu is the owner of the island".⁸⁶

In the meantime, the Vunivalu had not forgotten his quarrel with Tonga. He wrote to Tupou, asking that their long estrangement might end and seeking a visit from Tevita `Unga.⁸⁷ The King's reply, six months later, reflected the Tongan Parliament's resolutions relating to Fiji. His secretary Moss wrote

79 See above, n. 49.

80 See above, n. 48.

81 Before his return, Ma`afu had the Tongan flag removed from his vessel. See address by Swanston the meeting of Whites at Lomaloma, 20 Dec 1870.

82 Thurston to Governors of New South Wales and Victoria, 23 Jul 1868, BCFP.

83 Charter signed by King Cakobau, granted to the Polynesian Land Company, July 23, 1868, Henderson, 22–23.

84 Thurston to FO, 8 Sep 1868, BCFP.

85 Cakobau to Ma`afu, 25 Aug 1868, NAF; Notes of a Conversation which took place on board Her Majesty's ship "Pelorus" between Cakobau and Sir Hercules Robinson on Friday 25th September 1874, CO 881.

86 Calvert to Adm Erskine MP, 25 May 1869, CO881/2.

87 Cakobau to George Tupou, 26 Aug 1868, BCFP.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

that `Unga was usefully employed at Vava`u, and that as Tonga had ceded all her possessions in Fiji to Ma`afu, the King did not desire to mix himself in any way in Fijian politics, and therefore Cakobau had better apply to his friends in Fiji for assistance...⁸⁸

While Cakobau waited for answers from his correspondents, the Tongans were not forgotten by the European residents of Fiji. A debate in the letters column of the Levuka weekly, *The Fijian Weekly News and Planters Journal*, led one settler to refer to the American "debt" as "a protection against the Tongans", which opinion was borne out by the resolutions of the Tongan Parliament.⁸⁹ Thurston meanwhile reminded Ma`afu of the serious inconvenience caused to British subjects in Fiji by his failure to meet his debts, a neglect which had the potential to "detract from the harmony of our present relations", as the Consul delicately advised him.⁹⁰ Of Ma`afu himself, nothing was heard.

Tui Bua, inspired by his recent visit to Tonga, opened the third Legislative Assembly of Bua on 3 October by urging the Buan chiefs to give up "all idea of returning to the old state of things". He sought closer ties with the rest of eastern Fiji.⁹¹ Intermittent hostilities were occurring on Vanua Levu at the time, involving Solevu, the *vanua* which Cakobau had lost to Bua six years before, and also Macuata. While both Ma`afu and Tui Cakau were reportedly involved, the details are mostly unrecorded.⁹² Concerning matters more easily managed than war, Hennings Brothers, traders at Levuka, had taken over a debt of £100 which Ma`afu had owed a deceased settler.⁹³ Ma`afu re-emerged into the spotlight of history on 10 November when he advised Cakobau that he would not surrender Beqa for cession to the Europeans. His view was fully in accord with that of the island's chief, Emosi Tui Beqa, who referred to Ma`afu as his friend and partner in the land.⁹⁴ Ma`afu's whereabouts during the exchange is unclear, although during the same month his schooner, the *Caroline*, "mounting eight guns, and another ... belonging to Tui Cakau, together with six large Tongan war canoes, were lying at Solevu". The two chiefs were supposedly anxious for peace, while Cakobau wished Solevu to remain part of Bua, instead of coming under Ma`afu's control. Cakobau, the Levuka newspaper contended, "has reason to dread the

88 Tupou Ha`apai to Thurston 4 Feb 1869, BCFP.

89 "Omega" to the Editor, *The Fijian Weekly News and Planters Journal*, 26 Sep 1868.

90 Thurston to Ma`afu, 2 Oct 1868, BCFP.

91 *The Fijian Weekly News and Planters Journal*, 3 October 1868.

92 Evidence of Fr Favie, LCC R586; Evidence of David Wilkinson, LCC R788; "Dreketi and Macuata", Im Thurn Papers, Doc. 15, FM.

93 Swanston to Thurston, 9 Nov 1868, BCFP.

94 Ma`afu to Cakobau, 10 Nov 1868, BCFP; Emosi Tui Beqa to Cakobau, 16 Nov 1868, *ibid.* The controversy over Beqa would continue. In June 1869, Cakobau wrote to the British Consul, insisting that Beqa was the property of himself and Tui Dreketi. Ma`afu similarly lost no time in telling the Consul that Beqa was his by virtue of a gift from Tui Dreketi. Cakobau to Consul, 11 Jun 1869, BCFP; Ma`afu to Consul, 20 Nov 1869, *ibid.*

power [of Ma`afu], for his known connection with the King of Tonga".⁹⁵ If such were indeed Cakobau's view, he must have placed little faith in the resolutions of the Tongan Parliament.

In the outside world, interest in Fiji was still largely confined to its potential as a primary producer of cotton, coffee and other tropical products. *The Argus* reported in January 1869 that one of the major difficulties facing settlers was "the want of a settled government".⁹⁶ Thurston unwittingly lent credence to such reports when he advised the Governor of New South Wales that some beleaguered settlers in western Viti Levu, placing no faith in Cakobau for protection, had petitioned Ma`afu to come to their assistance. Thurston correctly advised the Governor that only British and American influence had prevented Ma`afu, "a man of great energy and ambition", from subjugating Fiji. Having waited for years for "a plausible pretext" to enter Fiji, Ma`afu had now been offered one, or so Thurston believed.⁹⁷ It was all to no avail, since Ma`afu was in Tonga at the time. He had secured from the chiefs of Lakeba, Cakaudrove, Macuata and Bua documents stating their wish that he be allowed to remain in Fiji, exercising the functions of a chief. True to its resolutions of the previous June, the Tongan government presented Ma`afu with a deed, ceding to him and his heirs "all her rights sovereign and territorial" in Fiji.⁹⁸ In a formal statement dated 3 February 1869, Tupou ceded all the Tongan lands in Fiji to Ma`afu, "late Governor of the Tongan possessions in Fiji", except Rabe, for himself and his successors. Ma`afu was denied use of the Tongan flag, which was not to be raised anywhere in Fiji. Moreover, Ma`afu was explicitly granted all the responsibility vested in the Tongan government among the Tongan lands in Fiji. These measures were undertaken, Tupou declared, to release the Tongan government "from embarrassment and difficulty".⁹⁹ The King's secretary later claimed that "the greatest difficulty with the King and Chiefs of Tonga is the giving up of Ma`afu himself ... making him an alien". These regrets notwithstanding, the break appeared both definitive and final.¹⁰⁰

Tupou's secretary, David Moss, Tupou Ha`apai, was later to outline the King's reasons for relinquishing the Tongan lands in Fiji. One was Ma`afu's long residence in Fiji and another the expenses involved in keeping "Colonies". Among those expenses, the heaviest were the bills signed by Ma`afu and payable by Tupou. Tribute sent by Ma`afu had amounted to a motley collection of mats, sailcloth, sinnet and sandalwood with a total value of less than \$100. Finally, there was

95 *The Fijian Weekly News and Planters Journal*, 21 Nov 1868.

96 *TA*, 20 Jan 1869.

97 Thurston to Earl of Belmore, 2 Feb 1868 and enclosure A: Petition to Ma`afu, 'King of the Windward Isles', BCFP. See also James Calvert to Admiral Erskine, MP, 25 May 1869, FO58/116.

98 Swanston to Thurston, 5 Jun 1869, BCFP.

99 Statement of George Tupou, 3 Feb 1869, enclosed with Swanston to Thurston, 25 Feb 1869, BCFP. For the full text of the statement, see Appendix F.

100 Tupou Ha`apai to Thurston, 4 Feb 1869, BCFP.

more land available in Tonga for cultivation than people to work it. Significantly for Ma`afu's longer-term future, Tupou Ha`apai denied Australian press reports that Ma`afu was Tupou's chosen successor. The question of succession had been put in the hands of Parliament in 1865 and when the chiefs had failed to agree, they swore an oath to support anyone chosen by the King.¹⁰¹

Among the weighty considerations of Ma`afu's future status in both Tonga and Fiji, during his visit to Tonga early in 1869, an episode of much smaller moment occurred which sheds some light on the personal side of his administration in Lau. Ma`afu's secretary, Robert Swanston, who accompanied his master on the trip, made a complaint to both David Moss and Tevita `Unga, Governor of Lau. Swanston declared that he would have to leave his master, who had not been "liberal enough" to him. When Moss and `Unga asked Swanston what he wanted,

I said I wanted a deed in fee-simple for my land at Dalidoni [in Vanuabalavu] which Ma`afu had refused to give me as it was against Tongan law. They spoke to King Tubou on the matter and I received a deed from Ma`afu, endorsed by Tubou. This was done very much against Ma`afu's inclination. I found on my return, that his discontent interfered with our official relations.

Seeking to remedy the situation, Swanston proposed to Ma`afu that if he would add a block called Masomo to the Dalidoni holding, Swanston would be content to hold both parcels of land as leasehold, in keeping with Ma`afu's usual practice in Lau. When Ma`afu agreed to the request, Swanston destroyed the original deed.¹⁰² The episode shows that, as a Tongan chief, Ma`afu was still obliged to respect the wishes of his king. It also reveals that he was not prepared to tolerate any deviation from the rigid pattern of control he asserted in Lau through his leasehold system of land tenure.

Part of the process of disengagement involved the formal termination on 1 March of the treaties between Tonga and both Bua and Lakeba.¹⁰³ The demise of these treaties, following his alienation from Tonga, gave Ma`afu unprecedented freedom to pursue his political fortunes in Fiji. Several months earlier, several Cakaudrove chiefs had advised Ma`afu of their willingness for Lau to join the *Tovata* and for Ma`afu to be its leader.¹⁰⁴ Now, the changed attitude of Tui Nayau was especially significant, since that chief's desire to remain within the orbit of Tonga had thwarted Ma`afu's ambitions concerning the *Tovata*. An agreement signed at Lakeba on 15 February stipulated that "all the islands formerly under

101 David Moss to Thurston, 2 Apr 1869, NAF.

102 LCC R958 Dalidoni, evidence of Robert Swanston and of Ma`afu, NAF.

103 Tupou Ha`apai to Thurston (2 letters), 4 Feb 1869, BCFP.

104 Letter from Cakaudrove chiefs to Ma`afu et al, 21 Aug 1868. The letter, which has apparently not survived, was tabled at a meeting of *Tovata* chiefs in May and June 1869. Minutes of The Meetings of the *Tovata* i Viti, May-Jun 1869 and Aug 1870, ML.

Tupou [are] now *Vakarorogo* to Ma`afu. Moala, Matuku, Totoya and Vanuabalavu directly, and Lakeba to pay tribute, but to be ruled by its own chiefs".¹⁰⁵ Ma`afu was formally installed as Tui Lau in a ceremony at Lakeba, where most of the principal chiefs were his kin, with the name Lau being officially applied to the united chiefdoms of Lakeba and Vanuabalavu. The agreement was signed by nine Vuanirewa chiefs, who chose two flags for the new *matanitu*.¹⁰⁶

At the time Ma`afu assumed his new dignity, "a sort of constitution and Code of Laws" was drawn up for the new Chiefdom of Lau.¹⁰⁷ Included among the chiefly signatories to the constitution were Tui Nayau and his designated successor Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, son of the late Vuetasau. The constitution included the provision that Tui Lau possessed the right to lease all unoccupied public lands with a limit of 500 acres for any one lessee. According to Swanston, one of the underlying principles of Ma`afu's land policies as Tui Lau was his determination not to deprive the *taukei* of lands that were, or could be, under cultivation. Only unoccupied lands could be leased, with a view "to introduce white capital and energy into the country". To encourage European settlers, who mostly preferred freehold land obtainable elsewhere in Fiji, Ma`afu was to establish 99-year leases.¹⁰⁸ Allotments, known as *magimaqi* (sinnet) because their beach frontages were usually measured with ropes of sinnet, were made to local residents, often on the basis of rank, with the size and resources of the allotments determining the amount of tax to be paid. Such a system had been in operation on Vanuabalavu for several years. Despite some teething problems relating especially to boundaries, the system proved to be a success. One less laudable feature of the new system enshrined in the rudimentary constitution of 1869 was the provision that all taxes raised in Lau, with the exception of those gathered on Lakeba, were the property of Ma`afu "to do with as he pleases". In similar vein were the ten tons of "produce of the sea" which Tui Nayau was to pay as tribute to Ma`afu annually, although that chief's rights in central Lau were confirmed. The Lands Claims Commissioners of 1880 would recommend that these absolute powers over leases and taxation should not be extended to Ma`afu's successors.¹⁰⁹

Moss wished Thurston to understand the finality of the King's break with Ma`afu and the Tongans in Fiji. He wrote again to the Acting Consul on 2 April, reminding him the Tongan government "would no longer be responsible for the acts of ... Ma`afu and ... you will please look upon all Tongans residing

105 LCC R952. See also LCC R930. The term *vakarorogo* indicated that the specified islands were under the authority of Ma`afu and owed obedience to him. A letter from the Lakeban chiefs, expressing unanimous support for Ma`afu's creation as Tui Lau, was tabled at the meeting of the Tovata chiefs in May and June 1869.

106 Swanston to Thurston, 25 Feb 1869, BCFP.

107 For the constitution, see Appendix G. See also Henderson, 26–27.

108 Evidence of Swanston, LCC R930.

109 Victor Williamson to Thurston, 25 Nov 1880, LCC R930 (General Report on Lau Leases). See also LCC R90. For a detailed treatment of Ma`afu's land policies in Lau, see Ch. 9.

in Fiji as the subjects of Ma`afu". Any Tongans dissatisfied with those new arrangements were given the opportunity to return home.¹¹⁰ Two months later, Thurston was further informed, this time by Swanston, of the final act in the drama of disengagement. From 28 May to 1 June, the chiefs of Lau, Cakaudrove and Bua met at Lomaloma, where

Ma`afu was recognised as Tui Lau, and acknowledged to be, and received as, a fellow Chieftain of Fiji by the Assembly. The Cession from Tonga to Ma`afu was approved and accepted and the united chiefdom of Lau was recognised as one of the *Tovata*, and Ma`afu was elected to be the head of the Confederation according to the tenor of the Constitution...¹¹¹

According to Swanston, the chiefs were of one mind:

Laws were passed to Consolidate the Actions of the Chiefs and Ma`afu Tui Cakau and Tui Bua in the presence of the principal chiefs of their respective territories reiterated their united resolve to maintain and enforce the Constitution as heretofore done, expressing their conviction that it was the way whereby peace and confidence could be ensured throughout Fiji.¹¹²

The resolutions of the meeting demonstrated that the chiefs were indeed "of one mind". Having decided that "the chief who is appointed leader shall have total authority over the affairs of the confederacy until his death", they expressed unanimity that the leader of the *Tovata* "should be Ma`afu, the Tui Lau and his deputy be the Tui Cakau". Concerning the ruling from Tupou Ha`apai that all Tongans in Fiji should be considered as Ma`afu's subjects, the chiefs stated, "we ... have heard and approve the decision that they [the Tongan chiefs] have given Ma`afu Tongan land and everything else under Tongan ownership in Fiji to be solely owned by him. We accept and cherish him to unite with us the chiefs of Fiji". The chiefs further agreed on a flag and seal for the *Tovata* and defined in detail the boundaries of Lau, Cakaudrove and Bua. They defined strategies to deal with conflicts arising from "people who cause problems and dissension" and tabled letters from various Cakaudrove chiefs "indicating their ... agreement for Lau to be in the *Tovata*, and for it to be led by Ma`afu". Moss' letter from Tonga, announcing that the King and the chiefs "had given Ma`afu all lands and everything belonging to Tonga" was also noted, as was a letter stating the decision of the chiefs of Lakeba that they have agreed to unite with Vanuabalavu and were "unanimous in their decision to create Ma`afu as Tui Lau".¹¹³

110 Moss to Thurston, 2 Apr 1868 (second, "non-official" letter).

111 Swanston to Thurston, 5 Jun 1869.

112 Book of Council of Chiefs, June 1869, unpublished MS (no pagination), NAF.

113 Discussions which took place at the meeting of the *Tovata* held in Lomaloma 28th, 29th, 31st May and 1st June 1869, NAF. I am indebted to Mr Sitiveni Yaqona for the English translation.

If Tui Cakau harboured any regrets over the loss to Cakaudrove of Vanuabalavu and other islands, he kept his own counsel. One administrative measure that revealed the chiefs', or Ma`afu's, foresight was the appointment of Tevita Uluilakeba as governor of the Lakeba division of Lau. While Lakeba would continue to maintain its identity, the focus of the new administration had now shifted permanently to Lomaloma. This alliance, in effect a reorganisation of the Northeastern Confederation, was to be known as the *Tovata e Viti*. Although its political evolution and administrative achievements still lay in the future, its formation was, for Ma`afu, the most decisive event of his 22 years' residence in Fiji. The long process of his transformation from a Tongan chief into a chief of Fiji was now complete. His political career still had a long course to run: two years after his appointment as Tui Lau, he became Viceroy in the short-lived planter oligarchy known as the "Cakobau Government", before being given office as Roko Tui Lau in the British administration, a post he retained until his death in 1881. Nevertheless, the power placed in his hands at Lomaloma in June 1869, a power recognised throughout Fiji and in Tonga, surpassed the imaginings of anyone who might have witnessed the young chief climb down from his canoe and wade ashore at Lakeba in 1847.

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