

9. “He looks every inch a chief”

Ma`afu’s recognition as Tui Lau and his formal separation from Tonga placed his rivalry with Cakobau in a new perspective. With the European population of Fiji growing, and increasing demands for their protection coming from their home governments, Ma`afu’s triumph in Lau brought the question of his future role in Fiji into sharper focus. Cakobau, intent on retaining favour with “the people from Melbourne”, lost no time in attempting to restrain his rival. The Vunivalu reminded acting British Consul John Thurston that the new Tui Lau was often seen in Beqa: “he obtains his food and wood from there”. Asserting that Beqa rightfully belonged to him and to Tui Dreketi, Cakobau told the Consul that Ma`afu should keep away from the island.¹ Although the question remained unresolved, the ownership of Beqa would never be of great moment. More pertinent to Ma`afu’s future in Fiji was a meeting of European settlers held at Levuka on 14 June 1869, under the auspices of Thurston. The meeting adopted a resolution, supported by Cakobau, Ma`afu, Tui Cakau and Tui Bua, urging the British government to establish a protectorate over Fiji to last for up to 20 years

in order that, since annexation to the crown is opposed to the policy of Her Majesty’s Government, the native chiefs, with the assistance of competent foreign residents, may be permitted and assisted to cultivate a form of government analogous to the Sandwich Islands. Your memorialists pray your Lordship may dwell upon the large and increasing connexion with the Australian colonies, and the apparent necessity of providing due protection alike to settlers and natives.²

More than 100 European residents supported the resolution, which Thurston undertook to forward to the Foreign Office. The *Fiji Times* suggested that had the petition “been properly made known throughout the group, the signatures would have been ten times more numerous”.³ Yet Thurston was unwilling to despatch it immediately, probably aware that if “some form of government” were established, outright annexation would be delayed indefinitely. American settlers addressed a similar petition to their government, although the U.S. Consul, Isaac Brower, believed it would be more suitable for the British to assume the protection of Fiji, in view of the composition of the settler community.⁴ Because

1 Cakobau to British Consul, 11 Jun 1869, BCFP.

2 *FT*, 30 Apr 1870. The petition was signed by Cakobau, by Ma`afu on behalf of himself, Tui Bua and Tui Cakau, and by 129 Europeans. See also *TA*, 3 May 1870; Messrs Emberson and Smith to BC, 13 Nov 1869, BCFP; WMMS Lakemba Circuit Report, April 1870, MOM 11. An earlier “private circular”, advocating the formation of a “native government”, had been signed by 37 Europeans on 14 Apr 1870. Frederick J. Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea*, London 1889, Appendix B.

3 *FT*, 30 Apr 1870.

4 Isaac Mills Brower to Fish, 30 Jun 1870, USC Laucala 4; *SMH*, 12 Oct 1869; Lord Belmore [Governor of NSW] to Lord Granville, 23 Nov 1869, quoted in James H. de Ricci, *How about Fiji?*, London 1874, 46–48.

of the volume of primary exports to Australia, Thurston declared, "Fiji is a necessity to, almost the birthright of the Australian colonies".⁵ The Melbourne *Argus* agreed, stating, "Already the Fiji islands are ours by right of commercial conquest and occupation" and urging British protection.⁶ In Fiji itself, even the North German Confederation was petitioned, a move which resulted in Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's appointment of Frederick Hennings as German Consul in Fiji.⁷ The Colonial Office, wary of further distant wars, believed that if the British government were to involve itself in the affairs of the large number of foreign settlers, "it may be expected that Fiji would soon become a second New Zealand in point of trouble and expenditure".⁸ Informed observers of Fiji, such as Captain Charles Hope, believed that British annexation was only a question of time.⁹ Despite the unwavering reluctance of the governments approached, nothing short of annexation by the British would satisfy the demands of settlers for some form of outside intervention to impose order on their undisciplined and fast-evolving society.

Ma`afu, like the indigenous chiefs, was unaffected by the European settlers' attempts to influence their home governments. He remained at Lomaloma, where Percival Friend, a schoolmaster attached to the Wesleyan mission, had been sent "to put up a Mission house and to keep hold of Ma`afu till a missionary come".¹⁰ During the Fiji Wesleyans' 1870 Synod, Frederick Langham wrote to Ma`afu and Swanston, explaining that the failure to send a missionary to Lomaloma was the consequence of a worldwide shortage of manpower.¹¹ Settlers who devoted attention to Fijian affairs, rather than their own, sometimes made pertinent and revealing comments about local politics. Robert Swanston, Ma`afu's secretary, observed it was "impracticable for these savages ... to establish any political structure that we should be able to dignify with the title of Government". Failing occupation of Fiji by any "civilised power", Europeans should recognise all chiefs as heads of their *matanitu* and "hold them responsible for peace and good order therein". The purpose of such an arrangement would be an eventual

5 John Thurston to Editor, *TA*, 3 May 1870, 6.

6 *TA*, 3 May 1870, 5.

7 Thurston to Charles Webley Hope, 18 Dec 1869, C.W. Hope, *Letter-Journals (of HMS Brisk 1865–1874)*, III. Hennings was born in Bremen, Germany in 1837. He came to Fiji in the 1850s, from Samoa, as an agent for Godeffroy and Son of Hamburg and Apia. See *Biographical Notes on Hennings*, HP.

8 G.F. Bowen [CO] to Lord Granville, 20 May 1869, enclosing a copy of a letter from Lord Belmore, transmitting copies of a letter to him from John Bates Thurston, acting British Consul in Fiji.

9 [C.W. Hope], "Sketches in Polynesia – The Fijis", *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. CVI, Jul – Dec 1869, 49.

10 Jesse Carey to Joseph White, 30 Jun 1870, Carey Letterbook. See also Methodist Church of Fiji, Synod Minutes 1869, resolutions 250 and 251, PMB 1138.

11 Langham to Ma`afu and Robert Swanston, 11 Jun 1870, Methodist Church of Fiji, Synod minutes 1870, PMB 1138.

union of the chiefs.¹² Despite Swanston's weary disillusion with the various "governments" which had appeared in Fiji during the 1860s, his employer remained the most likely of all the chiefs to bring a genuine union to fruition.

Thurston sought to direct settler disquiet into channels which might be conducive of results. The resolution adopted at Levuka in June advocated protection for up to 20 years because that period was the longest considered feasible, given the British government's manifest disinterest in Fiji. The Foreign Office, unmoved by the settlers' appeal and by news of the American petition, considered that an American protectorate over Fiji would pose fewer disadvantages than British annexation.¹³ In Australia, editorials referred to Fiji's future as "the depot of tropical productions" and spoke of Australia's "manifest destiny ... to colonise the islands of Melanesia".¹⁴ Ma`afu, secure in the paramountcy of Lau, might have wished for a freer hand to consolidate his power.

Cakobau's signature appended to the settlers' petition was not the only evidence of his continuing unease. He invited "foreign military settlers" to come to Fiji and place themselves under his authority, although to what ultimate purpose remains unclear. When the governors of New South Wales and New Zealand issued proclamations advising that acceptance of the invitation from Fiji would constitute a breach of Great Britain's Foreign Enlistment Act, the Foreign Office hastily concurred.¹⁵ While it is likely that Cakobau remained apprehensive about Ma`afu's intentions, his chief fear, as always, concerned the American "debt".¹⁶ His invitation to "military settlers" might have arisen from suggestions from his secretary, one of several Europeans who had attached themselves to Fiji's leading chiefs.¹⁷ Thurston deplored the influence of these men, describing them as "illiterate and factious" and as "active partisans in the many tribal quarrels of Fiji", seeking to "enforce their monstrous designs against the chief they profess to serve".¹⁸ The secretaries certainly possessed their various agendas, as indeed did Thurston. There arose a widening gulf between the acting Consul's views and those of several of his most prominent constituents.

Aside from his approval of the petition to London, Ma`afu was not an active player in Levuka during his first few months as Tui Lau. In August, probably accompanied by other chiefs, he visited Nadroga in western Viti Levu.¹⁹ This

12 Statement by Swanston 7 Jul 1869, John Dunmore Lang, Papers, Vol. 9, Personal and Miscellaneous, 1838–1873, 134. There was Australian support for such a scenario: see, for example, *The Age*, 4 Jan 1870, 2.

13 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 Dec 1869, enc. in FO to CO, 31 Dec 1869, CO 201/554. See also CO to FO, 4 Feb 1870, *ibid*; *SMH*, 12 Oct 1869; Lord Belmore to Lord Granville, 23 Nov 1869, quoted in de Ricci, 46–48.

14 *The Age*, 14 Aug and 9 Nov 1869.

15 G.F. Bowen to Lord Granville, 20 May 1869, CO209/211; FO to CO 24 Jun 1869, FO58/116.

16 A reasoned and eloquent argument in favour of a British reappraisal of the annexation question, and against the iniquity of the American demands on Fiji, is found in [Hope], "Sketches in Polynesia..."

17 One of Cakobau's secretaries was Samuel St John, an American.

18 Thurston to FO, 23 Aug 1869, FO58/115.

19 Lorimer Fison to William Moore, 22 Aug 1869, FO58/115.

visit was likely prompted by a petition organised by George Rodney Burt, a local planter who, disaffected by incessant hostility from inhabitants of Viti Levu's mountainous interior, begged Ma`afu "to come and clear out the mountains, and reign there". According to James Calvert, 70 "white men" signed the petition, but William Drew, Cakobau's private secretary, prevailed on Burt to abandon the petition in return for a promise from the Vunivalu "to punish the cannibals and get him redress".²⁰ News arrived that the captain of a French man-of-war, visiting Tonga "to talk strong to King George", became "satisfied that the expatriation of Ma`afu was bona fide, and that the Tongan government was not responsible for his actions in Fiji".²¹ French opinion, official or otherwise, was of only marginal relevance, given France's lack of involvement in Fijian affairs. Of greater concern to Ma`afu was the mundane matter of his debt to the trading firm of F. and W. Hennings at Lomaloma. So large had it become that in July 1869 he was forced to mortgage some of the jewels in his crown, the islands of Vanuabalavu, Moala and Totoya, as security for the amount of \$5,261, due on 31 July 1870.²² These islands were specified as Ma`afu's own property, "to do with as he pleases", under the rudimentary Lauan constitution formulated the previous February.²³ Despite this intrusion of commercial reality, Ma`afu appeared undismayed, signing an agreement with merchant Charles Mcfarland of Apia on 5 September. Ma`afu undertook to give Mcfarland his schooner *Eliza Ann* as well as 30 tuns of coconut oil, in exchange for Mcfarland's schooner *Mary*. The vessels were to be exchanged at Apia on 1 November and the deal concluded six months later.²⁴

The mortgage agreement provided for Ma`afu's debt to be partly met from taxation revenue accruing from the three islands. This provision highlights the important role taxation had already assumed in Lau, where the constitution stipulated that the inhabitants of the islands considered to be Ma`afu's private property were to pay annual taxes to him. Laws giving effect to this provision were passed at a "local parliament" held at Lakeba in August. The existing requirement of 15 gallons of coconut oil per man, having been found "insufficient to meet the expenditure", was augmented by a five-gallon "supplementary tax", levied to avoid public debt. Each man was to pay the taxes before the end of April, while women had to pay an annual tax in kind equivalent to three shillings per head. "Men with large families are beginning to tremble lest the next Parliament should impose a tax on babies", missionary Jesse Carey wryly

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

21 *FT*, 11 Sep 1869.

22 CRD No. 620, 27 July 1869, BCFP. See also Deryck Scarr, "Creditors and the House of Hennings: an Elegy from the social and economic history of Fiji", *JPH*, Vol. 7, 1972, 103–123.

23 See Clause 3, Formation of the Chiefdom of Lau, Lakeba, 15 February 1869, Appendix G. See also John Newmarch to Thurston, 24 Nov 1869 and encs, BCFP.

24 Agreement 5 Sep 1869 between Charles Mcfarland merchant of Samoa and Ma`afu "Governor of the Tongans in Fiji", BCFP.

noted. Ma`afu lacked nothing in devising new sources of revenue, even taxing, at 24 shillings per annum, young men who were training as Native Assistant Missionaries on Lakeba. Carey was aghast: "It will be impossible for the Society to pay the [tax]; and where are the poor young men to get it from? Ma`afu must only be thinking that the Lord will send big fish into our bay, each with silver pieces in their mouth, or he must intend to cramp our work, which I cannot believe, or he must be dreaming".²⁵ Ma`afu was no dreamer, however; he was thinking solely of revenue. Meanwhile, as the *Fiji Times* did not fail to note, "Tui Nayau is said to be as fat as ever".²⁶

The system of taxation in Lau encouraged development of the islands' agricultural resources within the framework of their traditional economy. While Ma`afu continued to spend most of his time in the province, enabling him to play an active role in its administration, anxiety over the immediate future of Fiji continued. Following a meeting of leading chiefs at Bau in early October, a letter urging annexation, signed by 11 of their number, was addressed to Queen Victoria. The meeting had been summoned by Thurston in an attempt to gain further chiefly endorsement of the Levuka resolution, two months earlier, seeking British protection. After meeting Thurston, Ma`afu added his signature to those of the Bauan chiefs.²⁷ The situation nevertheless remained confused, to the initial dismay of Commander William Truxton of the USS *Jamestown*, which arrived at Levuka on 22 October. Truxton, sent to investigate further the various American claims, convened a court of enquiry on board the *Jamestown*. The enquiry surprisingly recommended that if the Polynesia Company, already in default, discharged the debt, a refund should be made to Cakobau in view of the excessive nature of former Consul Williams' original claim in 1849. More importantly, the court found against Ma`afu in respect of claims made by the American John Macomber, who complained that Ma`afu refused to relinquish the island of Munia in the Vanuabalavu lagoon. Truxton wrote to Ma`afu threatening the use of force by the United States should the chief not allow Macomber peaceful possession of the island.²⁸

Threats and complaints from a visiting American naval commander would have caused Ma`afu little disquiet. An illuminating if brief debate ensued in the *Fiji Times* concerning the true state of authority on Fiji, with an editorial suggesting that "all acknowledge [Cakobau] as supreme". This drew fire from "Lewa Dodonu", who asked the editor if it were not true "that more than half of Fiji acknowledge [Cakobau's] `rival' as supreme?" Ma`afu was seen as possessing

25 Carey to John Leggoe, 2 Nov 1870, Carey to William Fletcher, 2 Nov 1870, Jesse Carey Letterbook 1867–1874.

26 *FT*, 4 Sep 1869.

27 The chiefs of Bau to the British Consul, 12 Oct 1869, FO58/118; Captain Truxton, US Sloop of War *Jamestown* off Levuka, 22 Oct 1869, Thurston to Hope, 18 Dec 1869, Hope, Letter-Journals; *FT*, 8 Jan 1870.

28 Captain Truxton to Ma`afu, 30 Oct 1869, USC Laucala 4. Munia had been excluded from Consul Jones' judgment at the 1865 hearing because the island's claimant, John Macomber, was an American citizen. See Ch. 7.

“the power ... energy and ... influence” to deny Cakobau supremacy. It was Ma`afu who collected the largest revenue and who offered effective protection to European settlers living at Lau, a protection not enjoyed by many settlers in Viti Levu. He was the “one man” who prevented Cakobau from becoming King of Fiji. The editor, seemingly admonished, soon advocated “a union between Cakobau and the President of the Lau Confederation” as a means of establishing “a strong Native Government”.²⁹ Debates among the settler population, like the resolutions of the American shipboard court, would do little to influence the chief whose ascendancy, at least in Lau, occupied so much column space in the *Fiji Times*.

Ma`afu was back in Levuka in November, calling on Thurston at his home after first writing to remind the acting Consul that Beqa remained his (Ma`afu's) property, despite having been “given ... to some Britishers” by Cakobau.³⁰ Meanwhile, the question of the relative powers of both Cakobau and Ma`afu, so often the subject of political comment, was considered by Lorimer Fison, a missionary closely interested in Fijian politics and ethnology. Writing at the end of 1869 about problems occasioned by the rapid growth of European settlement, Fison articulated the absurdity of considering Cakobau as King of Fiji. Taking the “lawless” inhabitants of the interior of Viti Levu as his example, Fison stated that they had never paid any tribute to, or been under the control of Cakobau, and yet whenever they committed any depredations against Europeans, the title of King of Fiji was used against Cakobau in order to make him “a sort of Royal sponge to be squeezed whenever a hill tribe quarrels with a planter and burns him out”. The missionary pointed out that Cakobau's real title was Vunivalu (Root or Source of War) of Bau and that even the sacred title of Roko Tui Bau belonged to another chief. There had never been “even the faintest tradition of any one man having ruled over [Fiji]”. Quoting other European observers, including missionary John Smith Fordham and Colonel William Smythe, Fison wrote that Cakobau himself acknowledged the title of Tui Viti to be incorrect and one used by outsiders. Describing “the king of Fiji doctrine” as “false in fact ... unjust in law [and] most disastrous in its consequences”, Fison predicted that “chaos and confusion worse confounded” would be left to Cakobau's successor, unless “a great political revolution take place, and ... Ma`afu be called to the head of affairs”. It is significant that the most reliable of all contemporary observers of Fiji, one who, unlike Thurston and others, had no political cause to champion, saw Ma`afu as the one chief standing between Fiji and the threat of widespread violence in the aftermath of Cakobau.³¹

29 *FT*, 6 and 13 Nov, 4 Dec 1869. On the question of protecting lives and property of settlers in the face of Cakobau's limited authority, see also Carey to Fison 19 Dec 1869, Carey Letterbook.

30 Ma`afu to BC, 20 Nov 1869, BCFP. The “Britishers” were the directors of the Polynesia Company, all from the Colony of Victoria, Australia. See Ch. 8 for the earlier dispute between Ma`afu and Cakobau over ownership of Beqa. See also Thurston to Hope, 22 Nov 1869; Ch. 8, n. 85.

31 Fison to Goldwin Smith, 18 Dec 1869, Lorimer Fison Letterbooks, Vols 1–7, 1867–1883. Fison's views were applauded by Jesse Carey, a missionary formerly stationed at Lomaloma but by 1869 principal of the Fiji Training Institution, known as Richmond, on the island of Kadavu. See Carey to Fison, 14 Jan 1870, Carey Letterbook.

Accurate as Fison's analysis is, the missionary's views had no influence on Ma`afu himself, then spending considerable time in Levuka. He was away from Vanuabalavu in late November 1869, when Wesleyan missionary Isaac Rooney praised the hospitality of Elenoa and the local chiefs. Rooney especially commended Ma`afu and Elenoa for their contribution of £40 to the mission, a benefaction that came at a time when Ma`afu was contending with a severe food shortage in Lau.³² In February 1870 the *Prince*, a vessel belonging to Tupou I, arrived in Lau accompanied by a large double canoe being sent as a present for Tui Bua. Both vessels "were loaded with native bread, which [was] distributed among the Windward Islands, where scarcity of food has been severely felt during the last few months".³³ The formal separation of Lau from Tonga did not prevent Tupou's manifesting an apparently humanitarian interest in the Tongan diaspora. Ma`afu's responsibilities for the lands entrusted to him by Tupou included Rabe, the only part of Fiji that remained the King's personal property.³⁴ Probably with a view to the forthcoming sale of the island, the British Consul had asked Tui Cakau to remove Rabe's inhabitants. This Tui Cakau refused to do without instructions from Ma`afu. The prospective purchaser, John Hill, already resident on Rabe, wrote to the new Consul, Edward March, asking him to advise Ma`afu to act.³⁵ Ma`afu's own views remain unknown.

Neither the fate of Rabe nor food shortages in Lau occupied the attention of settlers or Consul. Meanwhile, the question of annexation loomed ever larger. Although Consul March was relieved when the Foreign Office advised that neither France nor the United States had any plans to establish a protectorate over Fiji,³⁶ his chief concern lay with the two petitions arising from the meeting of settlers and chiefs the previous June. Thurston had at last submitted the petitions to March, stressing the detrimental absence of any authority sufficiently strong to control both settlers and "natives".³⁷ The Consul forwarded them to the Foreign Office, along with a new statement from the "memorialists" giving reasons in support of their petition. Although he made no recommendation, March enthused about Fiji's fertility, the rosy future of the cotton industry and the availability of cheap labour from neighbouring islands. He did not neglect to

32 Isaac Rooney to Stephen Rabone, 25 Nov 1869 and 5 Apr 1870, *WMN(A)*, Jul 1870, 200–203.

33 *FT*, 12 Feb 1870. See also CO to FO, 4 Feb 1870, FO58/119.

34 Rabe had belonged to the King since being presented to him by Tui Cakau in 1855. See Ch 8, ns 44 and 49. See also *FT*, 10 Sep 1870.

35 John Hill to BC, 12 Mar 1870, BCFP. See also LCC R1. The *FT* reported on 30 Jul 1870 that Hill had just returned from Tonga, "having completed from the [Tongan] government purchase of the ... island of Rabi". On 29 October, Hill wrote to Consul March advising that the Fijians living temporarily on Rabe were offering armed resistance, despite Tui Cakau's promise to remove them. Hill to March, 29 Oct 1870, BCFP.

36 FO to CO, 16 Mar 1870, quoted in de Ricci, 49; FO to March 19 Mar 1870, FO58/118.

37 Thurston to March, 10 Mar 1870, enclosing Memorial from Cakobau and Ma`afu and British residents praying for Her Majesty's Government to take Fiji under their protection, BCFP. Thurston later stated that his object in forwarding the petition was to foil the Polynesia Company, whose directors sought annexation by the United States. Thurston to John Dunmore Lang, 23 Oct 1870, NSW Legislative Assembly printed paper: The Fiji Islands (proposed annexation to NSW), Lang Papers.

mention that Ma`afu had visited Levuka in order to inscribe his own name “and that of the Confederation of which he is President”. March also enclosed a letter from Ma`afu advocating British government action, a letter written on behalf of Ma`afu himself, Tui Cakau, Tui Bua and the *Tovata ko Tokalau*.³⁸

The most important of the several items March forwarded to Whitehall was his lengthy report on the current state of Fiji. Working largely from consular archives, March outlined the history of the American claim, of French contacts with Fiji and of British settlement in the islands. Writing especially about the new settlers, March advised his masters that

the Fiji islands will not continue long in their present state ... The increasing immigration from the Colonies, the firm hold settlers have already acquired to large areas of land, and the pressure exercised by commercial enterprise will probably produce the same results that the other countries have witnessed. The only hope for the people and for the prevention of future trouble and maybe bloodshed lays on the possibility of some civilized government consenting to accept the responsibility of guiding the affairs of this infant Settlement.³⁹

In advocating a “civilized government”, March was referring to one which ensured the interests of both planters and merchants, but which also would offer some protection to indigenous Fijians against removal from their lands and engagement in the labour trade. Such sentiments were largely alien to the European community, most of whom were concerned only for their own protection and prosperity.

Settler opinion found expression in a circular prepared by a disparate group of planters and merchants advocating, in the light of British and American disinterest, a form of independence for Fiji. The circular referred to the settlers’ “precarious position” and suggested a security force of up to 100 men “to punish any aggressor” among the chiefs.⁴⁰ The one concession proposed, and that because of the chiefs’ power, was the aim “to bring about an influence with Cakobau, Tui Cakau, Ma`afu and the other ruling chiefs so that their assistance and support may be given in all matters where the [proposed] association decides that punishment is to be awarded to the natives”.⁴¹ The June 1869 meeting had revealed some difference of opinion between the British subjects and the Germans, with the latter wishing “to have Ma`afu as king. Their business connections and influence with Tonga made them lean to him”. The British mostly advocated

38 March to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 31 Mar 1870, FO58/118.

39 Report on the State of Affairs in Fiji, Enc. in March to Lord Clarendon, 31 Mar 1870, FO58/118.

40 FO 58/118. See also Frederick J. Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea*, London 1889, App. B, 286–293.

41 *FT*, 2 Apr 1870.

Cakobau as the nominal ruler of a settler state, since they felt better able to control him.⁴² Principal among the German settlers were the Hennings brothers, at whose Lomaloma store Ma`afu was already a long-standing customer and debtor.⁴³ His reaction to the settlers' proposals was never recorded.⁴⁴

The outcome of the Levuka meeting was the formation of a "Corporation of Fiji Settlers" which, owing to settler apathy and uncertainty over cession, proved to be short-lived.⁴⁵ The European settlers of Lau, in contrast with their fellows in Levuka, were cognisant of the need for the active involvement of local rulers if any political organisation were to prove stable. At a meeting in Lomaloma in May, chaired by planter Rupert Ryder of Mago, a resolution was passed to abide by the existing laws of Lau. Although white magistrates would be appointed, they were to be formally subject to Ma`afu, as a mark of respect. While "foreigners" were liable to pay tax, they should be represented in the government of their chieftaindom. A final resolution suggested that a delegation wait on "the ruling chieftains ... for the purpose of securing their sanction and co-operation".⁴⁶ The settlers' views were further articulated by Swanston, who declined an invitation from Levuka to organise local committees of whites in Lomaloma. In reply, he stated that the only likely consequence of unanimity among all of Fiji's European settlers would be "Lynch-law". He continued:

Our policy ... is to work with the native rulers of the land, if we are really seeking for a peaceful solution of the question now under agitation. Many of the chieftains ... continue to exhibit a strong desire to act in concert with our race, in the establishing of some approach to a systematic Government. I believe this to be practicable...

Louis Boehm, who had issued the invitation, assured Swanston that no independent government was envisaged.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the difference in philosophy between the Lauan settlers and those who met in Levuka was marked. More than two years earlier Swanston, and through him Ma`afu, had been reassured that acting Consul Thurston approved the right of a chief to enforce Lauan laws on all nationalities, "provided always that such laws are not

42 Moss, 432.

43 See above, n. 22 for details of Ma`afu's mortgage to the Hennings.

44 One outsider who sympathised with the settlers' desire for some form of stable government was Lord Belmore, Governor of NSW. He saw the settlers' need for protection as obvious in the face of Whitehall's refusal to take any responsibility for the administration of Fiji. See Lord Belmore to Lord Granville, 13 Jun 1869, FO58/119.

45 Only one meeting was ever held. See *FT*, 28 May and 6 Aug 1870.

46 *FT*, 4 Jun 1870. See also *FT*, 7 Jan 1871.

47 See *FT*, 28 May 1870, Correspondence, for the exchange of letters between Swanston and Boehm. The latter had "purchased" the Lauan island of Kanacea from Tui Cakau.

in violation of civilised ideas".⁴⁸ The determination of the Lomaloma Europeans to ensure Ma`afu's co-operation reflected the greater stability of the chiefdom of Lau and the surer authority of its chief.

Notwithstanding the good sense prevailing in Lomaloma, a state of anxiety, ever fuelled by rumours, persisted among both Fijians and settlers throughout Fiji. During May there was a brief conflict between Bua and neighbouring Solevu, still a nominal dependency of Bau, highlighted by the capture at sea of Tui Bua's schooner by the crew of Cakobau's cutter. The *Fiji Times* considered that the Vunivalu possessed a "perfect right" to the seizure, given the state of "war" between Bau and Bua.⁴⁹ Matters were speedily resolved, however, with the newspaper's Bua correspondent reporting that the *matanitu* was "a model of peace and quietness". Tui Bua appeared determined to seek help from Ma`afu and Tui Cakau should Cakobau further interfere in Solevu.⁵⁰ Unspecified rumours emanating from Taveuni, doubtless in reference to the Solevu problem, raised the spectre of an impending "war" between Cakobau, Ma`afu and Tui Cakau.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the three-day annual Assembly of the Lauan Chieftains evinced nothing but stability when it convened at Lakeba during the last week of May. In his opening address, Ma`afu "spoke in strong terms of the perceptible improvement in matters social and political in the Chiefdom". The chiefs' principal preoccupations at the Assembly were to make alterations and additions to the laws formulated at the 1869 meeting and to listen to Ma`afu's suggestions for a more efficient administration. Tui Lau noted particularly the need for magistrates to demonstrate greater consistency in the administration of justice. He also announced the resignation of Swanston as Secretary for Lau and his replacement by Louis Biganzoli, while Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba was to be Ma`afu's personal representative in Lakeba and Ono districts.⁵²

Henry Britton, a correspondent for the Melbourne *Argus*, commencing a visit to Fiji, witnessed the Assembly, where proceedings were conducted in both Fijian and Tongan. Like others before him, he was impressed by Tui Lau:

Ma`afu is a handsome man, about 48 years of age. He is over six feet in height, and weighs 20 stone, but his limbs being well knit, and his body properly proportioned, he does not give the impression of being

48 Thurston to Swanston, 14 Jan 1868, BCFP. See above, Ch. 8, n. 62.

49 *FT*, 14 May 1870.

50 *ibid.*, 20 Aug 1870.

51 *ibid.*, 4 Jun 1870. For official correspondence relating to the Bau – Bua "war", see Royal Navy, Australia Station, Reports, 2. The file contains letters between Consul March, missionary Joseph Nettleton, Tui Bua, Tui Cakau and Cakobau.

52 *FT*, 2 Jul 1870. See also Henry Britton, *Fiji in 1870: being the Letters of The Argus special correspondent, with a complete Map and Gazetteer of the Fijian Archipelago*, Melbourne 1870, 36. Tevita, described by Britton as a judge, was a son of Vuetasau, Ma`afu's onetime companion-in-arms during the *valu ni lotu*. He was also son-in-law to Cakobau and heir to his uncle Taliai Tupou as Tui Nayau.

nearly so bulky as that weight implies. He was very becomingly dressed in a black frock coat, with white ducks and patent-leather boots, and wore a cloth cap, with a long peak, covered by a white pugree. He looks every inch a chief, and his face expresses kindness as well as great resoluteness of character.⁵³

Britton attested to the efficient manner in which the Assembly was conducted and made mention of the immensely old and decidedly rotund Tui Nayau, seated on a mat in the corner and seemingly uninterested in the proceedings around him.⁵⁴ It was not only age and corpulence that had sidelined Lakeba's paramount chief. In the 23 years since Ma`afu had arrived from Tonga and placed himself under the authority of his kinsman, power had shifted entirely from Tui Nayau's hands into those of his erstwhile guest. Now, as "President" of the Assembly, Tui Lau revealed his chiefly mettle:

Ma`afu, who is a fluent speaker, and is considered one of the best native preachers in the group, addressed the Assembly on the business of the day, and expressed a hope that none of them would hold up their hands for or against a question without thoroughly understanding what they were voting for...⁵⁵

In contrast to the uncertainties and rumours prevailing amid the power vacuum in Levuka, the administration of Lau rested in firm hands indeed.

The picture of Ma`afu as undisputed master of Lau offers an opportunity to consider his land practices in the chiefdom. Throughout Fiji, since the advent of European settlers in the 1860s, chiefs had been willing to abuse custom for their own gain. Sometimes the same land was "sold" twice to different settlers, with *tauvei* occupiers dispossessed if it suited chiefly whim. Often, "purchasers" had to pay "five times over" for the same piece of land, paying off various spurious "owners" for the sake of "peace and quietness".⁵⁶ The chiefs themselves were often swindled by "deeds" untranslated into Fijian and whose purpose the chiefs did not understand. In Lau, the legal basis of Ma`afu's rule, and of his rights over land distribution, had been established at the 1865 hearing conducted by Consul Jones, when Ma`afu's position as chief of Lau was acknowledged to conform to Fijian custom.⁵⁷ According to Stipendiary Magistrate Charles Swayne, who heard many Lauan land disputes after Ma`afu's death, "at that time [i.e. 1865] it was

53 Britton, 36.

54 *ibid.*, 37. Britton's very detailed description of the Assembly in session has been described as "the first and possibly the only outsider's observations on a pre-Colonial Constitutional assembly in Fiji". A.C. Reid, *Ma`afu and the new Lau State*, unpublished TS, 22.

55 Britton, 36.

56 Stephen Smith to Editor, *FT*, 9 Oct 1875.

57 See above, Ch. 7.

understood that every man should have land and pay ... tax in money or oil".⁵⁸ In 1887, hearing evidence concerning various disputes involving Tongan lands on Lakeba, Swayne noted that the claims had arisen "not through any doubt of Ma`afu's right to settle lands on this island but simply from the idea that times might have changed".⁵⁹ At a contemporary hearing concerning ownership of lands on several Lauan islands, a Tongan named Viliami Saiogo stated that at the Division of Lands in 1865 following Jones' judgment, Ma`afu had allocated him land known as Vagareke, on the island of Susui, in the Vanuabalavu lagoon. Some eight years later, when Ma`afu wanted Vagareke to plant cotton, he resumed it and gave Viliami another piece known as Bureni in exchange. Another Tongan resident in Lau, Tevita Nuku of Sawana, gave evidence that deftly illustrates the range of Ma`afu's rights:

I am Tongan ... resident in Fiji for 32 years, since Kaba.⁶⁰ Narocake [on Susui] is my land. Ma`afu gave it me ... as my portion. I was not in Lau when the Division of Lands was made. I was at Kadavu building a canoe for Ma`afu ... for eight years. ... Ma`afu sent for me and told me to settle down at Lomaloma and gave me Narocake ... I have planted coconuts ... The land is mine. I hold it ... as other lands are held in Lau. Taxes are to be paid for the land as from all lands in Lau. If I die the land goes to my son ... Tui Susui claims the land I hold.

The island's paramount chief, Tui Susui, who indeed sought to resume control of the disputed lands, stated that Ma`afu, after leasing Bureni to a European settler who cultivated cotton there, resumed the land when the crop failed. Tui Susui acknowledged that Ma`afu had the right to give the land to the settler for cultivation.⁶¹

In his report following another enquiry concerning land on Lakeba, Swayne referred to a statement he was instructed to make to the *Boseniyasana* on the Lauan island of Moce:

My instructions were to inform the Roko Tui and the chiefs that the Roko's petition for the restoration to Fijians of lands leased by Ma`afu to Europeans and confirmed by the Government could not be granted and

58 Charles Swayne to Acting Colonial Secretary, 15 Sep 1885, CSO 87/2160.

59 Swayne to Native Commissioner, Lau, 2 May 1887, CSO 2160/1887. See also Ch. 7, n. 196.

60 Nuku was referring to the battle of Kaba, which occurred on 7 April 1855.

61 Land enquiry, Bau, Lakeba, 4 Dec 1886, resumed 30 Aug 1887, CSO 2160/1887. Numerous other claims involving land on Lakeba, Vanuabalavu, Moce, Totoya and other islands in Lau are found in CSO 2160. All acknowledge Ma`afu's untrammelled right to apportion the lands.

that further agitation to that end must cease. It would be a benefit to this district particularly if the hope of resuming lands in the possession of Tongan Taukeis was finally taken away from the Fijians.⁶²

The legal integrity of Ma`afu's practices, both in leasing land to settlers and allocating land to resident Fijians and Tongans, survived his death in 1881. He had in fact influenced land allocation in Vanuabalavu as early as 1860, when he approved the sale by three local chiefs of the districts of Kauvula and Matadravu to William Beddoes, an American who had arrived in Fiji as a beachcomber several years before. The three chiefs, according to Ma`afu, had been "afraid to go on" with the sale and had sought his advice. "I said very good".⁶³ Ma`afu developed a close friendship with Beddoes, often visiting his house to "open his boxes and turn them upside down", a practice Beddoes reciprocated in Ma`afu's home.⁶⁴ The American was able to profit from the friendship by subdividing and selling some of the land he had purchased in 1860. He had further ambitions: it was probably Beddoes who placed an newspaper advertisement in October 1868, advising that "three of four small plantations of about 150 acres" would come on the market in Vanuabalavu in about July of the following year.⁶⁵ Ma`afu agreed to sell Beddoes more land as an extension to the Kauvula block for a price of £75, with a deed of sale being prepared in May 1869 and registered at the British Consulate in Levuka.⁶⁶ When Beddoes died on Adavaci in 1871, Ma`afu arranged for his body to be brought to Kauvula for burial, in accordance with the planter's wish.⁶⁷ Altogether, Beddoes made considerable profit from sales of his land on Vanuabalavu. He did so by Ma`afu's leave, illustrating not only the extent of their friendship, but also the nature of Ma`afu's power on the island, a power which Beddoes effectively exploited. Following the 1860 sale, unprecedented on Vanuabalavu, no land in Lau could change hands, whether by allocation or lease, without Ma`afu's approval.

During the 1860s, especially after the 1865 ruling that Vanuabalavu properly belonged to him, Ma`afu was able to impose the Tongan practice of leasehold on the island. In Tonga itself, land alienation was forbidden, while under the 1862 Code of Laws, all land was deemed to belong to the Crown. This rule effectively shifted control of land from chiefs to the King, who in turn divided it among the people. In Fiji, by way of contrast, land was traditionally held in common by the *mataqali*, or clan. With his rights on Vanuabalavu confirmed, Ma`afu set about adapting land tenure there to the Tongan pattern. As we saw in Chapter Eight,

62 Land enquiry "Muanira" held at Lakeba 4 Dec 1886 before Hon. J. Blyth, Native Commissioner, *ibid.* Blyth found that Semisi Fifita had purchased the land for "powder, shot, axes etc".

63 LCC R 948 Kauvula, evidence of Ma`afu.

64 *ibid.*, evidence of Ma`afu and of Robert Swanston.

65 *The Fijian Weekly News and Planters' Journal*, 3 Oct 1868.

66 LCC R948, evidence of Ma`afu.

67 *ibid.*

the system of allotments known as *magimagi* was adopted. Since *magimagi* were measured from the shoreline and could be extended inland as far as the centre of the island, each landholder possessed fishing rights, land for cultivation, groves of coconuts and bush land which might be cleared for planting if needed. Here was a basis for each landholder, whether Fijian or Tongan, not only to support his family, but also to pay his taxes in kind. Those taxes would help with any future weapons purchases that might be contemplated, as well as the support of any Tongan troops summoned to Vanuabalavu. Ma`afu was able to exert a degree of control that utilised the island's resources to best effect, as well as reinforcing his own power as paramount chief.

Ma`afu also determined that lands not required for the support of the population could be leased to foreigners, a practice which differed from the freehold title available to settlers in some other parts of Fiji. In referring to land disputes such as those on Lakeba, Basil Thomson, Stipendiary Magistrate at Lomaloma after Ma`afu's death, described Ma`afu's practice:

According to Mafi NSM who used to divide the land in Ma`afu's time, it was not uncommon to turn out native owners in favour of white men who paid rent, and if the white men left, the land was supposed to return to Ma`afu for redistribution.⁶⁸

Leases were generally made for 50 years, on a renewable basis. As in the case of lands allocated to Fijians and Tongans, boundaries were sometimes marked with *magimagi* and were, wherever possible, defined by natural features that could be readily identified.⁶⁹ Ma`afu sought to provide his lessees with security of tenure, which would, in theory, help to ensure a steady revenue for him and discourage settlers from looking to foreign annexation of Fiji as a means of advancing their prospects. Both Robert Swanston and William Hennings, already resident on Vanuabalavu, leased land from Ma`afu under these arrangements, while other Europeans took up blocks, usually of several hundred acres, on Vanuabalavu and other islands in Lau.⁷⁰ There were to be 22 leases, varying from 100 to 550 acres, made to European settlers, as well as several smaller town lots in Lomaloma.

Despite the apparent efficiency of Ma`afu's practice of leasing lands not required for support of the population, the policy caused hardship to the *tauvei* of Vanuabalavu, Cicia and other Lauan islands. At the Lands Claims Commission of 1880, detailed evidence was heard concerning all of the leases allocated by Ma`afu. Depositions from heads of numerous *mataqali* and other chiefs revealed that Ma`afu usually failed to consult them concerning the proposed leases. Further, every chief who gave evidence stated that neither he nor his people

68 Basil Thomson to Swayne, 24 Mar 1886, CSO 86/677.

69 LCC R953 Vagariki, evidence of Swanston.

70 See, for example, LCC R933, R941, *passim*.

had ever received any share of the rents paid to Tui Lau by the settlers who leased and, in most cases, cultivated their lands. In some instances, Ma`afu said in evidence that he believed the *mataqali* of the lands in question were dead or, more often, claimed that he simply did not know who the *mataqali* were.⁷¹ Typical of the evidence given by *taukei* chiefs was that of Sanaila, belonging to the Uruoni people of Vanuabalavu, 300 acres of whose lands Ma`afu leased to the Hennings brothers. Sanaila stated that Ma`afu had neither consulted his *mataqali* nor given them any share of the rent. "There is not enough land for us to plant upon", Sanaila declared. His people were now forced to plant "back on the hills".⁷² Ma`afu had leased a small 15-acre section of this land to a "half-caste", John Brown, who regularly paid Tui Lau his annual rent of £7–10–0 and thus had his lease confirmed by the Commission.⁷³ *Mataqali* were unable to pay rent in cash. In the case of Doloca, a 100-acre block belonging to the Kai Na Vau Vau, a chief of that *mataqali*, Marika Raleka, stated, "We want to get back our land ... We have very little land left. We would not be content with a share of the rent. We want the land".⁷⁴ In similar fashion, Naibuka, a chief from the Kai Nabutu, said that the lease of some of his *mataqali*'s land, a 400-acre block called Na Yaca, had been against his wish. Ma`afu, according to Naibuka, had leased the land even though he knew it had earlier been apportioned to the Kai Nabutu. Although Ma`afu gave the people bush land in compensation, it had proven insufficient. When Naibuka had raised the matter with Ma`afu at a *Bosevakaturaga*, Tui Lau again told him "to take land in the bush".⁷⁵

One case, possibly exceptional, involved 450 acres known as Ba Vatu, which Ma`afu leased to William Hennings. Marika Raleka, speaking on behalf of the Bati *mataqali*, stated, "Tui Lau made war with them conquered them and brought them prisoners to Lomaloma. Then the land was leased. The towns of Bavatu, Adavaci, Dalidoni and half of Malaka were against Ma`afu and their people were removed to Lomaloma".⁷⁶ Ma`afu could be ruthless in dealing with any threat to his absolute power in Lau. While this case was atypical, it is certain that Ma`afu, despite his later claims of ignorance concerning some of the affected *mataqali*, gave careful consideration to each lease he authorised. The former Secretary of Lau, Robert Swanston, giving evidence at the Commission in respect of his own lease, said:

Every lease was carefully read over to Ma`afu before he signed it.
[Swanston's lease] must have been read by Ma`afu as he has added in his

71 See, for example, LCC R931 Rara Levu, evidence of Ma`afu; LCC R940 Buca Levu, evidence of Ma`afu.

72 LCC R933 Daku Uruoni, evidence of Sanaila.

73 LCC R973A Uruone.

74 LCC R939 Doloca, evidence of Marika Raleka.

75 LCC R935 Na Yaca, evidence of Naibuka.

76 LCC R941 Ba Vatu, evidence of Marika Raleka.

own handwriting two pieces of land I often used to have to call three or four times on Ma`afu before he would make up his mind to sign. He knew every word of the leases.⁷⁷

Ma`afu was content to ignore the wishes and needs of the *taukeyi* in the interest of putting the lands of Lau to their most productive use, productive at least in terms of revenue for himself.

By the time of his installation as Tui Lau, Ma`afu had assumed an unprecedented degree of control on Vanuabalavu. With detailed knowledge of the land and of the men who worked it, he sought to ensure that each allotment was being used to its full potential. In this way, his tax revenue would not suffer, while his “subjects”, the population of Lau, would continue to look to him as the sole source of their livelihood. If, as in the case of Viliame Saiogo’s allotment on Susui, Ma`afu considered that the land could be put to better use, he was quick to effect the necessary changes, while on the death of a landholder, the allotment would normally revert to Ma`afu for redistribution. On the other hand, a landholder who paid his tax could usually rely on his security of tenure, a fact which helped to ensure that most leaseholders were happy with Ma`afu’s system. A Fijian teacher described his impressions in about 1865:

I have seen in Vanuabalavu a new thing, a road four fathoms wide, it is called *tukuwau* . . . this is a law which Makafu [sic] has established . . . by which men are freed from their worldly troubles. It is what the Bible calls a Jubilee by which men are freed from their worries and can be confident. By this law the land is shared out, and the taxes are paid to the chief.⁷⁸

Ma`afu’s control remained absolute and was to prove lasting.⁷⁹ It went beyond individual allotments, as provided for under the Laws of Lau:

After the lands are apportioned out to the native taxpayers, the residue shall be considered as government lands, and the head of the Chiefdom shall have sole control thereof, and he shall do what he may please with the same.⁸⁰

In December 1939, when there were “many disputes” concerning land in Lau, Ma`afu’s ultimate successor as Tui Lau, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, in his capacity as Provincial Commissioner, conducted a major enquiry at Lomaloma. The enquiry was known as *Lewa ni Magimagi* (Ruling on *Magimagi*), a reference to the method of marking boundaries initiated by Ma`afu. It seemed that every

77 LCC R953 Na Rua Rua Vagariki, evidence of Robert Sherson Swanston.

78 Unnamed Fijian teacher, c. 1865, quoted in Peter France, *The Charter of the Land*, Melbourne 1969, 86.

79 For details of other individual examples of Ma`afu’s absolute control, see Land Enquiries, K.J. Allardyce Commissioner, 1906–1907, Vol. 1, Tailevu, Nadroga, Colo East, Lau, Namosi, Macuata, Cakaudrove, NLC.

80 *Constitution and Laws of the Chiefdom of Lau, Fiji*, Sydney 1971, Clause XIV.

Tongan claim in Lau was contested, often bitterly, by Fijians. In Vanuabalavu, outsiders, whether Tongan or Fijian, who held *magimagi* allotments had come to believe that they possessed unencumbered rights to the land and the trees on it.⁸¹ Sukuna determined that any land whose ownership was brought before his enquiry for resolution had to conform to certain requirements. Only boundaries operative during Ma`afu's time were recognised, while earlier holdings, if they were not confirmed by Ma`afu, were void. No *magimagi* established by Ma`afu could be the subject of any dispute. Sukuna considered changes to Ma`afu's rulings on land ownership and usage only if ownership had become extinct since Ma`afu's time. The first Tui Lau's land allocations, seen by Swayne and Thomson to have endured beyond Ma`afu's lifetime, were now confirmed in perpetuity.⁸²

Ma`afu's authority extended well beyond land allocation and taxation. He controlled the appointment of all officials, from the Secretary and the magistrates down to the village chiefs. Daily administrative tasks were the province of the Secretary, who collected the revenues and maintained all government records. Ma`afu's co-president of the Lauan Assembly, Tui Nayau, was responsible for the administration of the central and southern islands, remaining always subject to Tui Lau, to whom Tui Nayau, like all adult Lauans, owed tax obligations. The basis of chiefly authority had clearly changed in Lau under Ma`afu's administration, particularly in relation to land practices. While doubt should be cast on published references to a claim by Ma`afu that "he was like William the Conqueror who divided the land in England among his Norman knights",⁸³ the absolute nature of his rule in Lau remained unchallenged. With his sovereignty confirmed at the 1865 enquiry, the basis for his land policy under the laws of Lau was defined in Clause XV of the 1867 Constitution.⁸⁴ Clause XV authorised Tui Lau to lease all unoccupied public lands, that is lands not in actual possession of Fijians, to a maximum of 500 acres per lessee, subject to the annual payment of rent. According to Ma`afu's then secretary, Swanston, the leasing arrangements were designed to remove control of land from the *mataqali* "for the express purpose of bringing into cultivation lands which were suffered to lie uncultivated". Equally important for Tui Lau was the need "to

81 For a discussion of changes to land tenure wrought by the Tongan conquest of Vanuabalavu, with special reference to Mualevu, see Michael A.H.B. Walter, "The Conflict of the Traditional and the Traditionalised: An Analysis of Fijian Land Tenure", *JPS*, Vol. 87, No. 2, Jun 1978, 89–107.

82 Evidence Book, Ratu Sukuna Lau, *Lewa ni Magimagi*, Vol. 3, Folio 325, 5 Dec 1939, NLC.

83 A. Harold Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, Vol. 2, *Fiji*, Melbourne 1978, 109. The claim is probably apocryphal. See also Basil Thomson, *The Diversions of a Prime Minister*, London and Edinburgh 1894, 362.

84 *Constitution and Law of the Chiefdom of Lau*, Sydney 1871, Clause XV. Although the Constitution was not published until 1871, its provisions had been in practice since 1865. The full text is also found in G.C. Henderson, ed., *The Evolution of Government in Fiji*, Sydney 1935, 28–42.

introduce white capital and energy into the country". Supreme in his authority, Ma`afu acted "as his own treasurer, chancellor of the exchequer, auditor and everything else".⁸⁵

Consistent with Ma`afu's resolution to allow no land to remain idle was his policy "not to deprive natives of lands that were ... turned to account by them". He was to be the sole judge of what lands might properly be described as waste.⁸⁶ There were practical difficulties, nevertheless, particularly in connection with surveying, which led to the omission of any description of boundaries on most of the leases effected during Ma`afu's lifetime. Such niceties were never of major import in Lau, at least according to Saimoni Lausi`i, a deponent at a hearing convened by Charles Swayne in 1885. Referring to the boundaries of his own land, Saqani on Vanuabalavu, Saimoni stated in evidence: "The buli and Native Magistrate saw the land and heard us speak and they said that Ma`afu had fixed the boundary and they could not alter boundaries".⁸⁷ As in all things in Lau, Ma`afu had the last word. His land policies incorporated two basic principles that differed from practices elsewhere in Fiji. Firstly, land could never be alienated: only leasehold was permitted, although Tui Lau reluctantly agreed to long leases of 50 years in an effort to attract settlers whose first preference was for freehold, available elsewhere in Fiji. Secondly, lessees were required to continue in occupation of their lands and to plant crops, with any unoccupied land being subject to reallocation.⁸⁸

A representative example of Ma`afu's policy of leasing unoccupied lands to settlers was Buca Levu, a tract of 500 acres fronting the beach close to Mavana village on Vanuabalavu, opposite the island of Avea. On 7 March 1871, Ma`afu approved a 50-year lease of Buca Levu to Gideon Vecsey, a Hungarian who had arrived in Fiji from Sydney 11 months earlier. Vecsey, who leased the land through the agency of William Hennings, was to pay rent of one shilling per acre per annum, with an option to renew. After nine years' occupation, during which time he was naturalised as a British subject, Vecsey had 250 acres under cultivation, mostly with cotton. He had built a house for his family, as well as a yam shed, a drying shed for the cotton and even a "hospital". The rent was paid to Ma`afu, while Saimoni, the *turaga ni koro* of Mavana, would later state that although Ma`afu had consulted him before leasing the land, none of the rent ever reached the Kai Lota, the *mataqali* to whom the land rightfully belonged. Ma`afu had moved the inhabitants of a village on the land before the

85 Evidence of Robert Sherson Swanston, LCC R960. See also Victor A. Williamson, General Report on Lands in the Province of Lau, LCC R930.

86 *ibid.*

87 Evidence of Saimoni Laujii, 1 Sep 1885, Enquiry at Lomaloma ordered by His Excellency the Administrator into the right of occupation of Saimoni Laujii in the land known as Saqani on Vanuabalavu, FCSO 87/2160.

88 For a discussion of some of the European lessees on Vanuabalavu and elsewhere in Lau, see John Young, *Adventurous Spirits: Australian Migrant Society in pre-cession Fiji*, St Lucia 1984, Ch. 3.

lease was arranged. By September 1885 Vecsey had failed, in common with most other cotton planters in Fiji, defeated by falling commodity prices, new labour regulations and growing debts. At the Lands Claims Commission, Saimoni declared that his people, who owned Buca Levu, had "never received any share of the rent from Mr Vecsey".⁸⁹ As with all other Lauan leases, the rent had gone to Tui Lau. Vecsey's land was occupied by the Hennings brothers, at whose store in Lomaloma the Hungarian, like Ma`afu, had accumulated substantial debt. Vecsey duly returned to Australia, leaving behind his estranged part-Tongan wife, as well as two of their four children.⁹⁰

The need to raise revenue was not the principal reason for the strict regimen governing land allocation. That need was to be met by taxation. Under the Constitution, each male aged 16 years and over was required to pay an annual tax of 15 gallons of oil or the equivalent in cash. Females aged 16 and over had to pay three shillings in cash per annum or its equivalent "in Fijian property: mats, screens [or] fishnets". Furthermore, Tui Lau was reserved the right "to increase the amount of tax to be levied at his pleasure", should the exigencies of his government require it.⁹¹ It quickly became Ma`afu's practice to ensure that any Lauan, whether Fijian or Tongan, who sought to be allocated land was a regular taxpayer. So important was the taxation law that even Ma`afu's strict land allocation practice could be amended if there appeared to be a threat to revenue. In 1872, for example, Ma`afu was required to reallocate a piece of land known as Selavu on the Lauan island of Cicia. When the European lessee died, Ma`afu was approached by the *taukey* who "begged" him to return the land to them, contrary to his usual practice. Ma`afu was later to state: "I pitied the Cicia people as they were gathering nuts from this piece to pay their taxes with".⁹² Because insufficient good land was available elsewhere on Cicia for *taukey* cultivation, Ma`afu wanted Selavu to return to them, so that their tax requirements could be met. An able administrator, Ma`afu knew when principle could be sacrificed for the needs of the moment. While his taxation policies promised to ensure a steady if unspectacular revenue, much would depend on the way Ma`afu, always "his own treasurer", disposed of the proceeds.

With the substance of power clearly his, Ma`afu was able to turn his attention to a style befitting his status. In June 1870 the *Xarifa*, the finest racing yacht in Sydney, was sailed to Fiji by its new owner, Sydney Burt. On the voyage, she

⁸⁹ LCC R940 Buca Levu, evidence of Saimone.

⁹⁰ LCC R 940; HP; Antony Hooper, Gideon Vecsey, unpublished TSS 2001–2008. Vecsey's wife, née Elenoa Blake, was a sister of Ane, wife of Henry Miller, a personal assistant and interpreter for Ma`afu. (See Ch. 7). I am indebted to Emeritus Professor Hooper, a great-grandson of Gideon Vecsey, and to the late Lola Vecsey, a granddaughter of Gideon, for further information about the Vecsey family.

⁹¹ *Constitution of the Chiefdom of Lau*, Clause XVI. Fifteen gallons of oil were the equivalent of three tins, with each tin valued at 8 shillings.

⁹² LCC R962 Nasorio, Cicia.

“tore along in a gale of wind with all sail set”.⁹³ Burt, a failed auctioneer and member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, acted as Cakobau’s commercial agent.⁹⁴ He planned to sell the *Xarifa* to Cakobau but Ma`afu, with the revenues of Lau at his disposal, was able to pay the asking price of £1,000.⁹⁵ There is evidence that, in order to raise part of the *Xarifa*’s price, Ma`afu sold a piece of land named Navoavao in Bua, given him by Tui Bua, to a settler named Albert Manton.⁹⁶ Apart from the prestige of owning such a fine vessel, the *Xarifa* possessed practical advantages in that it would facilitate Ma`afu’s movements around the islands of Lau, where communication remains a problem to this day.

In the face of Ma`afu’s taste for the good life, an effort by missionary Jesse Carey to send someone to Lomaloma “to keep hold of Ma`afu and his people till a Missionary come” seems futile.⁹⁷ While Ma`afu’s intervention in the fighting in Solevu remained a possibility, he remained focused on a bigger picture.⁹⁸ In the middle of 1870 he wrote to the Foreign Office, on behalf of Tui Cakau, Tui Bua and the other *Tovata* chiefs, requesting British protection for Fiji on the grounds of increasing trade between the islands and the Australian colonies.⁹⁹ If, however, the British declined to act, protection from Hawai`i would be sought as an alternative. The letter, which mentioned the Levuka meeting of chiefs and settlers in May, renewed the requests made by that gathering.¹⁰⁰ The fact that Ma`afu added his weight to the meeting’s resolutions indicates a significant degree of confidence in the outcome. Although he might have sought to gain favour with the British in the event that the request was heeded, it is more probable that he knew British policy would not change. He would be left with

93 There were then between 30 and 40 other racing yachts from Sydney in Fiji. *SMH*, 7 May 1873.

94 In October 1870, Thurston described Burt as “Cakobau’s business factotum”. Thurston to Lang, 23 Oct 1870. Consul March described Burt as “Thakombau’s private agent [who] sold him a yacht”. March to FO, 11 Oct 1871, FO58/118. Burt and a relative had earlier “purchased” the island of Matuku from Cakobau for \$500. CRD 919, 20 Feb 1871.

95 A.C. Reid, personal communication to John Young, 1980, quoted in John Young, “Lau: a Windward Perspective”, *JPH*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1993, 168. According to settler G.H.W. Markham, Ma`afu had merely leased the yacht: G.H. Wolseley Markham, *Diary in Fiji*, 22 Aug 1870, NAF. The *Xarifa* had won the first ocean race in Australian history, from Sydney to Noumea and return, in 1864. For evidence that the *Xarifa* had been intended for Cakobau, see G.A. Stead to Charlotte Stead, 15 Jun 1870, George Augustus Stead Papers, NLA; March to FO, 11 Oct 1871. For a full account of the *Xarifa*’s illustrious racing career on Sydney Harbour, see Percy R. Stephenson, compiler, *Sydney Sails: Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron 1862–1962*, Sydney 1962, 48–62. I am indebted to Mr Peter Bradford, Honorary Archivist at the Squadron, for further information about the *Xarifa*. An oil painting of the yacht hangs at the Squadron’s headquarters in Kirribilli, Sydney.

96 Evidence of David Wilkinson [Secretary to Tui Bua], 18 Nov 1880, LCC R783A: Supplementary Nasavawaqa. Manton appears to have owned the *Xarifa* in August 1870, since on 26 Aug he discharged a mortgage on the yacht to Hennings brothers for £260. The following day, the *FT* reported that Ma`afu had completed the purchase of the *Xarifa*. Register of Sale and Mortgages of British Ships, BCFP; *FT*, 27 Aug 1870.

97 Carey to Joseph White, 30 Jun 1870, Carey Letterbook.

98 *FT*, 25 Jun 1870.

99 Much Australian opinion supported him. *The Age* advocated Victorian control of Fiji: “We want trade: the Fijis want protection”, 24 Aug 1870. See also *The Age*, 1 Sep 1870.

100 Enele Ma`afu Tui Lau to FO, n.d. [c. Jun 1870], FO 58/118. One settler wrote to the *FT* expressing the hope that “every man of us” would join Ma`afu and the other leading chiefs in signing the petition. “A Representative” to the Editor, *FT*, 30 Jul 1870.

a freer hand further to enhance his own power beyond Lau, while being able to assert that he had done his best to co-operate with the collective wish of his fellow chiefs and the majority of settlers.

In the meantime, representatives of the Australian colonies, meeting in Melbourne, resolved that British control of Fiji was "of the utmost importance" for the colonies' commercial interests. Although a petition was despatched, the home government apparently remained unmoved.¹⁰¹ In Fiji itself, Consul March despaired of any effective government being formed under the control of Cakobau who was "barely emerged from the most profound barbarism, full of duplicity and cunning", with "much to learn before he is capable of comprehending even the principles of government".¹⁰² Despite its seeming intransigence, however, the Foreign Office possessed at least one voice cognisant of the need for action over Fiji. "With a constant influx of Australian and foreign settlers, many of them desperate characters, it is evident that law and order must be expressed by stronger authority than exists there at present ... Some decision should be taken as to what we shall do".¹⁰³ With the demonstrable need for a central government in Fiji, Ma`afu was better placed than any indigenous chief to fill the vacuum.

Whatever his thoughts concerning the need for "stronger authority", Ma`afu remained unchallenged in Lau. In late July, he voyaged to Wairiki, there to participate in a "monster political feast". He "arrived in great state, his fleet consisting of one large ketch ... and about forty canoes", proceeding "with great pomp ... flags flying, men chanting and drums beating". He also brought "a large number of men and ... quite a bevy of fine looking Tonga girls".¹⁰⁴ Over 5,000 Fijians were present on the occasion, a meeting of the "parliament" of the *Tovata*. The host, Tui Cakau, who feared assassination from his supposed supporters, asked Ma`afu in a private conversation "to exterminate them all" should the worst happen. Ma`afu, whose response to the request is not known, later intimated that he would visit Sydney and Melbourne before the end of the year, "if the state of affairs will allow his absence from the country for a time".¹⁰⁵ Such a visit would afford him the opportunity to meet Colonial leaders and establish some measure of support for any future administration he might establish in Fiji. Meanwhile, as if to demonstrate his statesmanship, he dominated the Wairiki "parliament" as surely as he had the Lauan Assembly at Lakeba a few weeks earlier. His oration at the commencement of deliberations on 3 August laid stress on unity above all else:

101 Lord Canterbury [Governor of Victoria] to Lord Kimberley [Sec. of State for the Colonies], 12 Aug 1870, CO309/94. See also Resolutions of the Intercolonial Conference in Melbourne, 20 Jun 1870, de Ricci, 3.

102 March to FO, 18 Jul 1870, FO58/118.

103 FO minute dated 18 Jul 1870 on March's despatch of 31 Mar 1870. FO58/118.

104 *FT*, 23 Jul 1870. For an account of proceedings at the meeting, see Minutes of the Meetings of the *Tovata i Viti*, May-Jun 1869 and Aug 1870, ML.

105 Britton, 64.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

[Ma`afu] said that the Confederate chiefs were ... unanimous as to the benefits to be derived from ... continued union Tonga is strong in itself because the chiefs are united. ... What has become of the meetings at Bau? ... The root of Tonga's present position is that old tribal divisions are done away with, and there is unity of purpose among the chieftains ... At Lau we distinctly admit the benefits we have derived from the new state of affairs, and our desire is that we work together to advance all Fiji.¹⁰⁶

Laws approved by the assembled chiefs included the appointment of a General Secretary of the *Tovata*, the power of *Tovata* laws to overcome those of individual chiefdoms, the chiefs' secretaries to act as *ex-officio* magistrates, and the forfeiture of all rebel lands to the *Tovata* government. Ma`afu's final word on the new laws revealed a clarity and depth of vision no other chief of Fiji could emulate:

the laws are but few, yet they are all we require at present to meet the circumstances of the times. ... We must legislate gradually. In time there will be laws enough.¹⁰⁷

At the close of proceedings, Ma`afu announced the imminent installation of Tui Cakau as Tui Vanua Levu, a new dignity within the Fijian polity. Similarly, Katonivere was named as Governor of Macuata and Tui Bua as Governor of Bua. These appointments were undertaken partly to strengthen Ma`afu's grip on the *Tovata* lands and partly to isolate further Ritova, Tui Macuata, the one senior *Tovata* chief absent from Wairiki:

[The chiefs] had met to carry out an idea he had held for some years, ... creating Tui Cakau to be Tui Vanua Levu. Hitherto the want of union had been an obstacle, but now it had been done 'and would be maintained' (with emphasis). [Ma`afu] was sorry that Ritova was so persistent in absenting himself, he ought to have been here, and he would have to account to Tui Cakau. [Ma`afu] explained to [the chiefs] what rebellion was, and that now opposition to Tui Vanua Levu was rebellion and would entail its consequences. They knew well that he, the Tui Lau, and Tui Cakau, could together march through Vanua Levu in a few weeks, and that none of this trouble would have existed as it is today without white interference.¹⁰⁸

Further to emphasise his theme of unity, Ma`afu read to the gathering a copy of a letter he had sent to Cakobau, reiterating the *Tovata* chiefs' view that only

106 *FT*, 20 Aug 1870.

107 *ibid.*, 10 Sep 1870, where the complete list of the new laws is found. See also Lang Papers, Vol. 9, Personal and Miscellaneous 1838–1873, 139–140; n. 80 above. Robert Swanston, formerly Ma`afu's secretary, was appointed as first secretary of the *Tovata*. Also present at Wairiki were David Wilkinson, Tui Bua's secretary, and William Ross, attached to Tui Cakau.

108 *FT*, 8 Aug 1870.

Bua possessed proper jurisdiction over Solevu. The letter informed the Vunivalu that the *Tovata* chiefs would await the outcome of an enquiry conducted by the captain of a British warship, sent following an agreement between Cakobau, Consul March and Tui Cakau.¹⁰⁹ With the Cakaudrove chief his firm ally, Ma`afu sought both to place his control of the *Tovata* chiefdoms beyond dispute and to demonstrate to Cakobau the *Tovata* chiefs' common purpose. Unquestioned unity would enhance any future possibilities of further extending his power. Pursuing the theme of European interference, Ma`afu acknowledged that while many of the whites were "good men and true", others were "evil disposed and opposed to law", who "come among us and because we carry dark skins they think we are wild beasts and that they can carry out any iniquity without being called to account". Yet "iniquity" was not confined to the intruders: "The sea is white with the sails of white men's vessels, some of these will ... occasionally get ashore and be wrecked. In old times you used to kill and cook such castaways; that day is past, and we must study to give such unfortunates all the aid they need".¹¹⁰ Although Tui Lau, resplendent in the cloak of statecraft, spoke of conciliation, his discerning words were alarming in their perspicacity, alarming, that is, to any of the settlers who chose to take heed. They carried the implication that, following the boost given to the unity of the *Tovata*, the threat posed by the "evil disposed" settlers would have to be met and overcome.

Ma`afu's first step in meeting this threat was to write to the British Consul on behalf of all the *Tovata* chiefs. His letter, drafted by Swanston, was translated for the assembled chiefs and discussed by them clause by clause. Only when they expressed unanimous approval was the document forwarded. Ma`afu complained about intervention in Solevu by the American Consul, which action "strengthened the spirit of anarchy existing at Solevu". He informed Consul March that, although the chiefs acquiesced in the proposed investigation of the Solevu troubles, they were not sanguine concerning its outcome. Muted as the letter was, its message was clear: "the disturbance at Solevu ... is ... but a trifling affair, provided that we, the Chieftains of Fiji, be allowed to deal with it ourselves".¹¹¹ The Consul took offence; several days after the gathering at Wairiki ended, Ma`afu called on him at Levuka, only to meet with a rebuff. March, considering that the letter contained both "an accusation against [and] a censure upon" the British government, refused to speak to Ma`afu until it was withdrawn. "Grieved and annoyed", Ma`afu left the Consul's office "feeling that he had been snubbed".¹¹² He overcame his chagrin, however, almost certainly at Swanston's behest. Writing again to the Consul, Ma`afu withdrew the earlier

109 *ibid.*, 27 Aug 1870.

110 *ibid.*, 23 Jul, 20 Aug 1870.

111 Quoted in *FT*, 27 Aug 1870. For a contemporary copy of the letter, see Royal Navy, Australia Station, Reports, Vol. 28, Fiji 1868–1879. A copy in Fijian is found in Proceedings of the meeting of the *Tovata* held at Wairiki in ... Aug 1870, ML.

112 Swanston to the Editor, *FT*, 22 Aug 1870; *FT* 27 Aug 1870.

letter, describing it as “foolish and offensive”, and apologised. He asserted that “some white man” acting on his own authority had printed it in the newspaper against his instructions.¹¹³ Possibly somewhat *distract* following his apparent diplomatic setback, Ma`afu was not himself at a public ball in the Levuka Reading Room, held in honour of the officers of a visiting American warship, USS *Resaca*. “Present for a short time, [Ma`afu], although invited, declined to trip the fantastic toe”.¹¹⁴

Ma`afu’s apology to the Consul was disingenuous. On the same day as his first letter to March, he also wrote to Cakobau, again on the subject of Solevu. He reminded the Vunivalu that following the *Tovata* chiefs’ decisions the previous year concerning provincial boundaries, Solevu belonged unequivocally to Bua. Acknowledging discussions Cakobau had held with both Tui Bua and March, Ma`afu agreed that the Solevu dispute could be “held over” for Cakobau to “adjudicate when the British warship arrives ... We will wait to see whether some good will come out of this reconciliation. If not, we will carry out what we set out to do. ... If evidence is seen of a problem occurring, we will adopt appropriate defensive measures and it is up to God to determine ... who is the cause of evil”. Cakobau was left in no doubt concerning the course of any future “adjudication”.¹¹⁵

In the face of Ma`afu’s initial defiance, Consul March’s position is worth greater consideration. Before Ma`afu’s letter of apology arrived, the Consul drafted a response to the earlier missive that had caused such offence, castigating Tui Lau for entering “into official intercourse with me by casting imputations upon my office”. In high dudgeon, March, seeking to ascertain Ma`afu’s true feeling behind the screen of Swanston’s eloquence, requested Ma`afu “to be so good as to address me in your own language and handwriting should you feel disposed to favour me with any further communications”.¹¹⁶ Since the offending letter had cast aspersions on American interest in the Solevu troubles, March passed on a copy of it to U.S. Consul Isaac Brower. The latter, repudiating Tui Lau’s comments, expressed solidarity with his colleague:

Ma`afu has been for many years past and still is the head and front of the disturbing element to the peace and harmony of native affairs in Fiji and though to a certain extent held in check by influences ... of the

113 Ma`afu to March, 16 and 22 Aug 1870 (copies), Royal Navy, Australia Station, Reports, Vol. 28. Ma`afu also apprehended interference in Fiji by elders of the Wesleyan church, a view that prompted an appeal to him by Frederick Langham, Chairman of the Fiji Synod, to explain how the elders had offended the *Tovata* chiefs. Langham to Ma`afu, 24 Sep 1870, Robert Swanston, Letters 1870–1875.

114 *FT*, 20 Aug 1870.

115 Ma`afu to Cakobau, Wairiki, 6 Aug 1870, Proceedings of the meeting of the *Tovata* held at Wairiki.... I am indebted to Sitiveni Yaqona for a translation of the original Fijian.

116 March to Ma`afu, 15 Aug 1870 (copy), Royal Navy, Australia Station, Vol. 28. The letter was not sent “in consequence of [Ma`afu’s] having taken immediate steps to retract his communication of the contents of which he was ignorant”.

United States Government with the legitimate authorities in Fiji, it is evident that he has not abandoned his ambitious schemes [and] that he is now being made a tool of faction, who perhaps share his ambition for notoriety and hope to profit thereby.

Brower contended that Ma`afu's failure to further his ambitions in Solevu had prompted his letter to March.¹¹⁷ The two Consuls were one, or so it seemed, in their repudiation of Ma`afu and all his works. Their condemnation of what they saw as naked ambition and a determination to foment discord blinded them to a major force for political change in Fiji.

Swanston, and no doubt Ma`afu as well, were determined that the reading public should recognise Ma`afu's tactical withdrawal for what it was. Swanston reminded the editor of the *Fiji Times* that Ma`afu's opinion remained unchanged; having more than once felt the weight of British consular displeasure, and hoping to be invited on board an American warship then in port, Ma`afu could not be blamed for the appearance of failure "in his duties as delegate". Swanston advised that the Solevu rebels had surrendered as soon as they became aware of impending action against them by the *Tovata* chiefs. He saw "no folly in the ruling chiefs of a large portion of Fiji expressing their opinion on weighty matters connected with the peace of the country".¹¹⁸ He was right, of course, even if March was not aware. With the power of Tui Lau as the nominated representative of the *Tovata* undiminished, the British Consul, offended or not, would do well to take cognisance.

The Consul's Pyrrhic victory over Ma`afu failed to prevent Tui Lau's further involvement in the power struggle that continued to gain momentum. Wishing to profit from official displeasure, Cakobau expressed to March his fear that "evil will come upon Fiji through the warlike disposition and tendency of Ma`afu". With the American debt now paid, Cakobau asserted, Ma`afu thought his time had come "for the conquest or seizure of Fiji". Cakobau saw the correspondence between Ma`afu and the Consul as "a cloak to put that evil upon others of which he is the root". In order to avoid a "great war" in Fiji, he beseeched March to send "the Chief of the British ships of war" to side with the indigenous chiefs against Ma`afu.¹¹⁹ The Vunivalu's words express far more than general paranoia and fear of Ma`afu's designs. With his American secretary and numerous contacts in the settler community, Cakobau embodied the desire of the planters and traders of Levuka and further afield to be rid of a chief they could neither control nor manipulate. The settlers' purpose was to promote the interests of a co-operative Cakobau, a chief whom they continued to see as their willing tool.

117 Brower to March, 17 Aug 1870 (copy), Royal Navy Australia Station, Reports, Vol. 28.

118 Swanston to the Editor, *FT*, 22 Aug 1870.

119 Cakobau to March, 31 Aug 1870 (copy), Royal Navy Australia Station, Reports.

Consul March, however, was more attuned to the *Realpolitik* of the day than his reaction to Ma`afu's approach might suggest. He advised Lord Belmore, Governor of New South Wales, of measures taken "in view of the impending war between ... Cakobau and Ma`afu". According to March, Ma`afu saw the Solevu difficulties as a pretext to commence open hostilities against Cakobau, whose letter to the Consul suggests that Vunivalu and Consul were of one mind. Ma`afu had sent emissaries into Cakobau's lands, sowing the seeds of discontent, while Ritova, appointed as Tui Macuata by Commodore Seymour, sought American protection against similar incursions into *his* territory. Growing unrest among the Fijians, occasioned by increasing land alienation, was also on March's mind. The hostilities envisaged between Ma`afu and Cakobau were but part of a general race war which March thought increasingly likely.¹²⁰

However much *angst* permeated the correspondence of the Europeans in Fiji, the chiefdom of Lau continued to manifest the outward trappings of an efficient and peaceful regime. Everywhere, or so it appeared to *The Argus* correspondent, the flag of Ma`afu flew, while his uniformed police, their hats adorned with the appellation OFISA, patrolled the villages. Civil administration had attained the sophistication of maintaining records of births, marriages and deaths.¹²¹ On Vanuabalavu a road, 14 miles long and shaded on each side by breadfruit and banana trees, ran along the coast from Lomaloma. Many European families had settled on leasehold land on the island to cultivate cotton.¹²² The Hennings brothers, proprietors of Fiji's largest commercial house, owned both coffee and cotton plantations in Lau and were building a cotton gin at Lomaloma. The finest cotton plantation in Fiji, using only Fijian labour, was operated by the Ryder brothers on nearby Mago.¹²³ The Ryders' cotton had been appraised by spinners in Manchester and adjudged to be "equal to the best available in Liverpool".¹²⁴ Not only Europeans leased Lauan land: Henry Miller, son of an English Wesleyan missionary and a Tongan mother, paid rent to Ma`afu for land he occupied on Vanuabalavu.¹²⁵ According to his erstwhile secretary, Tui Lau heard "every part of every deed" read to him before he appended his signature.¹²⁶ In consequence of his firm hold on the reins of power in Lau, Ma`afu could not, even had he so wished, disengage from the politics of the rest of Fiji.

120 March to Lord Belmore, 24 Aug 1870 (copy), Royal Navy, Australia Station, Vol. 28. For March's fears of a race war, see March to FO, 30 Aug 1870, FO58/118. Missionary Lorimer Fison also foresaw an "inter-racial war". Lorimer Fison to William Fison, 29 Aug 1870, CO 201/562.

121 Britton, 37.

122 *ibid.*, 63.

123 For Ma`afu's long-standing and cordial relations with the Ryders, see above, Ch. 7.

124 *TA*, 17 Aug 1870, 6.

125 LCC R953.

126 Swanston, *ibid.* For three examples of the wording of Vanuabalavu leases, see LCC R954/5/6 Navadugu, Nasigani and Navetau.

For once, Cakobau appeared to steal a march on his rival when he attended a meeting of Taveuni planters, hastily arranged at the Vuna Point Hotel at the southern end of the island. Expressing pleasure and astonishment at the changes wrought on the landscape by the apparently industrious planters, and following dark hints of Ma`afu's plans to act against the planters' interests, Cakobau obtained from the meeting a pledge of unqualified support. Ma`afu, then visiting Tui Cakau up the coast at Wairiki, appeared discountenanced. Hoping to regain the initiative, he sent a canoe to Vuna Point "requesting the planters to come up and explain their grievances". This they did, with the result that Ma`afu, feigning to distance himself from Tui Cakau, denied he was the latter's advisor.¹²⁷ While at Wairiki, the settlers resolved not to interfere "with Fijian politics or internecine quarrels", to appoint magistrates subject to Tui Cakau's approval and to establish a Legislative Assembly which would meet biennially "to revise the laws and add others (subject to the approval of the Tui Vanua Levu) if required".¹²⁸ Significantly, Ma`afu signed a copy of the resolutions "only as a witness to Tui Cakau's signature".¹²⁹ Tui Cakau, now enjoying the added dignity of Tui Vanua Levu, a title he owed to Ma`afu, was in theory paramount chief of the *matanitu* of Cakaudrove, Macuata and Bua. The Wairiki resolutions established, on paper, an administration of these three chiefdoms nominally under Tui Cakau's control and with the essential involvement and co-operation of the settlers, the new element in the polity of Fiji. No such arrangement was anticipated in Cakobau's dominions.

Despite Ma`afu's attempt to disassociate himself from the collective will of Tui Cakau and the Taveuni planters, in an effort to mollify the planters' concerns, his influence on the outcome of the Wairiki meeting was plain. He sought, through his influence over Tui Cakau, to undermine Cakobau's *rapprochement* with the planters and to bring them firmly if unwittingly under the control of Tui Cakau, long Ma`afu's most important chiefly ally. The Wairiki resolutions, if they could be properly effected, would enable Ma`afu to reassert an apparently benign rule over the *Tovata* lands. His skilful reassertion of control, less a realignment than a masterstroke of statecraft, placed the three *matanitu* even more firmly beside Lau in readiness for the coming confrontation with Bau.

John Thurston, one of the two most astute resident observers of the Fijian scene, noted that the principal chiefs in the domains of Tui Lau and Tui Cakau enjoyed considerably more benefits than their written laws and constitutions might have suggested. "The heads of the two native governments have their banking accounts and can afford to buy such yachts as the *Xariffa*, or *Vivid*, for their pleasure ... Tui Lau's bill for £2,000 or £3,000 would be eagerly taken

127 *FT*, 24 Sep 1870.

128 For a full list of the resolutions passed at Wairiki, see *FT*, 12 Nov 1870.

129 *ibid.* See also *FT*, 10 Sep 1870.

by any Fijian mercantile man".¹³⁰ Ma`afu, content with neither the perks of office nor with his recent diplomatic gains in Cakaudrove, sailed to Levuka and from there to Macuata, Rewa and Kadavu. Accompanied by one of the Gwynne brothers, shipbuilders, of Lomaloma, and doubtless to Thurston's displeasure, Ma`afu voyaged in style aboard the *Xarifa*, escorted by his schooner *Caroline* and his ketch, *Tui Nayau*. Tongue in cheek, the *Fiji Times* noted "it is rumoured that Tui Lau's mission is political and that he aims at a union with the chiefs of the two districts".¹³¹ Inasmuch as a political motive was seldom absent from Ma`afu's voyages around Fiji, such a move indicated a desire, not only further to undermine Cakobau's support in the islands, but to encircle him with disaffected if not actively hostile chiefs. First, though, he proceeded to Macuata, where he joined hostilities against Ritova, who continued to "repudiate" the *Tovata*.¹³² He then proceeded quickly to Rewa, where Roko Tui Dreketi, the paramount chief, "determined to leave Bau and join the `confederate chieftains"". Cakobau responded several weeks later by sending emissaries to enquire. The response from the Roko Tui was unambiguous: "We chiefs of Rewa like the Tonguese form of government and wish Ma`afu to rule over us, we are for peace, but if you want to fight, come to us for we are ready".¹³³ Missionary Frederick Langham would later state that Ma`afu's visit to Rewa was made with the purpose of negotiating with the chiefs there "to declare war jointly against the Vunivalu".¹³⁴ According to Langham's colleague Jesse Carey, Rewa was now firmly allied to Lau, Cakaudrove, Bua and Macuata. Nevertheless, Carey believed, in spite of the "little nasty breezes" emanating from the "Tongan" [i.e. Ma`afu's] fleet, "other breezes will blow soon and take the miasma all away".¹³⁵ The "other breezes" were expected to blow from Whitehall, from which direction all was yet calm.

From Rewa, where some degree of secrecy and decorum had prevailed, Ma`afu and his fleet proceeded to Beqa, where 230 prisoners were taken. The men, whom he viewed as Bauan sympathisers, were sold as labourers to European settlers in Lau.¹³⁶ This action, unlike the Rewan alliance, threw down the gauntlet to Cakobau, who had long claimed absolute authority over Beqa. The Vunivalu responded quickly, advising the British Consul that the alliance between Rewa and the *Tovata* would certainly lead to war. Both the Consul and the captain of the *Rosario*, a visiting British warship, were besought to act against Ma`afu,

130 Thurston to Lang, 23 Oct 1870. The *Vivid* was a yacht belonging to Cakobau.

131 *FT*, 29 Oct 1870. Ferdinand and James Arden Gwynne had leased, but never occupied, land elsewhere in Vanuabalavu. LCC R957 Masomo, NAF.

132 *SMH*, 29 Nov 1870 (extract), enclosed in FO Domestic and Consular Jan-Jul 1871, FO58/121. See also despatch from Fiji dated 9 Nov 1870, *SMH*, 29 Nov 1870, 5.

133 Quoted in *FT*, 24 Dec 1870.

134 Evidence of Frederick Langham, 9 Sep 1880, LCC R929 Lovoni.

135 Carey to Rooney, 18 Nov 1870, Carey Letterbook.

136 *FT*, 29 Oct 1870. Four years later, it was claimed that Ma`afu "sold" 240 Beqa men for £3 each to planters in Lau. He supposedly extended the time of their hire, firstly from six months to one year, and later to three years. See "A Looker On" to Editor, *FT*, 18 Jul 1874.

with the consequence that Tui Lau was requested to wait on Consul March at Levuka.¹³⁷ Arriving there on 5 December, the day before a proposed interview with March, Ma`afu engaged his men to spend the day working under contract to build a stone wharf for St John Keyes, a local publican, storekeeper and shipping agent. The *Fiji Times*, in detailing the ensuing "Battle of Levuka", noted the hostilities as evidence of "the inestimable benefit conferred on the noble savage by his intercourse with the whites". Publican Keyes, wishing to expedite the construction of his wharf, had engaged the services of "Ma`afu and Gwynne, warriors and contractors, of Loma Loma".¹³⁸ During initial construction work, the Tongans were supervised by "an experienced and amiable looking Tongese gentleman dressed in a black coat and a large gun". The Tongans, naturally, were not bound to respect local laws and customs, "it being understood that the earth was created for the Tongese and their adherents". "It is scarcely to be believed, but it is true", the newspaper continued, "that the Fijian residents actually dared to remonstrate with the Tongese, or Ma`afuans, who were expropriating their property". The Tongans were forced to retreat. "Onward rushed the routed army, `anywhere, anywhere out of the way', closely followed by infuriated Fijians and excited papalangis". The pursuing Fijians reached Hennings Brothers' jetty "in time to throw volleys of stones and Fijian curses at the `noble two hundred' ... here most of the casualties occurred and the demoralisation of the Ma`afuans [was] completed".

His men safely on board their vessels, Ma`afu was urged to seek advice from the Consul as to his best course of action. He did so, only to be confronted by the Consul striding "about the room gesticulating in an excited and violent manner". Tui Lau, in contrast, "sat with the coolness and dignity becoming his position as a chieftain and a gentleman". Reminding the Consul that he had come to Levuka at the Consul's request, Ma`afu demanded compensation for the wounds his men had suffered. Tui Levuka, part of a council of chiefs called to assist "the Emperor of Fiji and Tonga [i.e. Consul March]", admitted that his people were in the wrong. During the discussion, which involved several European residents as well as various local chiefs, "the *Fiji Times* was excluded on account of its revolutionary tendencies. As the Emperor was particularly requested by Lord Clarendon ... to settle all native disputes, he ordered the Fijians to indemnify Ma`afu for the cost of the war and all forts or obstructions to Ma`afu swaggering along the beach are to be demolished". Safe from scurrilous newspaper hacks, Ma`afu hinted that should adequate compensation not be forthcoming, he would incite the Lovoni people, who lived in central Ovalau, to retaliate on his behalf. Eventually, Consul March agreed that the fines apportioned to the Levuka people should be in accordance with English law.¹³⁹

137 *FT*, 10 Dec 1870.

138 The Gwynne brothers leased land from Ma`afu on Vanuabalavu. See Young, 92–93.

139 *FT*, 10 Dec 1870. Lord Clarendon, who had died the previous June, was the British Foreign Secretary.

The *Fiji Times*' feature writer recognised an element of farce in the day's events on the Levuka waterfront. Yet, amid the ridicule, scarcely to be dignified even by the name of sarcasm, truth resided. Although apparently rebuffed, Ma`afu had in fact triumphed yet again: the Consul had bowed to his will, while the local Fijians, so intent on preserving their privileges, ended the day with the indignity of fines levied for their troubles. The newspaper correspondent had been right to deride Consul March as "the Emperor of Fiji and Tonga": it was Ma`afu, rather than the Consul, who remained free to swagger along the beach.

On a distant shore, Royal Navy Commodore Frederick Stirling, less sanguine than Jesse Carey although removed from the scene, reported from Sydney March's opinion "that a general war [in Fiji] between the two principal chiefs is imminent".¹⁴⁰ The United States had politely declined an earlier invitation to extend a protectorate over Fiji, with President Ulysses Grant noting that such a move would be "incompatible with the national interests committed to his charge".¹⁴¹ Little could be hoped from a contemporary petition to the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, similarly seeking annexation.¹⁴² In the meantime, Ma`afu was ceaseless in his efforts further to consolidate his already established pre-eminence. His hint to March concerning potential danger to the Europeans of Ovalau from the Lovoni people was not without substance. It was reported that during Ma`afu's eventful if short visit to Levuka, about 7 December 1870, he had sought to communicate with the fiercely independent Lovoni. Although often said to have been in some kind of tributary relationship with Bau, the most senior Lovoni chief stated in 1880 that no such relationship had existed in 1870. "Bau was on one side and Lovoni on the other", the chief declared. "Only in the case of war would we vakarorogo to Bau". Although the Lovoni sometimes presented *tabua* to Bau, this was done because "we were warriors and they wanted our assistance ... The Vunivalu always paid us for the services rendered in war to him".¹⁴³ The so-called Lovoni war, which began in 1870, ended with the submission of the Lovoni to Bau and the dispersal of most of the Lovoni warriors throughout Fiji as agricultural labourers, a dispersal that rankles to this day in Lovoni.¹⁴⁴

In contrast with the disorder prevailing in Levuka on 5 December, a decorous meeting of European settlers on Vanuabalavu took place in Lomaloma shortly before Christmas. Its purpose was to investigate the settlers' political status and "to devise some practicable joint course of action with the chief whereby the

140 Extracts from a letter [to FO] from Cdre Stirling at Sydney, 7 Oct 1870, FO58/119.

141 Hamilton Fish [U.S. Secretary of State] to Brower, 12 Oct 1870, U.S. Dept of State, Despatches to Consuls, Vol. 60.

142 Petition of John Dunmore Lang to the Legislative Assembly of NSW, for British annexation of Fiji, in particular annexation to NSW, Sep 1870, copy enc. in March to FO, 24 Oct 1870, FO58/118. See also de Ricci, 55–57.

143 Evidence of Loco (Kai Lovoni), Sep 1880 and of Frederick Langham, 9 Sep 1880, LCC R929 Lovoni.

144 In 1874, the Kakobau Government, perennially impecunious, mortgaged the Lovoni lands to the Sydney firm of Rabone, Feez & Co. Victor A. Williamson to Sir Arthur Gordon, 6 Nov 1880, LCC R929 Lovoni.

two races might work harmoniously together". Swanston addressed the settlers, advising them of his wish to see the authority of Tui Lau consolidated and the Executive of Lau strengthened within the framework of the rule of law. Swanston envisaged only one way in which the settlers might achieve these goals: to work in concert with the "native rulers". "Ma`afu and the Lau chiefs are most anxious that we should assume our share of the cares and responsibilities of government", he declared. More importantly, he told his fellow Europeans that "the position we assume towards Ma`afu and the Lau chiefs will be accepted by the natives as an index of how our race will act throughout Fiji". To this end, the laws of Lau were read and discussion of them invited, with a committee appointed to recommend any changes. Further measures, including the commencement of surveying and the appointment of magistrates, were adopted. When the committee reported in favour of formal adoption of the existing laws, Ma`afu signified his approval. The laws were to be published a few months later as the Constitution of Lau.¹⁴⁵ In a conciliatory move, he granted the committee, and through them the European residents of the *Tovata*, a charter granting the right of veto, should committee members feel that any existing or future law was prejudicial to the interests of the Europeans:

I, Ma`afu ... grant to the committee nominated by the whites of Lau for that purpose the right to veto as regards application against the whites of Lau, of any law passed in the *Tovata* or Lau assemblies, which the committee may deem inconsistent with the feelings and privileges of their race.

The proceedings were followed by a dinner at the Lomaloma hotel, where Ma`afu and several followers were the guests of the committee and the white residents of several islands of Lau.¹⁴⁶

The charter granted by Ma`afu was yet another tactic to enable him to rely on the support of the whites in any coming move against Cakobau. European settlers in Lau were promised security of leasehold tenure in return for taxation liability and an implicit acknowledgement of Fijian sovereignty. With their interests effectively secured and peaceful relations with their Fijian hosts assured, they would be unlikely to side with their disaffected, fractious and even paranoid counterparts in Viti Levu. It was in the Vanuabalavu settlers' interests to submit to Ma`afu's rule, guaranteed as it was by the Constitution, and to pay taxes to him as their legally constituted government. Even though their lands were leasehold, the settlers in Lau possessed significantly greater security of tenure than those in

¹⁴⁵ See above, n. 58.

¹⁴⁶ The committee members were Thomas Ryder of Mago, Leonard Boehm of Kanacea, Sydenham Bowden of Uruone, George Browning of Susui and Herbert Levick, William Hennings and John Gosling, all of Lomaloma. Planters in Lau were to pay a tax of sixpence per acre, or two guineas per annum in the case of town allotments. *FT*, 7 Jan 1871.

Viti Levu, where freehold largely applied. Cakobau, by way of contrast with his rival, could never hope to attain so effective a *rapprochement* with his uninvited guests. Ma`afu's charter was likely to prove yet another guarantee of stability in his already peaceful chiefdom, thereby further strengthening his position on the broader political stage in Fiji.

At the close of 1870, Henry Britton, the correspondent whose visit earlier in the year has been noted, made further reflections:¹⁴⁷

Ma`afu, though only a savage, is a very superior man for a Polynesian, and has an advantage over Thakombau in that he has been accustomed from his youth ... to the systematic forms of government adopted in Tonga, while he has always been intimately associated with the Europeans. In his kingdom printed books are kept for the official record of sentences inflicted, the births, deaths, marriages and divorces ... The prestige of his personal character has always been great, while Thakombau, whose introduction to the civilised modes of government occurred at too late a period of his life for him to properly understand them, bears the reputation of being a thorough shuffler.¹⁴⁸

With due allowance made for a visitor whose acquaintance with Fiji was of short duration, the contrast between the orderly processes of Lau and the chaos of Bau and Levuka, and between the minds and outlook of Tui Lau and the Vunivalu, did not admit of a fairer definition.

More pertinent to any coming *dénouement* between the two chiefs was the opinion of *Fiji Times* editor George Griffiths. Endorsing Swanston's speech to the planters' meeting at Lomaloma, Griffiths stated that Swanston "is to Ma`afu and Lau what Bismarck is to King William and ... Germany". The Lauan policy of acknowledging the rights and aspirations of the Fijian inhabitants was stated to be "wise", with the Constitution of Lau "sure to produce good results". Furthermore, the white settlers in Lau were described as Ma`afu's "debtors" for the "establishment of law and order under difficulties", while the Lauan administration offered a blueprint for the rest of Fiji. "A careful observation of the working of the Lau constitution may prove the advisability of Bau having a government as well as Lau and Bua".¹⁴⁹ Consul March, however, sought to deal with the exigencies of the moment. He appealed in vain to Commodore Stirling, then in New Zealand, to despatch a ship to Fiji as soon as possible. News that the United States would not consider a protectorate over Fiji likely made the anxious

147 See above, notes 52–55, 105 and 121.

148 Britton, 31.

149 *FT*, 11 Jan 1871.

March even more uneasy.¹⁵⁰ He despaired of continual appeals to him from the settlers, who were "ignorant or forgetful that the office is not a government". If he did not dance to the settlers' tune, he told the Foreign Office, they resorted to drunken public meetings. He did not exaggerate, since in May a petition, signed by 42 Europeans resident in Fiji, pressed the Foreign Office to remove March. "I am at the mercy of the mob", the Consul lamented, while the *Herald's* correspondent, although confident that March was a gentleman, recognised that the Consul remained "unpopular among some sections of Levuka's white community".¹⁵¹ March was caught between the unreasonable and selfish demands of the settlers, the steadfast refusal of Whitehall to contemplate any form of control over Fiji and the rapid increase in tension between the Vunivalu and Tui Lau.

The two rival chiefs must have been aware of growing planter discontent and of the likelihood that some form of foreign control of Fiji could not be far distant. In Sydney, a meeting of about 150 people at the Town Hall on 13 April evinced both anxiety about "the political conditions and prospects" of Fiji and a desire for New South Wales to assume the administration of the islands, since the British government had "positively" declined to do so.¹⁵² A deputation appointed by the meeting waited on Lord Belmore to present him with a petition seeking the co-operation of Whitehall in allowing the Colony to assume responsibility for Fiji.¹⁵³ In forwarding the petition to the Foreign Office, Belmore suggested the possibility of the kingdom of Hawai'i forming a protectorate over Fiji, a move which might meet the difficulty "which undoubtedly exists at present".¹⁵⁴ The idea had been suggested to him by Charles St Julian, now Hawaiian Consul-General "to the Independent States and Tribes of southern Polynesia" and was apparently favoured by William Hennings.¹⁵⁵ Whitehall, however, rightly observed that "the Hawaiian state [did not possess] the means to exercise any control over the European settlers, and native population of [Fiji], and a nominal

150 Commodore F.H. Stirling to March, 30 Jan 1871, Despatches from the Senior Naval Office of the Australia Station 30 Jan 1871 – 10 Nov 1871 (with gaps), BCFP; March to FO 30 Jan 1871, FO58/120.

151 March to W.H. Wylde, FO, 21 Apr 1871, FO58/120; James Turner to Lord Granville, 17 May 1871, FO58/121; *SMH*, 22 Sep 1871. There had been a proposal for the British Consul to be given magisterial powers over British subjects in Fiji: see FO to Treasury, 30 May 1871, CO201/567.

152 *SMH*, 14 Apr 1871; HO to Belmore, 1871, FO 58/121; Kimberley, FO, to Canterbury, 16 Mar 1871, FO58/121, CO 309/94; PP 1871 xlvii (H.C. 435), 58.

153 *SMH*, 26 Apr and 3 May 1871; *The Empire*, 26 Apr 1871; *FT*, 20 May 1871. For a contemporary British opinion describing Fiji as potentially "a valuable appendage to New South Wales", see Charles Cowper to John Dunmore Lang, 3 Nov 1871, Lang Papers, Vol. 7, Correspondence 1855–1877, ML.

154 Belmore to Kimberley, 17 May 1871, FO58/121.

155 Charles St Julian to Belmore, 26 Apr 1871, FO58/122; Charles St Julian, His Hawaiian Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires and Consul-General, to Charles Harris, Dept of Foreign Affairs Honolulu, 31 May 1871 and 26 Oct 1871, AH.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

Hawaiian protectorate would afford no protection for the maintenance of law and order or punishment of crime".¹⁵⁶ These considerations were precisely those uppermost in the minds of the citizens who had met in Sydney.

Featherbrained as it seems, the idea of a Hawaiian protectorate over Fiji remained real in the mind of St Julian, who brought the state of affairs in Fiji to the attention of Hawai`i's king, Kamehameha V.¹⁵⁷ Following a suggestion from St Julian, Hawaiian Foreign Minister Charles Harris financed the Sydney Consul to travel to Fiji in order to urge both Ma`afu and Cakobau to visit Hawai`i, where Kamehameha could "show them the country and the working of all its institutions".¹⁵⁸ Kamehameha wrote to both chiefs, inviting them to Hawai`i so "that you might see, the manner in which My Government is administered for Natives and foreigners".¹⁵⁹ St Julian saw the possibility for a Fijian kingdom along the lines of the Hawaiian. Even without the very different conditions prevailing in Fiji, such an eventuality remained unlikely in the face of Cakobau's limited power and his ever-increasing rivalry with Ma`afu. Unsurprisingly, neither chief ever set foot in Hawai`i.

The situation in Fiji remained too fraught for either the Vunivalu or Tui Lau to contemplate any overseas travel. Settlers in Nadroga met in February to acknowledge the sovereignty of Bau, while their counterparts in Rewa did likewise, even agreeing to pay a tax to Cakobau in return for protection.¹⁶⁰ These declarations, yet further symptoms of settler unease, came in the face of press reports of Ma`afu's continuing support of Fijians whom the *Fiji Times* coyly described as being in "'quasi' rebellion" against Cakobau.¹⁶¹ The Vunivalu appealed to the newspaper's editor to publish an account of Ma`afu's "treachery" towards him. He wanted the European settlers to be aware

that Ma`afu is doing his best to weaken him, and that Ma`afu has sent four muskets, a keg of powder, ten dollars, and one large cedar box, contents unknown, but probably filled with infernal machines, as a bribe to the Levoni [sic] tribe to kill all the men on the coast. The magnitude of the bribe, and the purpose for which it is given, will not fail to fill the world with wonder at the riches, and abhorrence at the treachery of the Fijians.¹⁶²

156 HO to Belmore 1871, FO58/121. See also FO to CO, 5 Aug 1871, FO58/122.

157 Kimberley, writing privately to the Prime Minister, described the idea of a Hawaiian protectorate over Fiji as "preposterous". Marion Diamond, *Creative Meddler: The Life and Fantasies of Charles St Julian*, Melbourne 1990, 133.

158 Harris to St Julian, 10 May 1871, AH.

159 Kamehameha to Ma`afu, 31 May 1871, AH; Kamehameha to Cakobau, 31 May 1871, *ibid*. A copy of the latter is also found in Cakobau Government, Chief Secretary's Office and Colonial Secretary's Office, IC, general, 30 May 1871 – 31 Aug 1875.

160 *FT*, 4 Feb 1871.

161 *FT*, 15 Feb 1871.

162 *FT*, 22 Feb 1871.

Cakobau, seemingly reduced to desperate straits, sought to influence settler opinion almost as a last chance to steal a march on his rival. At the same time, there appeared a press report of a "standing army" formed by Ma`afu at Lakeba, where the "soldiers" were drilled by his son Siale`ataogo. "We hope they will keep to `play'", declared the *Fiji Times*, "and never be tempted to try their strength against the peaceful body of cotton planters". "Armed neutrality is now the order of the day", the newspaper went on to say, tongue yet again planted in cheek, "and the Tui Lau intends not to be behind other civilised monarchs".¹⁶³

Armed Ma`afu's men certainly were, if their neutrality were tenuous at best. At his instigation, the Lovoni launched an armed insurrection against Tui Levuka, a chief whose lands lay under the nominal suzerainty of Cakobau. Reportedly "disaffected" with Cakobau, the Lovoni planned an attack on Natokalau, a coastal village loyal to the Vunivalu. Although the plan was postponed when Cakobau sent a *tabua*, an informer who had alerted the Vunivalu was murdered.¹⁶⁴ When the village was eventually destroyed, Ma`afu awaited the outcome with his "army" in Lakeba. His surrogates had over-reached themselves, however, being forced into abject surrender some four months later.¹⁶⁵ The subsequent trial of 13 Lovoni for high treason provided irrefutable evidence of Ma`afu's involvement in the insurrection. Having pleaded guilty, the 13 "threw themselves on the mercy of the court". Their counsel "said that they had been led into the crime [of treason] by the false representations of Ma`afu". Leoni, a chief from Totogo, a village adjoining Levuka, stated in evidence that "Ma`afu had come to him and persuaded him that it would be much to his benefit that an alliance against the Bau Government should be made. Ma`afu presented him with a bag of shot, and he yielded to his representations". Two other Totogo men, Saru and Draunidalu, deposed that Ma`afu had promised them "guns and powder" if they "would join the Lau confederation against the Bau government". The final decision by the Lovoni to seek revenge on their old enemies, the people of Natokalau, came about following Draunidalu's presentation to them of guns and powder acquired from Ma`afu.¹⁶⁶ The defeated warriors, convicted of treason in the Supreme Court of Fiji, were dispersed throughout the country, with many hired out to planters as labourers. Frederick Langham later stated that Cakobau "would not have the Lovoni people [in Ovalau], with Ma`afu in arms against him".¹⁶⁷ The loss of their lands by the Lovoni came about because Cakobau wished to punish them for their failure to provide him with political support.

163 *ibid.*

164 Nettleton to Rabone, 8 Feb 1871, *WMN(A)*, Apr 1871, 247.

165 *FT*, 22 Feb, 28 Jun and 1 Jul 1871; Nettleton to Rabone, 22 Feb 1871, *WMN(A)*, Apr 1871, 247–248. Consul March had requested a supply of ammunition from Lord Belmore: March to FO, 17 Aug 1871, FO 58/120.

166 Proceedings of the Provisional Supreme Court of Fiji, 4 Jul 1871, *FT*, 5 Jul 1871. See also evidence of Frederick Langham, 9 Sep 1880, LCC R929.

167 Evidence of Langham, LCC R929.

Despite the ignominious failure of Ma`afu's Lovoni allies, their defeat did nothing to undermine his support beyond the shores of Ovalau. In May, a meeting of planters in Bua resolved to request Tui Bua to grant them a charter "giving a similar right of veto on the laws of the Bua kingdom to that which Tui Lau has granted to the white residents of Lau".¹⁶⁸ Such a resolution reflected, not a desire by the planters to be governed by an enlightened administration, but a resolve to preserve their privileges in the light of chiefly power that, although absolute in Fijian custom, was considered despotic by many ambitious planters. Ma`afu himself, before his visit to his "standing army" in Lakeba, presided over a church meeting on Vanuabalavu on what missionary John Leggoe described as "a red-letter day". After singing and prayer, Ma`afu addressed the gathering, "congratulating the people upon their cleanliness and liberality, and expressing pleasure at the presence of missionaries". Declaring "love and endurance" to be the themes of his address, he spoke of the difference between Fijian and English love. If a Fijian gives a present, Tui Lau asserted, he expects one in return, whereas if an Englishman gives a present, he expects nothing in return. Referring to the earlier collection, Ma`afu added:

perhaps some of you have given from a Fijian point of view this morning, and you will go to your homes discontented because you have nothing to take back with you. Wait a while! Let me tell you what you have given in return. You have given to the Lord, and has he not given you something? Has he not given you life and sustained it? Has he not given his Son to die for you? Has he not given you teachers to teach the way of salvation?

Ma`afu proceeded to ask the visiting missionaries to send one of their number to Vanuabalavu, stating that he and his people were willing to suffer the long delay until one was appointed.¹⁶⁹

While Ma`afu's eloquence was music to Leggoe's ears, not all of the missionary's colleagues were willing to praise Tui Lau. Several months earlier, Langham had reported on Ma`afu's suspicions of some missionaries and on the question of which missionary should be sent to Lomaloma. Langham opted for Isaac Rooney:

He is the man for the place, and Ma`afu would rather have him than anyone else now in Fiji. Ma`afu is suspicious of some of us – tho' if he knew all – without any good reason – that we are thorough Cakobauites. He quite believes that Brother Rooney is a Ma`afuite and I think we ought to send the Brother, who has the confidence of a Chief, to live with that Chief in preference to one who is not known to have his confidence.¹⁷⁰

168 *FT*, 31 May 1871.

169 John Leggoe to Stephen Rabone, 26 April 1871, *WMN(A)*, No. 19, Oct 1871, 285. The Fijian conference appointed a missionary to Vanuabalavu later that year.

170 Langham to Rabone, 2 Jan 1871, MOM 103.

A wise move, seemingly, since a missionary who did not enjoy Ma`afu's confidence would find the Lomaloma station devoid of spiritual and material succour.

Ma`afu sought to assert proper control over the local missionary as over his entire realm. Not all was smooth sailing, however, since Macomber, the American who occupied Munia, appealed again to Ma`afu to remove the "natives" occupying the island.¹⁷¹ More pertinent was the disordered state of Ma`afu's finances. He enjoyed a substantial income from leasehold land throughout Lau, an income supplemented by "presents" from leaseholders.¹⁷² However, in violation of the Micawber principle, his expenses exceeded his income. Since the late 1860s, he had maintained an account at Hennings' store in Lomaloma, where his purchases typically included household goods and groceries.¹⁷³ Some three years earlier, acting Consul Thurston had written to Ma`afu urging him to settle his debts to various creditors.¹⁷⁴ Despite receiving a credit of £1,000 to his account with Hennings in August "on account of land sold to the Fiji Government", Ma`afu remained "heavily in debt" to the firm two months later.¹⁷⁵

The summary trial of the Lovoni rebels occurred during the very early days of the new administration in Fiji that came to be known as the Cakobau Government. When a group of Europeans met secretly at Levuka on 5 June 1871, the situation was becoming desperate. Sydney Burt, whose close business and personal alliance with Cakobau has already been noticed, instigated the meeting. Through his friendship with William Hennings, Burt was, according to March, able to influence Ma`afu. One consequence of that influence, the Consul believed, was Ma`afu's later acceptance of the title of Viceroy. The clandestine meeting enabled Burt and his friends to form "the nucleus of a government", which involved a revival of the 1867 Constitution, and to convene a meeting of delegates on 1 August. The British Consul later described this process as "a coup d'etat".¹⁷⁶

The rapid increase in European influence in Fiji arose from the recent influx of settlers. Europeans in the islands had increased in number from about 40 in 1860

171 Edwin J. Turpin, *Diary and Narrative of Edwin J. Turpin* from 15th December 1870, 3 Jan 1871. Turpin, a settler, wrote to Ma`afu on Macomber's behalf requesting removal of the "natives". See also n. 28 above.

172 George McEvoy, who leased land known as Tabuta on Cicia, paid Ma`afu over £600 in rent and £100 in presents between 1871 and 1880. LCC R961 Tabuta, Cicia.

173 An invoice dated 25 May 1870 included muslin, lamps, cups and saucers, "scarfs", tobacco, biscuits and copper nails, among other items. Ma`afu in account with W. Hennings, 25 May 1870, HP. See also J.G.M. Kissall to Ma`afu, 9 Jun 1871, *ibid*.

174 Thurston to Ma`afu, 2 Oct 1868, BCFP. See also John Harman junior to March, 31 Jan 1871; March to Harman 31 Mar 1871, *ibid*.

175 G.M. Henry to Messrs F. & W. Hennings, 25 Aug 1871, HP; statement of F.W. Hennings, 26 Aug 1871, HP, IC, general, 1864–1878; March to FO, 11 Oct 1871.

176 March to FO, 11 Oct 1871. For the text of the proclamation, dated 9 Jun 1871, see Moss, Appendix D, 298–299.

to considerably more than 2,000 by 1871.¹⁷⁷ More significantly, the bulk of them were now planters and merchants, rather than traders. The planters, often living in isolated parts of Fiji, required security of land tenure, while the merchants were concerned to see the rule of law established and a regular currency in circulation. In one of its earliest issues, the *Fiji Times*, a new forum of European discussion, had reminded its readers of “the necessity of forming some bond of union among us for the purpose of securing peace and order in our midst”.¹⁷⁸ The acknowledged need for stable government was accompanied by a hardening of race relations, an area where prevailing attitudes were demonstrated at the New Year's Day Regatta in 1872. At the corresponding event one year earlier, there had been a race for Fijian *drua*, won by Edward Miller, of mixed Fijian and European descent. In 1872, however, the *drua* race was abandoned, with only Europeans permitted to enter other events.¹⁷⁹

The boom years for cotton, which had sustained the rapid expansion in settler numbers, were over by 1871. Although the average plantation exceeded 80 acres, poverty was widespread among smaller holders, especially those who had lived in Fiji for a relatively short time. Many of the resident Europeans were derided in Australia as “defaulters, embezzling clerks and fraudulent debtors who have ... succeeded in making their escape to Fiji”.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, those settlers remaining solvent amid the inevitable bankruptcies were often disposed to recognise the need for a *rapprochement* with Fijian society. Some were prepared to acknowledge the validity of Fijian social obligations, especially in relation to land. Others, mostly newly arrived in the islands and ignorant or heedless of Fijian interests, sought to establish a constitution “as will secure to the white race the pre-eminence in the government of the country to which it is entitled by intellect and civilisation”.¹⁸¹ No such “pre-eminence” could be brought into existence without conflict with the Fijians, whose interests would not be protected if such a regime were ever established. Fortunately, aside from a pervading conservatism, the Europeans who met on 5 June manifested little unity of purpose and were in fact opposed by the majority of their fellows resident in Levuka.

Aside from such divergence of opinion, security of land tenure remained the most pressing concern of Europeans throughout Fiji. Land could only be obtained and held while Fijians considered that its alienation served their

177 W.T. Pritchard, *Polynesian Reminiscences*, London 1866, 209; Consular Commercial Report 1870, FO58/121; PP 1871, LXVI, 178.

178 *FT*, 11 Sep 1869.

179 *FT*, 4 Jan 1871, 3 Jan 1872. For an enlightening discussion of settler attitudes to race and government, see J.M.R. Young, “Evanescence Ascendancy: the planter community of Fiji”, J.W. Davidson and D.A. Scarr, eds, *Pacific Island Portraits*, Canberra 1970, 147–175.

180 *TA*, 18 Aug 1870, 5.

181 E.S. Smith, settler, quoted in J.M.R. Young, *Frontier society in Fiji 1858–1873*, PhD thesis, University of Adelaide 1968, 171.

best interests. A pervasive attitude amongst settlers was that "purchases" of land from Fijian chiefs gave the new "owners" freehold title, while most chiefs regarded the newcomers as temporary occupiers with limited rights. It was not until the Lands Claims Commission was established six years after the British assumed control of Fiji that a concerted effort was made to regulate ownership of land. The land question was a paramount consideration to the few merchants and traders who met in Levuka on 5 June.¹⁸² The *Fiji Times* declared its lack of sympathy for indigenous rights when it reprinted an 1867 news item from *The Sydney Morning Herald* that described Cakobau as incapable of understanding the term "moral support" as an abstract concept. The Vunivalu supposedly interpreted the offer of settler support as "armed assistance when asked for to drive the Tongans out of Fiji".¹⁸³ The dilemma facing Cakobau and the other chiefs of Fiji remained in 1871 as it had been four years earlier: was settler recognition of their authority to be achieved at the price of permanent alienation of their lands?

Consul March apparently thought so, believing Cakobau to have been manipulated by Europeans "seeking their own interests".¹⁸⁴ He pursued this theme with the Foreign Office, writing of the "notorious fact that these native chiefs are but mere tools in the hands of designing white men". As well as casting aspersions on the characters and aspirations of most of the Europeans who influenced Cakobau, March apprised his masters that one of the Vunivalu's "principal objects" was "the extension of his rule over all ... Fiji and the annihilation of his powerful rival Ma`afu". Cakobau cherished such "idle hopes" only because "he is being flattered by his present advisers with the prospect of attaining his wish. Already the acts and edicts promulgated by these irresponsible 'Ministers' apply to all Fiji and should they attempt to enforce them, war will assuredly be the consequence".¹⁸⁵ Whitehall remained unconcerned, however, advising March of its view that the European community in Fiji was now large and diverse enough to govern itself.¹⁸⁶ That community seemingly agreed, with its self-appointed spokesman, the editor of the *Fiji Times*, reminding his readers that

the Europeans will rule; the power of education and civilisation must come to the front, and if the prominent figure be a native ... it is only a puppet, the strings of which are pulled by the white man.¹⁸⁷

182 For a comprehensive discussion of contemporary land tenure in Fiji, see *The Sydney Mail*, 14 Oct 1871, 1050.

183 Quoted in *FT*, 28 Jun 1871. See *ibid.* for the full text of the "Late Constitution of the Bau Dominions".

184 March to Cakobau, 1 Jul 1871, FO58/120.

185 March to Granville, 7 Jul 1871, FO58/120. For popular opinion in Australia, which derided the pretensions of the new Fijian "government", see *SMH*, 7 Jul 1871, 7; *TA*, 12 Jul 1871; *The Age*, 15 Jul 1871.

186 *FT*, 12 and 29 Jul 1871. See also FO to CO 31 Jul 1871, CO 201/567. For the reaction of white inhabitants of Levuka to Whitehall's view, see *FT*, 22 Jul 1871.

187 *ibid.*, 29 Jul 1871.

As for the Australian colonies, the New South Wales Attorney-General, Sir James Martin, advised the Colony's governor that any scheme for the Colony to assume control of Fiji would be impossible to effect.¹⁸⁸

With a constitutional convention due to meet in Levuka on 1 August 1871, much would depend on the views of Europeans in more distant parts of the islands and, more importantly, on the reactions of the principal chiefs.¹⁸⁹ Settlers in Nadroga were reportedly "bitterly opposed" to the new regime, with Tui Nadroga unlikely to attend the convention unless supported by the local whites.¹⁹⁰ In Naitasiri, however, two delegates were elected to represent the Upper Rewa district, although a local resident, Joseph Reece, alarmed a residents' meeting with news "from a most reliable source ... that Ma`afu was on the point of coming to Rewa to join the disaffected tribe there in a demonstration against the Bau government". The gathering evinced a "very decided" view that everything possible should be done to rebut any "interference" by the Tongans.¹⁹¹ While this intelligence proved to be rumour, and despite the failure of his surrogate rebellion in Ovalau, the co-operation of Ma`afu above all other chiefs would certainly be needed if the new regime were to enjoy any prospects of success. The new premier, George Austin Woods, requested Tui Cakau to stop armed parties of his subjects entering Macuata, while simultaneously advising Ritova, "Governor in Chief" of Macuata, that he was authorised to resist by force of arms should Ma`afu or Tui Cakau attempt to take "forcible and unlawful possession of your territory or usurp any power of your people ... The King has given instructions [for] Tui Cakau and Ma`afu to be communicated with on this matter".¹⁹² At least in the case of Ma`afu, no reminder appeared necessary.

With his immediate future within the new regime so delicately balanced, Ma`afu was never in greater need of a secure power base in his "home" province of Lau. A somewhat curious sequence of events there revealed both the full extent of that power and the Tui Lau's inherent statesmanship. A well-attended meeting of white residents of Vanuabalavu, held in Lomaloma on 17 June, was addressed by William Hennings on the subject of "rumours which he had heard during his late visit to Taveuni, about the price of yams there". A Tongan named Feke had gone to Taveuni, claiming Ma`afu's authority to levy a price of £10 per 1,000 yams. As a consequence, "a feeling hostile to Ma`afu has arisen to leeward, which it behoves us to do our utmost to counteract", Hennings told the meeting. He stated his disbelief that such an instruction could have emanated from Ma`afu and moved that "Ma`afu be requested to call a meeting of his people on Monday next, and that he then and in our presence, proclaim

188 Sir James Martin to Belmore, 8 Aug 1871, quoted in de Ricci, 60–62.

189 The *FT* believed that prior consultation with the principal chiefs was essential, 28 Jul 1871.

190 *FT*, 15 Jul 1871.

191 *FT*, 29 Jul 1871.

192 George Austin Woods to Ritova, 24 Jun 1871, CG Set 31. See also Woods to Tui Cakau, 24 Jun 1871, *ibid*.

that there is no law at present, and that hereafter no law shall be made to control trading between whites and natives, and that his people shall understand that the laws and customs of Tonga, with regard to buying and selling, shall not be enforced". The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting further expressed its "earnest wishes that this act of Ma`afu's may tend towards ... maintaining good will between himself and the whites here, and that especially in other parts of ... Lau ..., Ma`afu's influence may prevail so as to foster the same good understanding between the whites and natives which is apparent in those islands which he personally controls". There was a resolution that Ma`afu be requested immediately to recall Feke from Taveuni, where the latter had established "objectionable laws". Respectful though the tone of the meeting was, Ma`afu could have been left in no doubt concerning his immediate course of action. When a delegation waited on him the same evening, Tui Lau "readily offered to comply with all the requests of the meeting, and asked that all the whites should assemble at his house the following Monday ..., when he would call together and address all his people in Vanua Balavu".

Ma`afu revealed his statesmanship in converting the ultimatum from the whites of Vanuabalavu into an opportunity to remind his Tongan and Fijian subjects that he alone directed the course of their lives, so long as they lived on lands under his control:

I have learnt for some time ... that there are some of you who seriously interfere with trading Henceforth I shall severely punish all those who in spite of what I say will endeavour to interfere...

There are many of you whose unauthorised acts and words implicate me. If one of you by act or speech annoys and troubles a white man, it is I who have to bear the blame, and as I know many of you have repeatedly been guilty of that about which I am now speaking, so have I been repeatedly blamed for acts of which I am innocent. There is a feeling abroad that I am the cause of the dissatisfaction of the whites generally with my government and my interests in Fiji, but I can tell you that the cause of such dissatisfaction can be traced to some of you. ... I have suffered for this long enough, and I now command you to mend your ways. The first complaint which reaches me from a white man about any one of you, whether chief or not, whether Fijian or Tongan, shall be redressed in such a manner that few of you will dare to be guilty another time. ... I want you especially to remember that the white men are our friends, and you must endeavour ... to avoid every source whence quarrels and disturbances may spring.¹⁹³

193 For the full text of Ma`afu's speech and details of the meeting two days earlier, see *FT*, 5 Jul 1871.

A resident of Fiji referred to “the sound sense” of Ma`afu’s address, claiming it to be “the declaration of one who feels himself in the position of an independent chief and not that of a vassal or subject”.¹⁹⁴ Such indeed was the impression Ma`afu successfully sought to convey. His admonitions to his people reminded them that his authority was always to be respected, while reassuring the Europeans that the same authority would be asserted in their interests. Ma`afu’s swift response to the whites’ latent disaffection ensured that his role in the new “government” of Fiji would remain unhampered by any unnecessary political difficulties in Lau.

In discussing the dubious prospects for any form of government in Fiji with Cakobau as its nominal head, the *Fiji Times* adopted a more measured tone than usual when it considered the influence Ma`afu was likely to wield on such an administration. As delegates prepared to meet at Levuka “to arrange for a Constitution”, the newspaper reminded its readers that “we see in the windward islands a powerful confederation – the Lau Confederation – with Ma`afu, an intelligent man at its head, which is not only a strong power but also exerting an influence ... daily increasing over the chiefdoms of Tui Cakau and Vuni Valu”.¹⁹⁵ In an attempt to exercise that influence, and probably buoyed by his adroit diplomacy at Lomaloma, Ma`afu called on Cakobau in Levuka on 22 July. At their conference, the two chiefs reportedly “settled all their rival claims and quarrels. Ma`afu is said to have given up all claims on Vanua Levu, Viti Levu, Beqa [and] Kadavu, and to have acknowledged Cakobau as King of Fiji and taken the oath of allegiance to him as such”.¹⁹⁶ In return, Ma`afu was appointed Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief of Lau, with an initial grant of £1,000 and a promised annual salary of £800. March later asserted that the £1,000 constituted “an indemnity ... for certain lands to which he laid claim”.¹⁹⁷ Ma`afu also became a member of the Privy Council and was given clear title to the Yasayasa Moala, where his rule, despite the findings of Consul Jones in 1865, was still subject to some dispute in both Bau and Lau.¹⁹⁸ A director of the Polynesia Company later wrote that Ma`afu had received his salary in return for “surrendering his claims” to Lau, thus permitting Cakobau to become the true “sovereign” of Fiji.¹⁹⁹ This was true to the extent that the chiefs’ salaries were seen as a means of ensuring their loyalty, as well as encouraging them in “the belief that they could become much greater than they otherwise could

194 “Vindex” [George William Rusden], *Fiji: its Political Aspect from 1870–1873*, Levuka 1873, 55.

195 *FT*, 28 Jun 1871.

196 *FT*, 9 Aug 1871. See also *FGG*, 25 Jul 1871; *FT*, 26 Jul 1871. Consul March also saw Hennings’ influence behind Ma`afu’s co-operation with Cakobau. See March to Granville, 11 Oct 1871, FO58/120. For a later reference to Hennings’ role, see *Encyclopaedia of Fiji*, 302.

197 March to FO, 11 Oct 1871. See also March to Belmore, 6 Aug 1871, FO58/124; *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

198 Five months earlier, Cakobau had “sold” Matuku to Sydney Burt for \$500. See above, n. 94. In 1874, a planter claimed that the Government had given Ma`afu £1,000 as well as legal title to the Yasayasa Moala. See “Spectator” to Editor, *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

199 *TA*, 9 Jan 1873, 6.

be".²⁰⁰ According to a tradition not documented until 1907, it was William Hennings, the first delegate from Lau to the Legislative Assembly, who, "after a deal of persuasion", convinced Ma`afu to proceed to Levuka, make his peace with Cakobau and take the oath of office as Viceroy.²⁰¹ This assertion is lent credence by a contemporary report in the *Fiji Times* claiming that Ma`afu's adhesion had been brought about through "foreign influence". The report added, significantly, that Cakobau, having always dreaded Ma`afu's power, now formally recognised the latter's rule in Lau.²⁰² Consul March believed that Ma`afu had accepted the post as Viceroy because he had been "flattered with the hope of eventually succeeding to the throne of Fiji", while the *Fiji Times* declared that Ma`afu, "whose ideas are more progressive and politic, yielded [to Cakobau]".²⁰³ The newspaper considered that Tui Lau was influenced by the prospect of formal recognition as a chief of Fiji and by the "much higher understanding in the eyes of foreigners" he would enjoy.²⁰⁴ It is likely, too, that Ma`afu and other leading chiefs were partly swayed by the promise of a regular salary and formal recognition of their status.²⁰⁵ Ma`afu had of course been created Tui Lau in 1869, although no such formal recognition from Bau was then forthcoming. Now, he also secured the approval of most influential Europeans, whose views he had always been willing to accommodate, at least in Lau, as a means of strengthening his power. As Viceroy, with both the Vunivalu and most influential whites reconciled to his enlarged power base, Ma`afu was in a position, not merely to await developments, but to use his influence to manipulate them to his advantage.

The new "government of Fiji" was inaugurated at "a large meeting on a hill overlooking ... Levuka", where Cakobau made a short speech and introduced the new "ministry". Its members were greeted by the "astonished silence" of the Fijians present, accompanied by the jeers of the whites.²⁰⁶ The same evening, a "monster indignation meeting" in Levuka, reflecting the wide divergence of opinion among Europeans, "strongly condemned" the ministers and declared the new "government" to be "an impertinence and an absurdity".²⁰⁷ Although the new regime, despite the derision of Consul March, succeeded in establishing

200 *The Age*, 3 May 1873, 3.

201 *The Cyclopaedia of Fiji*, Sydney 1907, facsimile edition, Fiji Museum, Suva 1984, 302.

202 *FT*, 5 Aug 1871.

203 March to FO, 11 Oct 1871; *FT*, 5 Aug 1871.

204 *FT*, 28 Oct 1871. The House had in August introduced an amendment whereby the successor to the throne should be chosen by the King during his lifetime. Failing that, the chiefs would choose the new ruler "by ballot in council assembled". *FT*, 12 Aug 1871.

205 See the views of one resident correspondent in *The Age*, 3 May 1873, 3.

206 For details of the proceedings, see Litton Forbes, *Two Years in Fiji*, London 1875, 286–290. Although Forbes described the "whole affair" as an "elaborate joke", he was perceptive in his analysis of the reasons why settlers keenly felt the need for a government: *ibid.*, 287. See also *FT*, 11 Sep, 18 Sep and 18 Dec 1869 and 15 Jan 1870; Young, "Evanescent Ascendancy...", 152–167; J.D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji 1858–1970*, London 1958, 44 et seq.

207 March to FO, 11 Oct 1871.

itself, its adherence to the constitutional monarchy was never more than a facade. Despite the farcical nature of its inauguration, the “government” maintained itself in office because both Cakobau and Ma`afu had, for widely different reasons, been won over to its cause. The common ground of the two great chiefs lay in the fact that in both their cases, “self-interest was made the moving power”.²⁰⁸ The nature of chiefly authority in Fiji meant that minor chiefs in both Cakobau’s domain and throughout Lau were bound to adhere to the authority of their rulers. While Ma`afu would support the “government” only for as long as it suited his purpose, there could be no dissenting voice in Lau.

Ma`afu, introduced by Premier Woods and interpreted by settler David Wilkinson, sought to adopt the role of go-between when the “convention” met to draft a constitution. He reminded the delegates that since they were discussing “a question of the greatest consequence”, each clause in the Constitution, as passed by the white delegates, “should be submitted to the native chiefs for discussion in their own language, and in their own Assembly, and if disapproved by them, be referred back to the whites for reconsideration”.²⁰⁹ Possibly in consequence of this request, “a perfect storm of disaffection” arose in Levuka, with Consul March later declaring that many white settlers, especially those removed from areas controlled by Cakobau and Ma`afu, were “disposed to revolt” against the “burlesque constitutional government”.²¹⁰ Albert Manton, despite his commercial dealings with Tui Lau, censured the “government” for taking heed of a chief who “but a short time ago had by evidence produced in their own court been proved the prime cause of the Lovoni war”.²¹¹ The convention nevertheless proceeded, with J.S. Butters, a planter in Macuata, elected as speaker. After some delegates refused to share their meeting room with “natives”, the chiefs eventually resolved the difficulty by sending a message through Ma`afu to the effect that they preferred to deliberate by themselves. The Assembly rejected the notion that Fiji should be controlled “by a government of whites alone, recognising the different native chiefs and recognised by them”. Instead, “the alliance made between Cakobau and Ma`afu was considered to be a sufficient guarantee for the stability of the proposed kingdom”. There was to be a House of Representatives elected by the Europeans, with all cabinet ministers chosen from among its members. Resolutions of the new Assembly would be submitted to the Privy Council, to be composed of Fijian chiefs and the King’s Cabinet. Unable to initiate legislation, the Council could only refer suggested amendments back to the Assembly. The Privy Council came into existence largely as a consequence of Ma`afu’s suggestion that the chiefs should discuss

208 *ibid.*

209 *FT*, 16 Aug 1871.

210 *Minute*, March to FO no. 17, 18 Oct 1871, FO58/120. For a list of the 24 settlers in attendance, see *FT*, 9 Aug 1871.

211 *FT*, 16 Aug 1871.

each proposed clause of the Constitution at a separate meeting. As the *Fiji Times* recognised, the creation of separate chambers was designed "to obviate the necessity of the two races mingling in the Assembly and voting together".²¹² Laws enacted by the two Houses were to be administered by Fijian governors of districts, assisted by a council of Europeans who would be empowered as magistrates. Finally, a Supreme Court would be established, consisting of a chief justice and two assistant judges, one of whom would be Fijian.²¹³ Although there was considerable opposition among the white community, principally because of the absence of prior public consultation, the "ministers" of the new administration, including two leading Fijian chiefs, represented a reasonable cross section of the population.²¹⁴ The new "premier", Sydney Burt, published, along with "The Constitution Act of the Kingdom of Fiji", a letter to the residents of Fiji, wherein he explained the lack of preliminary meetings and outlined the reasons for Cakobau's appointment of an Executive.²¹⁵

Delegates to the Assembly formally submitted to the Vunivalu a "Bill to establish a Constitution in and for the Kingdom of Fiji". Cakobau, as a constitutional monarch, gave his consent. The new kingdom was to be divided into provinces, along the lines of the existing *matanitu*, while five ministries were established: a Chief Secretariat and Ministries of Trade and Commerce, Lands and Works, Finance and Native Affairs. Once the royal assent had been given, Consul March adopted a more pragmatic approach, advising Whitehall that whatever the legality of the "present so-called Government", it was necessary in order to prevent further abuses by the settlers.²¹⁶ However much he had been influenced by his European advisers, the Vunivalu appeared optimistic when he formally closed the Assembly on 18 August. "Ma`afu and I are now of one spirit", he declared to the delegates. "If there is any difficulty in carrying out this Constitution, it will not be with us but with you white residents".²¹⁷ How much confidence Cakobau placed in his apparent unity of purpose with Ma`afu is unclear. He was not alone in his optimism, however: missionary Joseph Nettleton in Levuka described the new government as "likely to be permanent", with the two rival chiefs as "working together very well".²¹⁸ His colleague

212 *FT*, 26 Aug 1871.

213 *FT*, 23 Aug 1871. If minutes of the meeting were kept, they have not survived. See also *FGG*, No. 1, Vol. 1, 5 Jun 1871, enc. in FO (Kimberley) to Canterbury, 16 Mar 1871, FO58/121; Sir George Bowen to Kimberley, 11 Jul 1871, encs, FO58/122; *FT*, 7 Jun 1871. For the text of the Constitution, see G.C. Henderson, ed., *Fijian Documents, Political and Constitutional 1858–1875*, Sydney 1938, 54–66. For a detailed analysis, see *The Sydney Mail*, 7 Oct 1871, 1,000. For contemporary public concern, see *FT*, 17 Jun 1871, editorial.

214 For an example of hostile settler opinion, see Markham, *Diary*, 12 Jun 1871.

215 *FGG*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 10 Jun 1871. Cakobau, doubtless at the behest of his new "government", also wrote to Queen Victoria, advising her that the Executive had been appointed "at the earnest request of the 'Foreign Residents'". Cakobau to Queen Victoria, June 1871, FO58/121. See also *SMH*, 2 Oct 1871, 5.

216 March to FO, 19 Aug 1871, FO 58/120. The FO soon declared that "an early decision" should be taken concerning recognition of the Fijian government. Minute, March to FO, 27 Aug 1871, FO58/122.

217 *FT*, 19 Aug 1871.

218 Joseph Nettleton to Rabone, 30 Aug 1871, MOM 98.

Frederick Langham, stationed at Bau, appeared only slightly more cautious, noting that “Ma`afu and ... [the] Vunivalu will be able to keep the peace in Fiji”, with Cakobau “fully set to do all that his Ministry tell him to do”.²¹⁹ Even the correspondent for *The Sydney Morning Herald* commented favourably on Ma`afu’s agreement to become Viceroy: “That this move will strengthen the hands of the Government is certain”.²²⁰ The *Fiji Times* saw pragmatism as the reason for the new consensus: since the proposed regime “was largely concerned with the white man’s interests”, the chiefs “have met on what may be termed neutral ground and ... have joined ... with the white man, to effect the desired object”.²²¹ Chagrin was to be the requital of these hopeful observers. Cakobau and Ma`afu meanwhile, apparently steadfast in their desire to remain on cordial terms, appeared conscious of their new status. Consul March lamented that they no longer called at the Consulate “as was their wont and their whole bearing both to the whites and natives is totally different to what it was formerly”.²²²

The acceptance of the 1871 Constitution by the chiefs of Fiji, who entertained no notion of a “kingdom” along the lines of Tonga or Hawai`i, served to confirm Cakobau’s status and prestige, especially in relation to the European settlers. Consul March ascribed the chiefs’ altered demeanour to the influence of their European advisers. More politically astute than many of the missionaries and sceptical of the “rapprochement” between Cakobau and Ma`afu, the Consul well knew that most other Fijian chiefs were unlikely to “submit” to Cakobau’s newly proclaimed status as Tui Viti. Tui Cakau, in particular, continued to resist all overtures from Levuka. “He has lately been making a tour of his dominions [which] include Vanua Levu and Taveuni and ... has everywhere been received with marked signs of respect and recognition ... Tui Cakau has it in his power not to submit to the rule of Cakobau”. Seeming to echo Consul March, the *Fiji Times* correspondent working at Vuna Point in Taveuni reported that “Tui Cakau refused to listen to the ‘voice of the charmer’ (Ma`afu)” and had decided against visiting Levuka or recognising the new government. “He knows very well that however willing he might be ... to join the new government, his tribe would not do so”.²²³ March would remind Whitehall that Tui Cakau, adamant that he was at least as powerful a chief as Cakobau, scorned the leaders of the new “government” when he learned that they possessed no authority from Queen Victoria for their actions.²²⁴ March also doubted whether the chiefs of Fiji understood the proposed constitutional arrangements “in the light in which those framing the present government present it to the world”. Ma`afu, in

219 Langham to Rabone, 26 Aug 1871, 23 Sep 1871, MOM 103.

220 *SMH*, 18 Aug 1871, 5.

221 *FT*, 26 Aug 1871.

222 March to Belmore, 25 Aug 1871 (Confidential), FO58/122. The FO had directed March to cease correspondence with the Governor of NSW on Fijian matters. FO to March 11 Jul 1871, FO58/120.

223 *FT*, 19 Aug 1871.

224 March to FO, 11 Oct 1871.

particular, seemed not to understand that he was "made to appear as a subject of Cakobau. Were he free of external influences and asked the question, he would ... reply most explicitly in the negative".²²⁵ It is likely, however, that Ma`afu was not so politically naïve as March suggested. When Tui Lau accepted the position of Viceroy, seeming thereby to gain the confidence of both Cakobau and most influential whites, he was engaged in nothing more than an exercise in temporisation.

Whether or not Ma`afu brought his "charm" to bear on the recalcitrant Tui Cakau, the latter finally came down to Levuka where, after some persuasion and reportedly under the influence of alcohol, he took a verbal oath of allegiance to Cakobau. Present were his putative sovereign as well as Ma`afu, members of the government "and several gentlemen". Despite swearing allegiance "in a very decided manner", Tui Cakau refused to append his mark to a written form of the oath. Since his verbal oath in the presence of witnesses was considered sufficient, a further apparent obstacle to the future unity of Fiji was removed.²²⁶ In the face of continuing settler disquiet however, the loyalty or otherwise of Fiji's great chiefs was not the most pressing concern. John Thurston was approached by some other settlers, ostensibly in the name of the new King, "to step up and take the lead". Thurston quickly declined, looking rather to the day when he might be reappointed as Consul, "which compared to a Fijian portfolio is as a house built on rock, to one upon sand".²²⁷ At the same time, Charles Harris, foreign minister of Hawai`i, compared the new government ministers in Fiji with their counterparts there. In the northern kingdom, most of the Cabinet had been resident in the islands for upwards of 20 years. "With such men", Harris declared, "[their] identification with the community and knowledge of and sympathy with the native race is perfect". Displaying remarkable prescience, Harris described the situation in Fiji:

the foreign population, being small in numbers comparatively, and considering themselves settlers only, looking to themselves as entirely superior ... [and] think that the Government is made for their convenience ... [They] will avoid taxation as much as possible and [will] probably resort to borrowing to defray expenses.²²⁸

While the loyalty of powerful chiefs such as Tui Cakau was essential, it could never secure even the short-term stability of the new regime.

225 March to Belmore, 25 Aug 1871.

226 *FT*, 30 Aug 1871. St Julian advised Lord Belmore that Tui Cakau "was not perfectly sober, but in his usual state" when he took the oath. Belmore to Kimberley, 6 Oct 1871, FO58/122.

227 Thurston to Alexander Blake, 20 Sep 1871, John Bates Thurston, Diaries and biographical papers 1854–1897, NLA.

228 Harris to St Julian, 19 Sep 1871, AH.

During these early days, attention remained primarily focused on Cakobau, on occasions resplendent in the outward trappings of his high office. "His costume is dark blue cloth, with white facings and cocked hat. He is surrounded by Right Honourable Gentlemen of the Privy Council". So wrote Thurston, whose tongue rarely quitted his cheek during this time, to his friend Captain Hope.²²⁹ On 30 September, the new monarch took an oath, promising not to be false towards "the Constitution of the Kingdom of Fiji" and to "govern the land and the people according as written therein". On the same day, 11 leading chiefs swore similar allegiance to Cakobau as King of Fiji.²³⁰ At least one of the subordinate chiefs appears to have repudiated his oath within a month, however: Ratu Kini, Tui Nadroga, claimed "exclusive jurisdiction over his own people and does not acknowledge Cakobau as King of Fiji".²³¹ Consul March had earlier described Ratu Kini as "a man of character and ... considerable ability" who "ridiculed the idea of being governed from Bau".²³² Despite this and similar difficulties, all would depend on the attitude of Ma`afu, who held the future of the "Kingdom of Fiji" in his hand.

Charles St Julian, still Hawaiian Chargé d'Affaires although resident in New South Wales, visited Levuka in August. Upon his return to Sydney, he wrote at length to his friend Charles Harris in Honolulu concerning the Viceroy:

Ma`afu ... is a very different man from Cakobau. A splendid looking fellow and a gentleman in his manners whenever he chooses to conform to the usages of civilised society. He is the great chief of the Archipelago. A shrewd far seeing man, with a very large share of ambition, yet with that ambition so tempered and guided by wisdom that he will always prefer the substance to the shadow, and will never lose the one by heedlessly grasping at the other. He has generally acquired an influence in Fiji which is really greater ... than that of Cakobau, although the unquestionably superior Fijian rank of the latter and Ma`afu's Tongan birth renders Cakobau the only person, at present, in whose name Fiji could be made one kingdom. Hence Ma`afu, although he might have successfully opposed the claim of Cakobau to this kingship over the whole archipelago, could not himself ... have acquired this position, found it more politic to give his support, to secure to himself, without question, under the designation of Vice Roy of the Windward Islands, all the power which he already had as Tui Lau and *to be placed in the best position for watching events*. By most of the settlers and by many even of the superior Fijian chiefs, Ma`afu is regarded as decidedly the

229 Thurston to Hope, Letter-Journals of Captain Charles W. Hope..., 6 Sep 1871.

230 The oaths are printed in full in Deve Toganivalu, "Ratu Cakobau", *TFS*, 1912–1913, 9.

231 March to FO, 30 Oct 1871, FO58/120.

232 March to FO, 11 Oct 1871.

most fitting man to rule; and when Cakobau dies it is very probable that Ma`afu will be chosen King although there may be some `troubles' thereupon, for there is no relative of Cakobau fit to succeed ... in all probability it will not be very long ere, in some shape or other, [Ma`afu] is the actual ruler of Fiji and the Fijians – native-born and foreign-born. ... [He] thinks ... the success of the present administration is very doubtful [and] ... will remain to watch events and act as circumstances may require.

Although St Julian had "carefully cultivated [Ma`afu's] acquaintance" during his visit, and unerring though he is on the subject of Ma`afu's character and motives, his summary of Ma`afu's views of the new government suggests a degree of dissimulation on the part of the Viceroy. St Julian recounted that Ma`afu, despite his pessimism, felt that "by watchfulness, prudence and energy some governmental superstructure for the entire archipelago may be sustained upon the foundation which has thus been laid down".²³³ If Ma`afu was indeed telling St Julian what he knew the visitor wanted to hear, the visitor appeared alert, if only to a small extent, to the sophistry of his host. St Julian advised the Governor of New South Wales that while Ma`afu appeared sincere in his submission to Cakobau, "he has the ulterior intention of succeeding him as King of Fiji".²³⁴ While purporting to devote his energies to ensuring the stability and survival of the Kingdom of Fiji, Ma`afu was preparing to profit from the regime's inevitable demise.

During his visit of three weeks, St Julian discussed with Ma`afu the latter's invitation to visit Kamehameha in Hawai'i. Ma`afu's response was that the need "to watch events and act as circumstances may require" precluded an early voyage north. Nevertheless, St Julian reassured Harris, "if [Ma`afu] requires serious advice he will not hesitate to apply to His Hawaiian Majesty's Government for it, and will continually and especially correspond with myself on the understanding that I will advise him as circumstances may require". St Julian's fastidious and affected prose reveals the condescension, even disdain, which appear to have characterised his relations with both chiefs and settlers in Fiji. Ma`afu was ready to promise anything to placate his irksome visitor, while no whit intending to depart from his own agenda.

St Julian's imperious tones aside, his views concerning Fiji's constitutional arrangements are worthy of attention, not least because they reflect a genuine understanding of conditions in which Ma`afu's larger ambitions could be achieved. St Julian believed parliamentary government to be "quite unsuitable" for Fiji, in part because "no government can be permanent or can materially

233 St Julian to Harris, 27 Sep 1871, AH (italics in original).

234 Belmore to Kimberley, 6 Oct 1871.

advance the prosperity of the country and its people under which there is any such distinction of races or classes as to create any legal inequality". The constitution then in the process of formation included precisely such distinctions. "The present Kingdom of Fiji", St Julian averred, "is ... nothing more than a federal union of chiefdoms ... under regal presidency".²³⁵ The mutual rivalries and jealousies which St Julian recognised not only militated against the survival of a central government, but also provided the potential for a chief such as Ma`afu, who combined ambition with the substance of power, to gain control of the entire archipelago.

Whatever the immediate future held, the adhesion of Ma`afu and Tui Cakau to the new regime was generally welcomed. William Scott, a settler on Ovalau, expressed his "great satisfaction" at the news, which he saw as "a sure guarantee that ... efforts now made for the introduction of law and order will be successful".²³⁶ Settlers in Vanuabalavu, meanwhile, met at Lomaloma on 16 September to hear the report of their delegates to the recent congress at Levuka. William Hennings reminded his friends that although Ma`afu was no longer "the presiding genius of the Tovata", his importance was enhanced now that he had accepted the post of Viceroy. His elevation would be "no loss to us", thought Hennings, "and must be a gain to him and his friends".²³⁷ The settlers of Ma`afu's "home" province were sufficiently attuned to the constitutional complexities of the day to appoint a five-man committee for the purpose of considering the proposed Constitution clause by clause. The committee was to report back to the residents of Vanuabalavu a week later, when the residents' views of the Constitution "as a whole" would be handed to the district Representatives, to be brought before the Assembly in Levuka. Ma`afu himself, apparently warming to the role of Viceroy, presided over a meeting of the Privy Council in Levuka on 24 September. The Council accepted responsibility for the debts of the kingdom, calling at the same time for new taxes due the previous June to be paid, at rates of ten shillings for men and eight shillings for women.²³⁸ Ma`afu's support for the provision was not without irony, in view of future problems that would arise concerning the transfer of Lauan taxes to Levuka.

Comfortable as he might have appeared in his vice-regal role, Ma`afu was not long in expressing some misgiving about Fiji's new constitutional arrangements. At the recent assembly of chiefs in Levuka, it had been agreed that Tui Bua should permit the chief of Raviravi village in Bua to reoccupy nearby Nabouwalu Point and to rebuild the former village situated there, destroyed during the troubles of the previous year. Cakobau, attempting to exercise his new function as "King" of Fiji

235 St Julian to Harris, 27 Sep 1871.

236 William Scott to Editor, *FT*, 2 Sep 1871.

237 *FT*, 20 Sep 1871.

238 Order in Council, Nasova, 24 Sep 1871, quoted in Report of Commodore Goodenough and Mr Consul Layard on the offer of cession of the Fiji Islands to the British Crown, 1874, PP [C.1011], XLV, 71.

and despite his earlier rebuff over Solevu, instructed the inhabitants of both that village and Raviravi that the reoccupation should not proceed. Ma`afu became "apprehensive" that Cakobau's intervention might "cause trouble on [the Bua coast] as it will tend to unsettle the native mind and raise the question whether the establishment of a General Government is a true and real thing or not". David Wilkinson, secretary to Tui Bua, endorsed Ma`afu's views, adding that such intervention as that attempted by Cakobau "is just what upset the two previous attempts to unite Fiji under one Head of Government". According to Wilkinson, "the old custom of [chiefs] interfering with local and internal management of any other chiefdom was to [cease] forever". Bau had broken through that "law" once before, a move that resulted in the creation of the *Tovata ko Lau*. Now the Vunivalu was apparently set to repeat his former mistake although, within the dimensions of the traditional Fijian polity, his involvement was justified.

Wilkinson added that although Ma`afu "has joined the General Government with a good heart and is fully prepared to abide by and carry out its laws in their entirety", he had acted "with the full understanding that all customs of the above kind were to be abandoned ... [Ma`afu] fully believes that the General Government is a practicable undertaking ... but impossible if such Fijian customs are not forever prohibited".²³⁹ Ma`afu had seemingly reassured Wilkinson, as he had St Julian, that the new regime would prosper if all concerned obeyed the rules. Was the new Viceroy expressing genuine concern over hindrances to Fiji's new constitutional path, or was he seeking to expound a philosophy whereby, under the guise of constitutional principle, he might abandon his responsibilities and actively pursue his ambition to become master of Fiji?

239 Wilkinson to Woods, 17 Oct 1871, CG Set 31.

This text taken from *Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji: The life and times of Fiji's first Tui Lau*, by John Spurway, published 2015 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.