

10. “There is no doubt Ma`afu means mischief now”

During the second half of 1871, Ma`afu’s role as Viceroy in the new Kingdom of Fiji appeared to overshadow his function as Tui Lau. As trader William Hennings reminded the September meeting of Vanuabalavu planters and traders, Ma`afu now trod a different stage, although his new role was expected to benefit his Lauan “subjects”.¹ Ma`afu’s fortunes were tied to those of the administration, a “government” that was little more than an oligarchy of planters and traders, people described by a visitor to Fiji as “a heterogeneous lot, of whom a considerable proportion are not strictly British subjects”.² However self-interested many members of the government might have appeared, there were among them those who sought to establish a regime which would benefit both Fijians and Europeans. Nevertheless, with few potential sources of revenue and a dependence on the goodwill of local chiefs, the new “kingdom” would always be hard-pressed to enforce its authority, especially in the face of chiefly resistance to the government’s determination to hold them to account. The administrative machinery put into place in 1871 was decidedly top-heavy, involving a multitude of functionaries whose salaries far exceeded anticipated revenue.³ At whatever cost to his longer-term ambitions, Ma`afu would now exercise his authority close to the apex of this excessively large bureaucratic edifice.

Recognising Ma`afu’s overwhelming importance in the new order, *The Sydney Morning Herald’s* Fiji correspondent noted that his adherence to the new administration “at once gave a reality to Thakombau’s assumed position as King of Fiji”. The Viceroy’s appearance seemed to enhance his power:

Ma`afu is one of the finest looking men I have ever seen; full in stature and admirably proportioned. His complexion is a clear brown, and his features regular; with nothing of the Negro cast about them. He wears no beard. Ordinarily he dresses in the native costume – a white shirt and an ample garment of tapa from the waist to the ankles, peeping from above the folds of which may be seen his gold watch chain and his white pocket handkerchief. Occasionally, however, Ma`afu dresses in full European costume, and seems quite as much at his ease in garments of broadcloth as in those of linen and tapa. Sometimes it is in a suit of well-fitting black, and at others in ... uniform – something like the undress of superior officer in the British navy...

1 See Ch. 9.

2 Charles Cowper to John Dunmore Lang, 3 Nov 1871, Lang Papers, Vol. 7, Correspondence 1855–1877, 1,023.

3 Appropriations Act, 1871.

As the correspondent was quick to add, “Ma`afu has been mixed up from time to time in all manner of native `difficulties’, and has always come out a winner”.⁴ His winning ways extended further back than his creation as Tui Lau in 1869, back indeed as far as the *valu ni lotu* in the 1850s. After the *Tovata* had been created in 1867, partly as a foil to Cakobau, there had been established in Lau a degree of systematic administration unprecedented in Fiji. Each local chief had retained sovereignty over his traditional domain, with periodic meetings to decide matters of general interest, while Ma`afu’s powers as the supreme chief involved matters affecting the *Tovata* as a whole. The question in 1871 was whether a similarly efficient administration could evolve in a larger and more complex society, where elements of the fast-growing European population demanded a regime which would satisfy their needs while keeping all Fijians, chiefs and commoners alike, in their place.

Ma`afu, more aware than any other chief in Fiji that the special circumstances of the new government were markedly different to those pertaining to the *Tovata*, appeared to settle well into his new vice-regal role. When Cakobau made a formal visit to the Legislative Assembly on 3 November, Ma`afu attended him, with the American and Hawaiian Consuls among other dignitaries also part of the King’s train.⁵ Prospects for the stability of the new administration received a boost a day later when Ritova, Tui Macuata, newly arrived from his *matanitu*, “took the oath of allegiance to Cakobau and his seat as a member of the Privy Council”. Ma`afu, seeking to profit from Ritova’s long-sought participation, left for Macuata the next day “on government business”, carrying despatches from both the government and Ritova and “armed with authority to stop the war”.⁶ His ostensible commitment to the stability of the new regime nevertheless appeared less than equivocal as early as December, when some members of the Polynesia Company petitioned Parliament, seeking redress of a grievance arising from Ma`afu’s actions. Despite having renounced all claims to Beqa on becoming Viceroy, Ma`afu had later prevented officers of the Company from surveying the island, although it is unclear whether his intervention occurred after he took the oath of office.⁷ He reportedly revived his former claim to half of Beqa, an island Cakobau had sold in its entirety to the Company.⁸ It appeared that the Viceroy’s probity was already being called into question.

Displaying an aplomb befitting his new role, Ma`afu chaired the Privy Council on 28 November when, in the presence of 28 chiefs and governors, the King

4 *SMH*, 26 Oct 1871, 5.

5 *FT*, 4 Nov 1871.

6 *FT*, 11 Nov 1871.

7 *ibid.*, 20 Dec 1871.

8 *ibid.*, 18 Nov 1871.

formally opened proceedings.⁹ Two days later, the Viceroy could not attend the Council because of indisposition, although he resumed the Chair on 1 December.¹⁰ The routine press reports of these and other viceregal duties do not disguise the King's dependence on his Viceroy, however irksome Ma`afu's appointment was to Cakobau.¹¹ When the King visited the Legislative Assembly again on 6 December,

He was escorted by a small number of his own bodyguard and a guard of honor composed of about forty of Ma`afu's men under the command of His Excellency's son. These latter marched to the beat of a drum in a very soldier-like manner keeping good step and time, and in white shirts and fringed sulus looked well. On arriving at the Parliament House the King's soldiers accompanied him to the building but Ma`afu's men plied arms ... and remained in the roadway.¹²

Ma`afu, as the Minister for Lands and Works observed in Parliament three days later, was to be the Commander-in-Chief of military and naval forces, with the governors of provinces acting under him as colonels.¹³ While his men, so smartly turned out, formed an honour guard for the King, the Viceroy might have been contemplating the day when the same forces might be turned against their putative master.

The first session of Fiji's Parliament was inevitably very busy, with provision being made for postal services, land regulations, public works and the importation of labour, all measures meant to benefit the settlers. The estimated costs of this legislation would be met by direct taxation, with a poll tax, set at £2 per head for Europeans and £1 per head for Fijians, being imposed. The Viceroy appeared concerned at the severity of these amounts, urging that the King be petitioned to lower the tax for "the native population" to two and a half dollars, with "the native chiefs [to] be instructed to assist ... forthwith the whole to be paid to His Majesty's Treasury before 31 December".¹⁴ After the prorogation of Parliament on 14 December, to reconvene on 2 May 1872, Ma`afu attended a ball at Levuka the next evening, given in honour of government ministers.¹⁵

Whatever the eventual fate of the taxation regulations, the new regime appeared more secure when Golea, Tui Cakau, the islands' third most powerful chief, took

9 *ibid.*, 29 Nov 1871. For the text of the King's speech, see Frederick J. Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea*, London 1889, Appendix F, 302–305.

10 *FT*, 2 Dec 1871.

11 A *FT* correspondent believed that "the King objects to Ma`afu being even his Viceroy", *FT*, 11 Nov 1871.

12 *ibid.*, 9 Dec 1871. 'His Excellency's son' was Siale`ataogo, then aged in his twenties.

13 *ibid.*

14 Statement by Ma`afu, no date [Dec 1871], CG Set 31. One British pound was then equal to about five American dollars.

15 *FT*, 20 Dec 1871.

the oath of office as a Privy Councillor and assumed his seat as a Councillor on 21 December.¹⁶ His initial reluctance to swear allegiance to Cakobau and take his place in the new order had largely been overcome by Ma`afu, whose influence continued to guide Tui Cakau's actions. At the end of the year the island of Rabe, traditionally belonging to Cakaudrove and the only part of Fiji owned by Tupou I, had finally been sold to three Sydney businessmen, one of whom, John Hill, resided on the island. Tui Cakau, who opposed the sale on the grounds that the island was properly his, refused to remove the inhabitants until directed to do so by Ma`afu. Hill appealed to the British Consul, asking him to bring his influence to bear on Ma`afu to issue the necessary direction to Tui Cakau.¹⁷ It was clear that, with the new Kingdom of Fiji less than six months old, all the eastern and northern islands of the archipelago, the domains of Tui Lau and Tui Cakau, would remain as integral parts of the kingdom only as long as the Viceroy was disposed to support the *status quo*.

While the Viceroy's authority remained unchallenged, the same could not be said for that of the King. Debate in the first session of Parliament on the Crown Lands Bill, subsequently withdrawn, revealed contradictory views concerning Cakobau's power in relation to the lands of powerful chiefs such as Ma`afu, Tui Cakau and Tui Nadroga. One Colonel Hamilton, representing Nadroga, declared that if Cakobau had visited that province, Tui Nadroga "would have scoffed him". Tui Nadroga had certainly asserted his customary rights, albeit in a new guise, appointing two planters as his agents for land sales and advising Consul March that appeal would be made to him should "any attempt" be made by "Cakobau and his agents native or European to interfere with Tui Nadroga's rights". The chief required a guarantee that those rights would be respected before he would travel to Levuka and take his place in Cakobau's Privy Council.¹⁸ In the case of Ma`afu, Hamilton claimed, without providing details, that the Viceroy "had participated in a certain arrangement between the King and Tui Nadroga". The frustration of these and other chiefs can come as no surprise, since the Bill proposed to convert all Fijian land not occupied by Europeans into Crown land, in direct defiance of the traditional rights of the *mataqali*. Crown land would, in theory, be at the King's disposal, with the King acting on the advice of his ministers. For the rulers of the *matanitu*, unacquainted with such an alien concept of land tenure and always jealous of their ascendancy, the proposed fundamental changes to Fijian custom were intolerable.

16 Statement by Sydney Charles Burt, Chief Secretary, *FGG*, 21 Dec 1871, quoted in *FT*, 23 Dec 1871.

17 John Hill to BC, Saturday, (no date), BCFP; re Rabi: Evidence before Commission 11 December 1875, Minutes of the Executive Council Sitting for the Rehearing of Claims to Lands 1879–1880, Appendix C, 83B and 83C. Agreement to sell had been made in June 1870, although the deed was not signed until 26 December 1871, in Nuku`alofa. Tupou I received a price of £1,300 from Hill and also Edward and John Dawson, both of Sydney. See Ch. 9, ns 34–35.

18 *FT*, 18 Nov 1871; CRD 1069, BCFP.

A subsequent Royal Commission into Quiet Land Titles, which met a few times in early 1872, merely shelved the problem. The Commission, in a statement of principle, articulated the dilemma facing the government:

In consequence of the variety ... of claims to land in Fiji, and the extreme difficulty of ascertaining the full force of native customs and traditions; and the prerogatives of rank, the Commissioners find it impossible to lay down fixed principles or rules by which they shall in all cases be guided...¹⁹

Gaining control over "unoccupied" lands in Fiji had been a prime motivation of Fiji's new "Constitution". The Royal Commissioners were saying, in effect, that the problem of land tenure was too hard of resolution now. It would remain so throughout the short life of the Kingdom of Fiji.

In "reviewing" a year of unprecedented change, the *Fiji Times* expressed greater optimism about the new regime than was reflected on the floor of Parliament. "The native chiefs have given ... their adhesion to the King and the Constitution, almost without exception ... Ma`afu and Tui Cakau, with a whole host of followers, are now the supporters of the [government]".²⁰ Other voices were markedly less sanguine. Charles St Julian, still Hawaiian Consul-General in Sydney, described the prospects of the new Fijian government as "anything but certain", owing to the prevalence of faction and the likelihood of a successful challenge to the government, a challenge Cakobau would neither understand nor tolerate.²¹ While St Julian better represented the true situation in Fiji than did the newspaper, there was another observer even more closely attuned to Fijian *Realpolitik*. Lorimer Fison's mordacious views of the settlers' regime owed nothing to diplomacy: "They have everything belonging to a kingdom, excepting the king, the executive power, the subjects and the revenue ... Cakobau is no more king of Fiji than I am. They can act through the chiefs alone". Although writing from Sydney, Fison relied on "thoroughly trustworthy" correspondents in Fiji, from whom he learned that "not a few of the chiefs are already bitterly incensed against the [government]". Fison could never envisage Cakobau as a constitutional monarch: "He has never acknowledged any law [or] political action but his own ... If the white men think they can do as they like with him, setting him up as a sort of Roi fainéant, and making him their tool, they are very much mistaken. He is made of very different stuff". More importantly, Fison saw the professed loyalty of Ma`afu as nothing more than a chimera: "Ma`afu ... took the oath of allegiance; but I learn from Fijian letters that he understood it in a sense very different from that in which the Government understood it,

19 Royal Commission into Quiet Land Titles, Minute Book 1872-74, NAF.

20 *FT*, 30 Nov 1871. The Australian press disagreed: see, for example, *The Age* of 8 Jan 1872, which predicted "a stormy future" for the Fijian government.

21 Charles St Julian to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Hawai`i, 24 Nov 1871, AH.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

and will not consider himself bound thereby as Cakobau's subject".²² Ma`afu himself, in the reservations he expressed to David Wilkinson concerning Cakobau's "interference" in Bua, did much to confirm Fison's pessimism.²³ Tui Lau's oath of allegiance was conditional, dependent on a collective renunciation by Fiji's chiefs of a practice in which they had long been nurtured.

Events were to demonstrate that Fison's views, on the government generally and on Ma`afu's participation in particular, could not be gainsaid. For the moment Consul March, no friend to the administration, seemed to echo the missionary in his advice to Whitehall:

Cakobau, in whose name the government ... is conducted, has not the mental capacity to comprehend the meaning of the 'laws' to which he is represented as having assented, and consequently ... the real governing power is in the hands of his advisers who, it is well known, do not command any confidence or respect.²⁴

The British government, concerned less with Cakobau's "mental capacity" than with the new regime's actual authority, was prepared to accord *de facto* recognition to the Kingdom of Fiji, while absolutely declining formal recognition "without much fuller information as to its character and prospects". Stability, as well as protection of the lives and property of British subjects resident in Fiji, were Whitehall's chief concerns.²⁵ The *Fiji Times* described the lack of public confidence in the government as a "political crisis", while Premier George Austin Woods left for Sydney in order to secure a loan.²⁶ The *Argus* in Melbourne reflected popular opinion in Australia when it predicted "a stormy future" for the new Kingdom of Fiji.²⁷

As has been shown, the most difficult initial problem confronting the Cakobau Government was the question of land. Most of the ministers, nurtured as they were in the settler colonies in Australia and New Zealand, sought to replicate the settler ascendancy of their homelands. The Royal Commission's failure even to attempt a resolution was an admission of defeat in the face of the maze of Fijian custom. For the time being at least, questions of individual landholdings would be dealt with on a makeshift basis. Ma`afu, acting as a private individual rather

22 Lorimer Fison to his brother [William Fison], 26 Dec 1871, Press Copy book: sermons, articles and letters, 1867-1873, ML.

23 See Ch. 9, n. 239.

24 Consul March to FO, 26 Jan 1872, FO58/131.

25 FO to Adm., 29 Dec 1871, FO58/122; minute to March to FO no. 32, 30 Dec 1871, FO58/120. See also Lord Kimberley to Lord Belmore, 3 Nov 1871, quoted in G.C. Henderson, ed., *Fijian Documents, Political and Constitutional 1858-1875*, Sydney 1938.

26 GB PP, C.124.

27 TA, 8 Jan 1872.

than as Viceroy, lost no time in asserting his rights to Vanuabalavu following an application by settler George Winter for a Crown grant of the island. Ma`afu protested, through John Thurston, to the Royal Commission:

I am requested [Thurston wrote] by His Excellency the Viceroy of Lau to inform you he enters a protest and caveat against [Winter's application].

His Excellency states that Vanuabalavu is his private property and together with other private landed property was secured by him by treaty under date of 24 July 1871. That Vanuabalavu was his long before the establishment of Government in Fiji and that Mr Winter has not and never had any claim to the island.²⁸

In similar vein, Ma`afu protested to the Minister for Native Affairs concerning another settler claim, that of Joseph and William Reece, immigrants from New Zealand, who had "purchased" Moala in January 1871. It was stated that when a deed of conveyance was executed between William Reece and Cakobau, Reece was aware that the title to Moala "was not perfect without Ma`afu's consent", which was never obtained.²⁹ Ma`afu now refuted the sale in explicit terms:

in consequence of my treaty with His Majesty any such claim cannot be entertained by me. The quiet and undisturbed [possession] of the Yasayasa Moala ... guaranteed by the Kingdom of Fiji must never be questioned ... such quiet and undisturbed possession was held by me prior to the establishment of the General Government, and in order to preserve the peace of the country and not to disturb the welfare of the whites I accepted the guarantee from His Majesty being well assured at the time that His Majesty's Government would immediately take such steps as to quiet any demands of the nature which Mr Reece now makes.³⁰

His title was never in danger: the Royal Commissioners were unanimous in finding that, in the absence of Ma`afu's consent, the Reece brothers possessed "no claim whatever ... to Moala".³¹ The Minister for Native Affairs minuted Ma`afu's letter: "The Viceroy's interest in Moala will be duly protected".³² Ma`afu's sovereignty in all of Lau had been seen to accord both with Fijian custom and English law at the 1865 enquiry conducted by Consul Jones. Now, the Tui Lau and Viceroy would brook no interference with his rights so unambiguously defined seven years earlier.

28 John Bates Thurston to Secretary, Royal Lands Commissioners, 23 Jan 1872, CG Set 43. Winter's application exempted Susui, Munia and Avea, which had been privately sold by George Henry, and about two and a half acres in Lomaloma, purchased by William Beddoes.

29 FT, 20 Jun 1872.

30 Ma`afu to F.W. Hennings, Minister for Native Affairs, 24 Feb 1872, CG Set 41.

31 FT, 20 Jun 1872.

32 Ma`afu to Hennings, 24 Feb 1872.

With his sovereignty apparently in jeopardy, although safe enough in reality, Ma`afu was formally appointed as Governor of Lau on 10 February 1872. His kinsman Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba was made Lieutenant Governor, while Louis Biganzoli, a settler on Vanuabalavu, became Secretary of Lau.³³ One month later, William Hennings was formally designated as Warden of the Eastern Group, an appointment which would enhance his already considerable influence in Lau.³⁴ Secure in office and with his subordinates in place, Ma`afu appeared to settle into the minutiae of his administrative responsibilities. After 40 labourers, alleging brutal treatment, absconded from the Vanuabalavu plantation of a settler named Ducker, Ma`afu recommended to the Ministry for Native Affairs that Ducker “conciliate his people by a more liberal treatment”. Ma`afu subsequently failed to honour an undertaking to return the men to their plantation.³⁵ He also reassured an American settler that the Lauan island of Vatu Vara, where the American had interests, would henceforth be *tabu*, in order to avoid a recurrence of “alleged depredations” by “His Majesty’s native subjects”.³⁶ He even lent his yacht, the *Xarifa*, to join the pursuit of four Solomon Islander labourers supposedly involved in the “massacre” of four Europeans in Rewa.³⁷ When a Macuata settler named Bardwell, avowedly disappointed following contacts with a local chief, sought the Viceroy’s help, Ma`afu admonished the settler for having laboured under a disillusion concerning “both my functions as Viceroy and my office as Governor of Lau”. While defending the rights of the chiefs, Ma`afu did not fail to reassure Bardwell “that any well founded claims will immediately cause my interference on behalf of the aggrieved party”.³⁸ Louis Biganzoli’s constrained prose in reporting these matters creates an impression of impartiality and balance, where the Viceroy administers his Lauan realm with favour to none. What, then, can be made of the despatch from Lau to Levuka of 23 Tongan “troops” aboard Ma`afu’s cutter, the *Vivid*? The *Fiji Times* reported their arrival:

This is a valuable addition to the brigade already in Levuka, and swells the force at the command of the Ministry to such extraordinary dimensions that they will be able at last to take the Government of the country into their own hands, and enforce the laws of the realm.³⁹

Did the newspaper’s derision mask more baleful aspirations on the part of Ma`afu? His force was small, yet was he perhaps sending a less than subtle reminder to the precarious settler regime in Levuka of the power which the Viceroy and Governor of Lau could summon if need arose?

33 FGG, 10 Feb 1872.

34 *ibid.*, 8 Mar 1872.

35 Ma`afu to F.W. Hennings, 5 Feb 1872, CG Set 43; Swanston to I.P.M. Ducker, 22 Jul 1872, Swanston to Biganzoli, 29 Aug and 7 Oct 1872, CG Set 44.

36 Ma`afu to E. Thompson, 19 Feb 1872, GHMP, NAF 1/Temp. 18.

37 Joseph Nettleton to BC, 18 Feb 1872, MOM 1.

38 Ma`afu to Bardwell, 17 Feb 1872, GHMP, NAF 1/Temp. 18.

39 *FT*, 6 Mar 1872.

Consul March was not sanguine concerning the regime's prospects. Advising the Foreign Office that the principal chiefs' subjection to Cakobau was "of appearance only", he added that the government was one of "artifice [with] no solid basis". Immigration had ceased, there was "a regular exodus of settlers", commerce had reached "its lowest ebb" and "British subjects [had] daily complained [to March] of the 'despotism'" under which they lived.⁴⁰ Such discontent was not surprising, given some of the unique features of the kingdom's government. The men who bore the grand titles of Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Trade were all retail traders in Levuka, with shops adjacent to one another. An Australian newspaper correspondent was to write of the "extravagant airs" and "absurd pretensions" of these "self-appointed advisers of the king".⁴¹ There was an opposition, also self-appointed: the British Subjects' Mutual Protection Society, which "found a sympathetic ear" in Consul March.⁴² On a positive note, 60 bales of Fijian cotton, grown by the Ryder brothers of Mago, was exhibited to favourable notice in Melbourne.⁴³ The Viceroy's apparent administrative zeal and devotion to duty must be seen against this background of chiefly disquiet, latent settler hostility to their peers set in authority over them, and the massive reliance on a single commodity whose producers, with few exceptions, lacked sufficient capital and expertise and whose price was, even then, launched into a downward trajectory.

During his early months in office, the Viceroy likely remained unaware of the diplomatic and legal ferment that continued to envelop the "government" of which he formed a part. In New South Wales, whence some of Fiji's Ministers had come, the Attorney-General, Sir James Martin, believed that "the establishment [of a government] by so small and heterogeneous a body of persons" would inevitably lead to foreign intervention. Further, the right of British subjects "to throw off their allegiance, and ... form themselves into an independent state, has not ... been recognised".⁴⁴ Martin advocated either annexation or Imperial recognition of the novel regime. Whitehall, seemingly uninterested in colonial opinion, peremptorily reminded Sydney that "the Colonial Governments" should conform to the Imperial authorities' decision to recognise the administration in Fiji "as a de facto Government".⁴⁵ While not refuting such a direction, the Chief Justice of New South Wales was careful to forward to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley, a "Manifesto" from the British Subjects' Mutual Protection Society in Fiji, declaring their government illegal on the grounds that "British subjects cannot unite with a native sovereign to form a

40 March to FO, 5 Feb 1872 and 20 Mar 1872, FO 58/131.

41 Litton Forbes, *Two Years in Fiji*, London 1875, 324. For a discussion of settler discontent in Cakaudrove and Lau, see John Young, *Adventurous Spirits: Australian migrant society in pre-cession Fiji*, St Lucia 1984, Ch. 8.

42 March to Lord Granville, 20 Mar 1872, FO58/131.

43 *TA*, 21 Mar 1872, 5.

44 Sir James Martin to Administration of the [NSW] Govt, 17 Apr 1872, Belmore Papers.

45 Lord Kimberley to the Officer Administering the [NSW] Government, 12 Apr 1872, GB PP C.509.

government". More germane to the petitioners' purpose was their expressed determination "to resist the government's attempts to collect taxes".⁴⁶ This flurry of correspondence between Levuka, Sydney and London would bear fruit within three years, with Cession. In the meantime the Viceroy, impervious to these legal and constitutional niceties, went about his business.

Secure though Ma`afu appeared in Lau, his business could not be divorced from deliberations at the centre of the empire that looked on the strange new "Kingdom of Fiji" with an uneasy mix of puzzlement and disdain. Debate in the House of Commons over the question of annexation, while cognisant of "philanthropy and the growth of cotton", remained mindful of the fact that "the British taxpayer must not be entirely forgotten". On 15 June 1872, a motion calling for the annexation of Fiji was defeated by 135 votes to 84, a result influenced by Prime Minister William Gladstone's view that such a move would be "impolitic" without a formal request from Fiji.⁴⁷ Whether such a request should come from Fiji's chiefs, or its government Ministers, or both, was not canvassed in the debate. In any case, the question was premature, given the divergence of opinion among both settlers and chiefs. The unease felt by adherents of the British Subjects' Mutual Protection Society was reflected in the outcome of a public meeting held in Levuka on 14 June. A petition, praying that the British government would grant Fiji "Protection for ten, fifteen or twenty years", was signed by "Ma`afu, King of Lau" on behalf of himself, Tui Bua and Tui Cakau. Cakobau "King of Bau" also signed, as did 120 white residents.⁴⁸ Protection, in the eyes of the settlers who signed, meant nothing more than security for their vested interests, with no provision for the welfare of the Fijians. John Thurston, who became the government's Chief Secretary in May, did not forward the petition to London until October, a delay probably inspired by his contempt for the Consul. Nevertheless, the existence of the petition meant that, whatever the British Parliament's resolutions might be, Whitehall was not done with the matter of Fiji. In view of Ma`afu's oscillating opinions about British control during cession negotiations 18 months later, the question of his motive in such a public declaration of intent at this time must be posed. He might well have realised that the kind of "protection" sought would give both chiefs and settlers much greater freedom to contrive a constitutional relationship than would be possible if annexation were to occur. At the very least Ma`afu, aware that London would show no interest, at least in the short term, felt that his own purposes would be best served by a show of common cause with his fellow chiefs and a representative body of settlers.

46 Sir Alfred Stephen to Lord Kimberley, 19 Apr 1872, No. 24, CO 201/569.

47 Hansard, 3rd Series, ccxii (1872), 25 Jun, 205–217, quoted in Ethel Drus, "The Colonial Office and the Annexation of Fiji", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, Vol. XXXII, 100.

48 For the text of the petition, see *FT*, 30 Oct 1872.

Ma`afu, Viceroy since August 1871, retained the title of Tui Lau granted him two years earlier. As we have seen, it was as Tui Lau that his authority was invoked in the enquiry into the supposed purchase of Moala. He possessed yet another dignity: Commander-in-Chief of Lau.⁴⁹ In that capacity, he made formal application for a further official appointment for his son Siale`ataongo, then aged in his late twenties and often referred to in Fiji as Charley Ma`afu. The Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy requested that Siale, already "captain commanding the military forces of the eastern group, may receive his commission as a captain in the Permanent Staff".⁵⁰ The request was granted when Cakobau formally appointed "Charles Ataogo Ma`afu" as "Captain of the Eastern Contingent of the Military and Armed Constabulary" in July.⁵¹ This appointment might also have owed something to a complaint by Robert Swanston to the Native Commissioner in Levuka. "Captain Ma`afu", Swanston wrote, "has been overstepping his duties and in so doing is likely to cause disturbance". Having arrested several people without a warrant, Siale, along with his father, was to be "notified that Charles Ma`afu is not in any way connected with the police and that he must not interfere with the duties of the police". According to David Wilkinson, Siale had promised to mend his ways and not to interfere, an undertaking that might have prompted the official appointment.⁵² Whether Ma`afu senior was moved by pride or chagrin at the curious turn of events is not recorded.

It was as Viceroy, rather than as Commander-in-Chief, that Ma`afu's name was most often heard during the short life of the Cakobau Government. During the eventful month of June 1872, the Minister of Finance proposed in Parliament that \$4,000 be granted to "His Excellency Ma`afu" in compensation for the amount of £2,000 to £3,000 "of law revenue" which the Viceroy had transferred to General Revenue. This move was purely *pro forma*, to enable debate on the proposed Budget to proceed. Ma`afu, probably to his regret, did not receive this largesse. He did appear in his full dignity, however, on Saturday 15 June when, at 9 a.m., he took his seat as President of the Privy Council. The new Chief Secretary, John Thurston, formally tendered to "His Excellency the Viceroy ... the congratulations of this Council and of so many influential chiefs of the realm".⁵³ The ritual bespoke order, stability and unity of purpose, with Ma`afu presiding over a body of chiefs and ministers who were content with their respective roles in the new order. The reverse was in fact true: when Thurston

49 See Ch. 9, n. 197.

50 Ma`afu to Minister of Lands and Works, 3 Jun 1872, CG Set 31.

51 FGG, 10 Jul 1872.

52 Robert Swanston, Memo for the Native Commissioner, 4 Jul 1872, with minute by David Wilkinson, CG Set 43. On 1 Aug 1872, Wilkinson was appointed as Native Commissioner and Chief Interpreter. FGG, 12 Aug 1872.

53 FT, 24 Jun 1872.

found time to describe the proceedings to his old friend Captain Hope, he described them as “a most extraordinary attempt to establish a Government with such incongruous elements”.⁵⁴

Incongruity or no, both Viceroy and King pursued their constitutional duties. On 20 June, they jointly wrote to the Ministers on behalf of themselves and “the Chiefs and Governors of the Provinces of Fiji”. Ostensibly, they wished “to enquire into certain administration matters which we are not well acquainted with”. They claimed to want only four “persons” to head the government: John Thurston, Robert Swanston, William Hennings and George Austin Woods. The last was criticised for too hasty an introduction of European ways, while the question of money, always a bugbear of the Cakobau Government, was raised. How were the many “officials, clerks and foreigners” in the administration to be paid? As chiefs of Fiji, the responsibility of Cakobau, Ma`afu and their peers lay with their people and their lands, especially during planting season, now upon them. They were all eager to return to their villages, but their new duties kept them in Levuka, trying to accommodate the routines and rituals of an alien administrative structure which appeared unduly large and, at least to some of the chiefs, difficult to comprehend. “Ship with big sail is easily capsized”, the chiefs reminded the Ministers. “The boom should be shortened so that we can sail on well”.⁵⁵ Wise counsel certainly, but the ministers were unlikely to pay heed. If the Viceroy, urging caution and restraint, possessed plans beyond the faithful execution of his duties, he had yet to reveal his hand.

The province of Lau, Ma`afu’s special responsibility in the new kingdom as it had been in the *Tovata*, seems, on the scanty evidence available for mid 1872, to have been administered efficiently. It was alone among the *matanitu* of Fiji in providing an increased subscription to the Wesleyan mission, which attributed reduced contributions elsewhere to “the people having to pay taxes”.⁵⁶ Towards the end of June, with Parliament still in session, Ma`afu was planning a trip to Vanuabalavu and Bua, in company with Tui Bua, in order to investigate problems brought to their notice by the wardens for Lau and Bua.⁵⁷ The Viceroy appeared likely to leave Levuka earlier than planned since, in what might well have been a tactical move, he complained of “indisposition” occasioned by “the annoyance and irritation to which His Excellency is subjected by the persistent visits of whites ... by whom he complains he is greatly harassed in his position”. Ma`afu proposed to return home to Lomaloma for recuperation, a move which so alarmed the Cabinet that several Ministers were due to meet him on 27 June in order to urge him to remain in Levuka until the close of the Parliamentary

54 Thurston to Charles Webley Hope, 6 Jul 1872, C.W. Hope, Letter-Journals (of HMS *Brisk* 1865–1874).

55 King and Viceroy to Ministers of the Fijian Government, 20 Jun 1872, CG Set 10.

56 *FT*, 20 Jun 1872.

57 Swanston to W. Hennings & F. Otway, 28 Jun 1872, CG Set 42. Details of the wardens’ concerns have not survived.

session.⁵⁸ Such harassment as Ma`afu complained about is feasible, given the fractious nature of political life in the kingdom and the need to gain the Viceroy's ear. Nevertheless, Ma`afu might have welcomed an opportunity to distance himself, literally and figuratively, from the planter oligarchy that was the Kingdom of Fiji, a first inducement, perhaps, to abrogate his vice-regal role in the pursuit of wider ambitions.

Ma`afu found Europeans in his own domain decidedly less irksome, especially since, thanks to his proclaimed support for the government, the settlers of Lau were inclined to follow suit. The same applied to their counterparts in Cakaudrove and Bua, where Ma`afu possessed great influence and whose paramount chiefs also appeared favourably disposed to Levuka. At a meeting of settlers and European residents held in Lomaloma on 18 April, the Viceroy had been unequivocal in his support for the King. He spoke with particular reference to the actions of some Vanuabalavu chiefs who sought to prevent some of their men, who had gained government approval, from working as labourers for planters on the island:

I am a member of the Government, and I will uphold that Government; the old style of going about with guns will not do, it might be Fijian fashion in past years – we have got rid of it in Tonga! Fiji is doing the same; Cakobau says 'Have this done in this province, and that in that province' and we obey his orders ... It is not good ... your trying to go against the Government and the Vunivalu. ... Lau is at peace, you cannot disturb it. ... When the men's time is up, they will return, and not sooner.⁵⁹

The ramifications of Ma`afu's participation in the government reached beyond Lau and even Fiji: Sir Alfred Stephen, Chief Justice of New South Wales, advised Consul March that "since the accession to [Cakobau's] authority of Ma`afu and the only other unwavering chief", Stephen felt "justified" in concluding that Cakobau was now "the acknowledged chief or king of the entire group or territory".⁶⁰ Stephen, versed in English constitutional law and practice, lacked acquaintance with the *Realpolitik* of Fiji. The rosy picture he painted nevertheless bore some relevance to the situation in Lau, as long as Ma`afu represented the authority, if only asserted, of "the acknowledged chief or king" of Fiji.

Even at play, if appearances can be believed, Ma`afu displayed his leadership qualities. In May, he joined in celebrations of Queen Victoria's birthday at Lomaloma, when hundreds of Fijian, Tongan and European residents of Lau gathered for a sports carnival and regatta, events favoured by "a light south-easterly breeze with a calm sea". The *Xarifa*, as well as Ma`afu's schooner *Tui*

58 Henry Freeman, Clerk of the [Executive] Council, Levuka, 26 Jun 1872, CG Set 10.

59 *FT*, 27 Apr 1872.

60 Stephen to March, 17 Apr 1872, PP [C.509].

Lau, “which latter was the flagship, were streaming from the trucks to the decks with gorgeous bunting”. In a “Handicap Sailing Boat Race”, the Viceroy, his energies apparently undiminished by his exertions in Parliament, steered a blue skiff himself, winning by five minutes. The second placegetter was “His Excellency Ma`afu’s Butcher Boat”. The day’s events, planned to offer something for everyone, included a “Swimming Race for Natives”, where the victor was “a plantation labourer”, and “climbing a greasy pole” – for labourers only – won by “a Santo man”. Festivities culminated with a dinner at the Lomaloma Hotel, described by a Lauan planter:

His Excellency the Viceroy was conspicuous throughout the day for his bonhomie and his evident desire to promote the harmony and success of the meeting; in fact, his exertions tired him so much, that he was unable to be present at the dinner. However, on the proposal of his health, the toast was duly and appropriately responded to by his son, who, amongst other things, said that his father was much pleased that his own people should have had an opportunity of witnessing and participating in the variety of amusements arranged by the whites, and that he thought meetings of the sort calculated to inspire and promote more good feeling between the different races than could be obtained in any other manner.⁶¹

While Ma`afu was demonstrating his nautical skills, the second session of Fiji’s Parliament opened in the capital. It was presided over, in the absence of King and Viceroy, by the group’s new Chief Justice, Charles St Julian, recently arrived from Sydney.⁶² When the ministry of Sydney Burt resigned a few days later, a new administration under George Austin Woods as Premier was formed. Ma`afu, having escaped the political fray in Levuka, could take his ease at home in Lomaloma, with none to gainsay either his loyalty to the Kingdom of Fiji or his place in the hearts of his Lauan people, whether Fijian, Tongan or European. The *Fiji Times*, ever alert to the slightest quiver from Lomaloma, reported at the end of May that “pigs, fowls, yams and provisions of all kinds are forbidden to be sold, as His Excellency is expecting a visit from his most gracious majesty King George of Tonga, who will of course bring a swarm of human locusts with him, which will leave the district in a state of famine”.⁶³ Although the newspaper could deride the Tongans at will, it could never ignore their presence in Lau. The expected visit appears not to have taken place.

The political fray continued in Levuka, where Swanston, one of the four “persons” favoured by Ma`afu and the King, was appointed Minister for Native

61 *FT*, 25 May 1872.

62 *ibid.*

63 *ibid.*, 31 May 1872.

Affairs. He sought advice from the Viceroy's secretary on a somewhat arcane constitutional question: "I wish to request that you will examine Ma`afu's commission and ascertain therefrom whether Ma`afu is Viceroy of Lau or of Fiji and report to the Ministry".⁶⁴ Although the secretary's reply, along with the commission itself, has not survived, it appears that Ma`afu was in fact Viceroy of Fiji, not that it mattered among the political ebbs and flows in Levuka. A more pressing concern for the new government was raising revenue: Howard Clarkson, Minister of Finance, was quick to remind provincial governors and secretaries of the necessity to gather outstanding taxes, even issuing advice about how they should be collected. The zealous minister was driven by more than his government's immediate financial needs. The "natives", Clarkson instructed the provincial secretaries, were to be reminded that "there is a power to which they are paying tribute and therefore rendering it easier for them to understand the new relations in which they stand to the government".⁶⁵ As a means of ensuring that the "natives" would be in a position to pay, Premier Woods advised the Executive Council to issue a proclamation "making it incumbent on every adult aboriginal male to plant and keep in order 200 cotton trees, or some other produce equivalent thereto".⁶⁶ During the following two years before Cession, Ma`afu was to prove efficient in the collection of taxes in Lau, albeit reluctant to see those taxes pass through his hands on the one-way journey to Levuka.

The Viceroy's private financial difficulties, for which taxation revenue would, in the near future, suggest itself as a remedy, were already upon him. George Moore, a Levuka shipwright and creditor of Ma`afu, approached Swanston to seek the Minister's aid in settling the debt. Swanston duly forwarded particulars to Biganzoli, at the same time reminding Moore that it was not the Ministry's role "to collect accounts due by Governors of Provinces or other Native Chieftains ... therefore you will understand that ... no precedent is being established."⁶⁷ There is no record of whether the debt was ever discharged. For the moment, though, the Viceroy remained beyond reproach in the performance of his public duties. At 11 a.m. on 23 July, again deputising for an absent Cakobau and with his approach heralded by "a salvo of guns from the Government Battery", Ma`afu, "dressed in a uniform of a Post Captain of the British Navy", entered the House. Empowered by His Majesty's Commission, which the Clerk of the House read to Members and visitors, all of whom were standing, the Viceroy gave Royal Assent to 20 bills, before proroguing Parliament until 1 May 1873.⁶⁸ The King's speech, couched in the formal language of administration, was a predictable summary of measures passed in the session just concluded, of which

64 Swanston to Louis Biganzoli, Secretary for Lau, 22 Jul 1873, CG Set 44.

65 Dr Clarkson to Payn, Secretary for Tailevu, 12 Jul 1872, CG Set 28. The same letter was sent to the secretaries of nine other provinces, including Lau.

66 Memorandum, George Austin Woods to Executive Council, 5 Aug 1872, CG Set 44.

67 Swanston to George Moore, 12 Jul 1872, Swanston to Biganzoli, 12 Jul 1872, CG Set 44.

68 *FT*, 27 Jul 1872.

the Polynesian Immigration Act, designed to curb many evils of the labour trade, was the most important. The King concluded by expressing satisfaction with the visits to Fiji of foreign ships of war and enlarged on the favourable prospects for the cotton industry. It was left to the Viceroy, in his own speech, to awaken the members from their slumber. After thanking them for their diligence in the performance of their Parliamentary duties, Ma`afu warmed to his theme:

You who are English men, you who are Americans, and us who are dark skinned, we see new things now, what we behold today is strange to Fiji ... I name it a good age ... I am thankful and rejoice at our unity in thus making the laws ... but ... I have something on my mind I wish to say...

I ask you whites how is it that you cannot be of one mind or agree on what we are now endeavouring to do. It appears to me that as soon as it is thought well to do anything that is good, several rise up to oppose it and prevent it being accomplished. ... We chiefs were formerly all divided amongst ourselves. I had my state and laws at Lau; there were different chiefs and different laws to leeward, and each followed his own way; but we are now one under the same laws, under the same King, and we are glad of it and desire it, but you (the white race) are divided...

I shall soon leave for Lau, but it will be to do my duty, and not as some have said to me, to go my own way. The position I hold is understood; if trouble arise in any part of the Laws, and I am required, I shall be at my post, with what help ever the Government may require, for in the matter of a government, I have but one mind, and the King of Fiji, who has appointed me to represent him here today, has but one mind, and we are agreed to stand or fall by our Government; and if you whites as a whole will not help us, we will do it ourselves in company with those few who will. We are the natives. It is our land. ... if you will resist the Government ... my mind is that we should request your Government to remove you from the group, in order to prevent evil. ... you who do not want a Government leave us, so that we may be able to each do his duties without hindrance.⁶⁹

Conscious of a different audience, the Viceroy presented a far sterner mien than he had done in Lomaloma five weeks earlier. He was reminding members that divisions among them and among the settler community generally were responsible for the failure of the previous government. There was also a hint that his expressed support for the rule of law, apparently unequivocal, would be withdrawn if dissension continued.

69 *ibid.*

The Viceroy had mentioned his imminent departure for Lau. Before leaving Levuka, he was able to enjoy some of the perquisites of high office, attending, with his wife, a "Dinner and Ball" on the evening of 23 July, when he appeared happy to respond to a toast "to the Viceroy".⁷⁰ In Vanuabalavu meanwhile, where he soon returned, prospects appeared as favourable as ever. Lomaloma had recently been declared an official port of entry for Fiji, while Mafi, Ma`afu's long-serving *matapule*, was appointed as an Assistant Native Judge in the Supreme Court.⁷¹ In keeping with his established rights in Vanuabalavu under both Fijian custom and English law, Ma`afu was acknowledged as owner of the island by the Minister for Native Affairs. Swanston expounded the government's official view in response to concerns raised about the sale by Ma`afu of a piece of ground north of Lomaloma.⁷² There was nothing new in this acknowledgement, but of greater import for Fiji's future were appeals from Swanston requesting Ma`afu's intervention in both Bua and Macuata. The former province's paramount, Tui Bua, had complained of interference by Tui Cakau in Kubulau, an island in the Yasawas subject to Tui Bua's authority. Swanston appealed to Ma`afu "as the representative of the paramount chief of that province ... not to allow an illegal act to take place". More significantly, following complaints from Europeans living on the island of Lutu in Macuata of threatening letters from Katonivere, a member of the province's chiefly family, Ma`afu was similarly addressed. Swanston wrote to the Viceroy, "you alone can easily end the illegal letters from Katonivere".⁷³ This recognition of Ma`afu as the ultimate authority in Bua and Macuata, an authority which owed nothing to his official position as Viceroy, might have raised disquiet in the minds of any European in Fiji who had taken note of the veiled hints, carefully phrased so as to accord with the solemn tone of the occasion, which were found in Ma`afu's formal address to Parliament two months earlier.

The authority of Ma`afu and other leading chiefs was not unrecognised among the settlers. A planter named Richard Philp, in describing the limitations of Cakobau's power and influence, referred to Ma`afu and Tui Cakau as "great chiefs" who were "quite independent" of the King. Philp saw the plantations of Taveuni and Vanuabalavu as the principal reasons why the two chiefs had to be brought under Cakobau's actual authority, as opposed to the legal fiction embodied in the Vunivalu's nominal role as "King" of Fiji. The formal submission of the two "great chiefs" brought the planters living in their realms into the ambit of the settler regime at Levuka. The plantations of Lau and Cakaudrove were, according to Philp, "the sources from which the funds of the

70 Swanston to Speaker of Legislative Assembly, 22 Jul 1872, CG Set 44; *FT*, 24 Jul 1872.

71 *FGG*, 10 Jul 1872; *FT*, 17 Jul 1872; Minister for Native Affairs [Swanston], Diary 1873, 25 Jul 1872, Government House Correspondence, Bundle 32.

72 Swanston to Messrs Peat Bros and Moore, per Mr Hedemann, 17 Aug 1872, CG Set 44.

73 Swanston to Ma`afu, 27 Sep and 2 Oct 1872, CG Set 42.

Fiji government were to come".⁷⁴ Although these outlying settlers, especially those in Lau, were largely prosperous, they looked askance both at their fellows in Levuka and at what they saw as the elaborate and increasingly irrelevant facade of constitutional government. With the settlers in Lau, as with the Fijians and Tongans living there, it was Ma`afu's authority, rather than Cakobau's, that counted in the end.

The question of British annexation loomed ever larger over these concerns. Chief Secretary John Thurston, who favoured Cession as the least of several evils, protested to the Colonial Office over a circular despatch submitted to the governors of the Australian colonies, instructing them to treat the government in Fiji as a *de facto* administration. How, Thurston remonstrated, could this direction "be reconciled with the rights of justice or the established principles of International Law?"⁷⁵ With this principle in mind, he wrote in a less diplomatic vein to Captain Hope: "If England wants Fiji let her take it; if not do not let her rob the chiefs of their rights".⁷⁶ Thurston saw Cession as the best means of protecting the indigenous rights of the chiefs in the face of exigent settlers intent on nothing more than their own interests.

Settler discontent manifested itself in a series of meetings held in Levuka in December 1872. At the largest gathering, held at Keyse's Hotel, a resolution was passed to re-establish the British Subjects' Mutual Protection Society "to overturn a usurping Ministry by armed force, if necessary". The delegates expressed the view that the present government had plunged the country heavily into debt, a situation that would influence the Home government against annexation. After meeting for two days, 46 settlers pledged themselves "to mutual assistance in our determination to depose the present Government with a view to the future annexation of Fiji to Great Britain". According to a "Secret Circular", an oath of secrecy was taken and arrangements made for members of the new Society to visit settlers on outlying parts of Fiji in order to explain their purpose and gather support.⁷⁷

The revival of the British Subjects' Mutual Protection Society, and the resolutions adopted by the meeting at Keyse's Hotel, quickly involved Ma`afu, Cakobau and Tui Cakau in the spiralling demands for constitutional change. The day after the meeting concluded, a delegation of Society members waited on Thurston with a resolution, passed at the meeting, "requesting the King to annul the present Constitution". Thurston had already visited Bau to discuss

74 Richard Philp, *Diary*, Oct 1872, unpaginated.

75 Thurston to CO, 16 Dec 1872, CG Set 23. See also Thurston to Hope, 11 Oct 1872, Letter-Journals III.

76 Thurston to Hope, 24 Nov 1872, CG Set 23.

77 "Secret Circular inviting to the formation of a British Subjects' Mutual Protection Society" and "Memoranda for the Information of Settlers on the Rewa", Frederick J. Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea*, London 1889, Appendix G, 306–309.

possible changes with Cakobau and while "the necessity for some reform was acknowledged", the King would not entertain annulment of the Constitution. Such a course would, according to Thurston, accede to the wishes "of a small body of whites who appeared to be animated with a general spirit of unrest". Thurston announced that he would consult Ma`afu and Tui Cakau concerning the best means of effecting reform, so that he could "advise the King as to the best course to pursue".⁷⁸ At year's end, the questions of constitutional reform and annexation remained far from resolution.

Thurston believed that the settlers must accept the present government, as the principal chiefs had done, or the way should be made clear for annexation. He preferred annexation principally in order to "save the natives from the grasping proclivities and arrogance of our own dear race, or the rascals of it".⁷⁹ Thurston saw the present debt-ridden government as manifestly unsuited to the country it purported to govern: "The idea of a Ministry in this country ruling by a majority or not at all is simply absurd". In the likely event that a loan could be raised in Australia, "every knave in the place would enter the lists, and try to lay hands on the Treasurer's Chest". With Whitehall seemingly uninterested in annexation, Thurston would direct his energies towards amending or abrogating the Constitution. He was prepared to travel to London with Ma`afu and Ratu Epli Nailatikau, Cakobau's eldest son, in order to devise the terms of Cession, if only Whitehall would say the word.⁸⁰ The Commercial Agent for Fiji in Sydney, Carl Sahl, while visiting London, interviewed the Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, as well as Lord Kimberley and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies. Following these consultations, Sahl advised Thurston that recognition would depend on how well the Fijian government maintained law and order, with particular reference to control of the labour trade from Melanesia. Whatever hopes Whitehall entertained that the regime in Levuka might satisfy requirements were doomed in the face of factional rivalry among the settlers, hostility from Consul March and Cakobau's lack of real authority beyond central Fiji.⁸¹

Ma`afu's absence from Levuka meant that his voice was not heard in the quickening debate over annexation. While the *Fiji Times* reported "general sympathy in favour of the project", it spoke only for part of the settler community, as indeed did the "Secret Circular", which appeared on 20 January.⁸² Chief Justice Charles St Julian revealed both perspicacity and restraint in his

78 *FT*, 21 Dec 1872.

79 Thurston to Hope, 11 Oct 1872, Letter-Journals III.

80 *ibid.*

81 For discussions of Whitehall's evolving attitude towards annexation, see Ethel Drus, "The Colonial Office and the Annexation of Fiji", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, Vol. XXXII, 87–110; W.P. Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands*, Ch. 6.

82 *FT*, 2 Jan 1873.

comments on the constitutional question. He regarded petitions as “worthless” and considered unconditional annexation, without the consent of chiefs and people, as dangerous and likely to provoke a “race war”. Only through a proper consultative process, St Julian believed, could serious difficulties be avoided.⁸³ Considering settler attitudes manifested in the “Secret Circular”, there was small prospect that such a process would occur. In Britain meanwhile, opinion appeared to be moving, however slowly, towards a more favourable view of Cession. General William Smythe, whose recommendations against annexation had been accepted by Whitehall more than a decade earlier, had altered his opinion. He now saw the fractious nature of the settler community, and the lack of real authority vested in the British Consul, as reasons why Whitehall should make a move.⁸⁴ Former Consul March, who had returned to Britain in January, recognised that threats of armed resistance among some settler groups could not continue. His impractical solution would involve a return to the *status quo* before extensive European settlement:

Granted that no adequate government exists in Fiji, the native race should be left to govern itself by its own laws and custom, improved from time to time by the example and teaching of civilization. Cakobau would then return to the position he has always held and govern the western portion of Fiji, whilst Ma`afu and Tui Cakau would hold sway as formerly over the Windward Islands.⁸⁵

Aside from the fact that Cakobau had never “governed” all of western Fiji, March ignored the obvious implications of such a scenario. Left to his own devices in Lau and with no central “government”, however inadequate, in Levuka, Ma`afu would set his sights on an early confrontation with Cakobau, with the mastery of Fiji as the prize.

Following his consultation, which he later falsely claimed to be secret, with Ma`afu and Tui Cakau at Lomaloma, Thurston was authorised by the King “to put a question of Cession direct to Her Britannic Majesty’s Government”.⁸⁶ He did so, asking the Foreign Office whether, in the event of a renewed offer from the King and people of Fiji, the government would “entertain a proposal ... to cede the Kingdom to Her Britannic Majesty”.⁸⁷ Thurston also forwarded a

83 Charles St Julian to Sir Alfred Stephen, 31 Jan 1873, CO 83/5.

84 General W.J. Smythe to Mr McArthur, 12 Feb 1873, cited in Thomas McCullagh, *Sir William McArthur KCMG, a Biography, religious, parliamentary, municipal, commercial*, London 1891, 158–159.

85 Memorandum by Edward March, London, 7 March 1873, FO58/135.

86 Thurston to James Calvert, 31 Jan 1873, quoted in McCullagh, 158. See also Thurston to Lord Granville, 1 Feb 1873, CG Set 23; Thurston to Francis Tait, c. Jan 1873, quoted in Tait to Rev. W.B. Boyce, 24 Feb 1873, McCullagh 157–158. Thurston later claimed that his mission to Lomaloma was secret (Thurston to Sir Arthur Gordon, 25 Nov 1880, Stanmore Papers). In fact, the reasons for his return to Levuka were reported in the press. (*FT*, 22 Jan 1873).

87 Thurston to Granville, 31 Jan 1873, FO58/138.

confidential despatch to Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor of New South Wales, describing the "imminent danger ... of a collision between the white settlers ... and the natives". He referred to the "oppression and spoliation" being visited upon the Fijians, describing the small settler community as "largely ... insolvent planters who are exerting themselves to the utmost to destroy the Government as the readiest way of escaping from their liabilities and from the consequences of their acts of tyranny and murder". Thurston accurately ascribed the disfavour in which the government was held to efforts made by the regime to enforce civil law "against insolvent planters" and especially to raise taxes. The country moreover was overburdened with an executive, judicial and bureaucratic structure accurately described by Robinson as "preposterously large for the small Foreign Community which does not exceed 2,000 in number".⁸⁸ With more voices supporting annexation being raised in London and with Cakobau favourably disposed, a resolution of Fiji's constitutional dilemma might have appeared possible. Ma`afu remained the wild card: although Thurston had consulted both him and Tui Cakau, the views of the Viceroy, unlike those of the King, remained unknown.

Captain Hope, ever an acute observer, accurately reviewed the role of the Windward chiefs: "It is a question whether the proud Tongan, Ma`afu ... or the crafty Tui Cakau of Vanua Levu, could continue their submission to the Fiji Constitution. While it is quite certain that if they did not, the Minister would have no power to coerce them".⁸⁹ Hope saw annexation as the only feasible solution. It must nevertheless have been evident, during these early months of 1873, that despite the quickening tenor of debate, no move in that direction was likely in the short term. What, in the meantime, was occupying the attention of "the proud Tongan, Ma`afu"? He was, in the words of the Warden for Lau, William Hennings, contemplating "the appointment of a gentleman" to the position of Secretary for Lau, vacant since Louis Biganzoli's resignation the previous October.⁹⁰ Ma`afu, who wanted Biganzoli back, refused to accept Swanston's appointee, John Giblin and finally announced in April that one George Bayley had been chosen. Hennings wrote to Bayley, "His Excellency would be glad of your additional services as Private Secretary".⁹¹ Earlier that month Giblin, who insisted that he had been appointed by the King, arrived in Lomaloma and called on the Viceroy.⁹² Ma`afu officially appointed Bayley the day

88 Confidential Despatch from Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor of New South Wales, to the Earl of Kimberley, 27 Jan 1873, quoted in G.C. Henderson, ed., *The Evolution of Government in Fiji*, Sydney 1935, 58–64.

89 Memorandum on the State of Affairs in the Fiji Islands, 17 Jan 1873, Hope Letter-Journals.

90 Hennings to Swanston, 29 Jan 1873, CG Set 41. See also Swanston to Biganzoli, 7 Oct 1872, Swanston to Hennings, 7 Oct 1872, CG Set 42; Hennings to Giblin, 17 Apr 1873, CG Set 1.

91 Hennings to George Bayley, 7 Apr 1873, CG Set 10. See also Swanston to Hennings, 30 Jan 1873, Swanston to Ma`afu, 4 Mar 1873, Swanston to John Giblin, 4 Mar 1873, CG Set 42; Giblin to Swanston, 20 Jan 1873, Giblin to Woods, 17 May 1873, CG Set 41.

92 Giblin to Swanston, 21 Apr 1873, Giblin to Bayley, 21 Apr 1873, CG Set 1.

following Giblin's arrival, while nominating his previous secretary, Biganzoli, as Stipendiary Magistrate for Moala.⁹³ During this period, Ma`afu was requested to put his house in order, quite literally: the Minister for Native Affairs wrote that, while the government had erected "the Mess room" at Lomaloma, "no attempt appears to have been made by Your Excellency to build your own residence". He was urged to do so "forthwith".⁹⁴

None of these housekeeping matters can shed any light on the Viceroy's views on Fiji's constitutional debate. There are moreover indications that his attention was engaged with the perennial problem of his finances. He was already heavily in debt, having owed the trading firm of J. Levick and Co. £225 since January 1872. Because the question of Ma`afu's debts was to be linked, for the rest of his life, to that of tax collection in Lau, notice should be made of an agreement concerning the Lauan taxes, drawn up between Howard Clarkson and William Hennings early in 1873. Under the agreement, Hennings was authorised to collect all taxes in Lau, whether in money, oil or other produce, for the rest of the year. He was also to purchase all other coconut oil produced in Lau, "paying for the same in approved bills on Sydney", at rates varying between 15 and 18 shillings per ton. Copra also was to be purchased "at fair market value". Most crucially, Article Four of the agreement provided "That Mr Hennings be authorised to pay the Viceroy's salary and Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba's salary out of said proceeds before handing the moneys to the Minister of Finance".⁹⁵ Hennings, long a creditor of Ma`afu, sought, at the request of Ma`afu's then secretary Biganzoli and of Swanston, to settle the debt to Levicks with a draft payable at a Sydney bank. Ma`afu had apparently arranged to pay in copra, which Hennings undertook to collect on behalf of Levicks, although he reported in March 1873 that he had been unable to do so.⁹⁶ In the meantime, Ratu Tevita "took 2½ tons of oil belonging to the Government at Lakeba and sold it to [a settler]".⁹⁷ The Ministry of Finance in Levuka was informed that Ma`afu's schooner *Tui Lau* had collected a cargo of oil and copra at Moala, Matuku and Totoya from the natives "on account of taxes for the Government, and that the said cargo had been sold at Levuka, and no returns had been made thereof to the Government". Furthermore, two shipments of produce, "collected by the natives for their taxes", had been conveyed to Levuka and sold to the trading firm of Messrs Hedemann. Howard Clarkson wrote diplomatically of "a misunderstanding ... on the part of His Excellency the Viceroy as to his

93 Hennings to Thurston, 26 Feb 1873, CG Set 10; Memorandum from the Cabinet to the Honorable the Minister for Native Affairs at Navunisimaloa, Province of Ra, 19 May 1873, CG Set 3.

94 Woods, Minister for Native Affairs, to HE the Viceroy, 4 Mar 1873, CG Set 43.

95 Agreement respecting the Windward Taxes, Hon. Minister of Finance and F. & W. Hennings, January 4, 1873, *FT*, 17 June 1874.

96 Hennings to C.W. Drury, 14 Mar 1873, CG Set 27.

97 *ibid.*

right of Disposition of Taxes received from Natives of his Province".⁹⁸ When an officer of the Ministry called at Lomaloma to investigate the sale of the cargo from the Moala group, Ma`afu "in a very decisive manner said it was not true", at the same time indicating his annoyance that "the Government should interview his subordinates in regard to the amount of taxes collected". The *Tui Lau* had indeed brought a cargo to Lomaloma, the Viceroy vouchsafed, but "it had nothing to do with taxes", being rather destined to discharge the debts of both himself and Tevita Uluilakeba to Levick Brothers. Hennings confirmed his assertions.⁹⁹ To cloud the issue further, John Giblin, in his capacity as the new Secretary of Lau, formally advised the Ministry that because all the Lauan taxes had been paid in oil and copra, and bearing in mind the "difficulties attending to the collection of same, no revenue can be paid into the Treasury from ... Lau until after 1st May next".¹⁰⁰

This misappropriation of taxation revenue would have come as no surprise to any who took notice of Ma`afu's stated views on the principle of taxation, and indeed of his spending habits. The *Fiji Times*, having been "informed that Ma`afu had declined to submit any taxes to Levuka" and was moreover demanding his salary, soon reported a "rumour" that, during Thurston's visit to Lomaloma, Ma`afu had announced that he would not pay taxes "as he was about to purchase a large vessel, and wanted the money".¹⁰¹ Ma`afu had indeed requested that an amount of £24 from his salary be forwarded to him at Lomaloma, while letting down his guard to the extent of remarking to the Governor of Central Province "that we should not pay in any taxes at all".¹⁰² His finances were enhanced by more than his salary and his booty from tax collections, since in December 1872, the Sydney firm of Rabone Feez had forwarded him a payment of £600, although for what purpose is not known.¹⁰³ The Melbourne *Argus*, reporting a visit to the Chief Secretary of Victoria by a deputation of directors of the Polynesia Company, noted that one of the directors, Dr Macartney, had persuaded Ma`afu "to fall in with Cakobau's views". In return, Ma`afu received £800 a year "in consequence of surrendering his claims, so that now for the first time Cakobau became really sovereign of the islands", a reference to Ma`afu's salary.¹⁰⁴ It is noteworthy that during this period of financial uncertainty, Ma`afu was careful to remain on good terms with the Wesleyan missionaries. He authorised Hennings to pay Isaac Rooney, the missionary stationed at Lomaloma, the sum of £31-15-0, an amount raised on the small islands of Vatoa and Vanua Vatu

98 Howard Clarkson, Treasurer, to Drury, 28 Feb 1873, CG Set 10.

99 C.W. Drury to Clarkson, 17 Mar 1873, Hennings to Drury, 14 Mar 1873, CG Set 27.

100 John Giblin to Minister of Finance, 14 Mar 1873, CG Set 43.

101 *FT*, 8 Feb 1873. See also *ibid.*, 25 Jan 1873.

102 Charles Ma`afu to Minister for Native Affairs, 17 Feb 1873, CG Set 31; Nathaniel Chalmers, Secretary of Central Province to Acting Minister of Native Affairs, 15 Mar 1873, CG Set 41.

103 Rabone Feez to Ma`afu, 10 Dec 1872, BC Papers.

104 *TA*, 9 Jan 1872, 6.

in central Lau. Rooney himself recorded that Parliament had “voted the Vatoa taxes for 1872 in payment”.¹⁰⁵ While Ma`afu continued to receive rents for many other leased lands in Lau, the picture that emerges during early 1873 reveals a chief who, tempted by *la dolce vita* to which his position of power had long since opened a door, was ready to grasp at all financial straws, including those still drifting in the wind.

Immersed as he was during these days in the minutiae of provincial administration, the Viceroy could not avoid involvement in events elsewhere in Fiji. In February 1873, planter William Burnes, his wife and children were murdered on their plantation at Vunisamaloa on the Ba River in north-western Viti Levu. The perpetrators, Fijians from the interior, were apparently motivated by rumours that the *taukei* would be killed if annexation were to occur.¹⁰⁶ With some local settlers threatening armed rebellion against Levuka, Thurston lost no time in accompanying Major W. Fitzgerald and 50 soldiers to the Ba river mouth in March. Ma`afu offered to send all his men and even to come himself “to meet any whites in arms against the Matanitu”.¹⁰⁷ While the presence of HMS *Dido* soon quelled any thought of settler rebellion in the area, the Viceroy’s intentions remained obscure during growing settler disaffection with the regime in Levuka. Planters in Ba, Nadi and Nadroga, provinces in western Viti Levu, had formed an “organised resistance” which, according to one of the British Commissioners appointed later that year, was only quelled by the swift intervention of the *Dido*’s commander, Captain William Chapman.¹⁰⁸ Premier Woods, writing in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, advised Ma`afu of the *Dido*’s successful intervention. Proposing, as a show of force, to lead the Western Contingent on a march through the mountains, to commence on 19 May, Woods requested Ma`afu to attend in person “if convenient”, in order to command the force.¹⁰⁹ But the Viceroy, Commander-in Chief or no, had already “declined to become involved in the Viti Levu wars”, thereby drawing a complaint from the Premier for his failure to respond to a request for the services of Captain Ma`afu, the Viceroy’s son, and one company of the Lau Regiment for field service in Viti Levu.¹¹⁰ An Australian newspaper meanwhile reported “rumours of trouble” likely to arise with Ma`afu who, “instead of raising legitimate revenues, and expending such revenues in a legitimate manner, had been coercing his dependents into contributions for the purchase of vessels to be presented to King George”. Succession to the throne of Tonga, as well as armed suppression of rebellious

105 Minute by Isaac Rooney, Ma`afu to Hennings, 8 Jan 1873, HP.

106 *FT*, 18 Dec 1872, 18 Jan, 8–9 Feb 1873.

107 Thurston to Swanston, c. Mar 1873, CG Set 23. See also G.H.W. Markham, *Diary*, 8 Feb 1873.

108 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, 3.

109 Woods to Ma`afu, 24 Apr 1873, CG Set 35.

110 G.R. Humphrey to Minister for NA, 10 Apr 1873, CG Set 41; Woods to Ma`afu, 24 Apr 1873, CG Set 33.

whites in Viti Levu, were said to be on Ma`afu's mind.¹¹¹ Rumours aside, the *Fiji Times* pointedly asked why, with Cakobau occupied with "war" in Ba and Rewa and "another little affair" looming in Kadavu, no help was forthcoming from the Viceroy and Tui Cakau. "In the time after Ma`afu joined the Government, we saw Tongan troops at Levuka, but now where are they?" Ma`afu had expressed loyalty and solidarity in the past, but now, in late April, "it is a significant fact that there is [no] aid from Ma`afu, neither in taxes nor arms. Why is this?"¹¹²

Part of the answer lay in the nature of the still essentially frontier society, among the settlers, existing in Fiji. Planters, heavily dependent on the profits of cotton cultivation, had formed a government whose aim was to usurp ultimate power in the islands from the few powerful chiefs in whose hands it was concentrated. With their salaries, their grandiose titles and their hopes of consolidating their power within the new regime, Cakobau, Ma`afu, Tui Cakau and the other great chiefs had been seduced into compliance. Yet such compliance could only be transient. Some of the settlers sought to endow their regime with at least an air of permanence, while others looked to annexation as the best means of securing their ascendancy, fraught as it was with the perils of looming confrontation. There existed in the minds of most of members of the fractious settler society a notion of race pre-eminence, such as that articulated in the pages of the *Fiji Times*:

True to the instincts of the Anglo-Saxon race we have come to this ultima thule of creation; to bring a savage race within the pale, and to partake of the benefits of our civilization; let us hope to bring them beneath the sway of the British sceptre, and thus to open up more fully a new and profitable field for British enterprise.¹¹³

Among the settlers, there was at least one who opposed this view: John Thurston, who believed that the rights of Fijians in their own country had to be recognised. The increasing polarisation of the settler community came at a time when both sides were looking to annexation as the only viable solution and when two Fijian chiefs, however imposing their titles in the new administration, were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Kingdom of Fiji.

The *Fiji Times*, writing in May of an "approaching crisis", reminded its readers of the "immense importance" of the position of Ma`afu and Tui Cakau:

In what relationship do they stand, friendly or otherwise; if friendly then why have not the taxes been enforced in those districts, and likewise the salaries of the native officials been paid? If unfriendly, what steps have been taken, or what negotiations have been entered into to bring back

111 *SMH* correspondent, quoted in *FT*, 9 Apr 1873.

112 *FT*, 30 Apr 1873.

113 *FT*, 24 May 1873.

the recalcitrant natives to their allegiance? It will be remembered that with the exception of £1300 from Cakaudrovi there have not been any taxes paid from the windward islands for ... nine months.

Everyone, according to the editor, was aware of "rumours ... of disaffection" emanating from Lau.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, in a final reply to the request for his personal attendance and for the despatch of a Lau contingent to central Viti Levu, the Viceroy announced plans to visit Levuka "at an early date" to consider what might be done about rebellious Europeans "at Ba and elsewhere". Thurston, believing Ma`afu to be influenced by "pernicious advice" in Lau, suggested that Swanston should join the Cabinet. In that way, the Minister could proffer advice on how best to deal with Ma`afu.¹¹⁵ Even in Australia, the press warned of "rumours of troubles likely to arise with Ma`afu, who has not given such support to the Government as he promised since he found that its effects have been to seriously reduce his dignity and power". Ma`afu had withheld tax revenue to purchase vessels for Tupou, vessels which might be his after Tupou's death, since Ma`afu had some prospect of succeeding his cousin. "A collision between Cakobau and his Viceroy is far from improbable", the *Sydney Morning Herald* declared.¹¹⁶ Thurston remained well aware that the government depended more on the Viceroy's support than the Viceroy gained from his adhesion to the regime. For this reason, there could well have been substance to the persistent "rumours".

The Chief Secretary was right: the rumours were not unfounded. A meeting at Lomaloma on 17 May, attended by a majority of the planters and European settlers of Lau, formally expressed "its entire dissatisfaction with the acts of the present government". After waiting in the wings while the resolution was passed, Ma`afu joined the settlers, announcing that his views "entirely" coincided with theirs. With Parliament about to reconvene in Levuka, the Viceroy promised to do what lay in his power "to effect an alteration".¹¹⁷ As one visitor to Fiji observed, the regime in Levuka would ignore Ma`afu's views at its peril.¹¹⁸ In the event, Ma`afu could not, or more likely would not, effect any change. When Parliament reassembled on 31 May, with the King absent in Rewa, the Speech from the Throne, read by Chief Justice St Julian, envisaged constitutional amendments designed to increase the Fijians' electoral rights.¹¹⁹ However, when the government lost a vote to authorise an investigation of its parlous finances, it was evident that its opponents were numerically stronger and would frustrate any reform. The King, ignorant of constitutional usage, declined to accept the subsequent resignation of his ministers and, doubtless acting on a quiet word

114 *ibid.*, 21 May 1873.

115 Memorandum from the Cabinet to ... Minister for Native Affairs, 19 May 1873.

116 *SMH*, quoted in *FT*, 9 Apr 1874.

117 *FT*, 4 Jun 1873.

118 Vindex [George William Rusden], *Fiji: its Political Aspect 1870–1873*, Levuka 1873, 97.

119 VPLA (iii), 31 May 1873, CG Set 6.

of advice, dissolved the House. The Viceroy meanwhile, presiding in the Privy Council, appeared to do nothing to honour his commitment made at Lomaloma. From that place John Giblin, the official if thwarted secretary for Lau, attempted to exercise his duties in the face of the Viceroy's refusal to recognise him. Giblin wrote to the Treasurer complaining of William Hennings' right to collect taxes in the province. Although informed by Hennings that \$965 had been collected and forwarded to the Treasury, Giblin would not be mollified:

During my stay at Lomaloma I saw nine casks of oil delivered at ... Hennings' store by the master of the ketch "Tui Nayau" as Taxes and was then told by the said master that the people of Lakeba and the surrounding islands had had their taxes ready for some time and were but waiting the arrival of a vessel with the necessary casks to deliver it ... to the officer appointed to receive it.

Whilst on ... Cicia with Ratu Tevita the Lieutenant Governor the natives informed me that the oil was lying ready for collection in every town on the island ... I consider it my duty as Secretary for Lau to remark that I consider the person charged with the collection of taxes in Lau has been very remiss in his duty for had the matter been properly attended to a large amount of revenue would ere this have been received from the Province by Government.¹²⁰

Hennings was quick to defend himself to the Chief Secretary, declaring that after taxes were collected, "it was distinctly understood that before my remittance to Treasury was made, the several salaries due here should be paid".¹²¹ Seemingly sure of his ground, he advised Clarkson the following month that he had collected £192-13-4 in taxes "from the natives of the Windward Isles" and that he had "acquainted His Excellency the Viceroy ... that the above amount is at His Excellency's disposal as an instalment of his salary". Hennings might have added "in settlement of His Excellency's account at my store" since, according to a minute added to his letter, the amount in question was to be credited to that account.¹²² Hennings seems to have withdrawn from tax collection after the rebuke from Thurston, even sending his account books to Carl Sahl, who saw that they were "exact and thoroughly well kept". Asked by Hennings to resume his role as collector of Lauan taxes, Sahl claimed that much of the collected tax produce never reached Ma`afu or his agents, being paid directly to the trader.¹²³ If that were true, it must have been with Tui Lau's compliance. Even rents from "Government Waste Lands" in the province, which had been paid to Ma`afu as Tui Lau during the days of the *Tovata*, continued to be so directed despite their

120 John B. Giblin to Treasurer, 12 Jun 1873, CG Set 31. See also *FT*, 14 Jun 1873.

121 Hennings to Thurston, 3 Jun 1873, CG Set 10.

122 Hennings to Clarkson, Treasurer, 23 Jul 1873, minute by David Wilkinson, CG Set 27.

123 James G. Goodenough, *Journal*, 25 Jan 1874.

now being “an asset of the Crown”. All the Treasurer could do was to request Hennings to obtain acknowledgement and a receipt from Ma`afu.¹²⁴ Thurston, seemingly still optimistic, advised Sahl that he was “expecting [Ma`afu and Tui Cakau] in Levuka daily to confer with Ministers upon the present state of affairs”.¹²⁵ This flurry of correspondence enunciated a recurring theme in Ma`afu’s administration of Lau: the efficient collection of taxation revenue, and its equally efficient disbursement within the province, always to the chagrin of those in power in Levuka.

The Treasury’s pathetic request for a receipt bears eloquent witness to its frustration, not to say impotence, in dealing with the black hole of Lauan taxes. Ma`afu’s long-standing account at Hennings’ store in Lomaloma had metamorphosed into an all-engulfing maw from which Levuka could hope to extract nothing. The Treasury, moreover, was effectively empty: Woods had borrowed money to pay ministerial salaries while, according to an Australian newspaper, the Fijian government now depended “on how long its credit can hold out in Australia and New Zealand”.¹²⁶ That period was likely to be short, as long as settlers in Fiji remained opposed to an administration they believed had been established to squeeze taxes from them. While most of the government’s supporters were insolvent, almost all settlers, whatever their views of the administration, were principally motivated by self-interest. In the words of one among them who held a mirror, if not to their souls, at least to their overdrafts, “the grasping and rapacity of the Europeans is something quite marvellous”.¹²⁷

During this period, there arose some prospect of a solution when Cabinet announced the appointment of two Commissioners to investigate the situation in Fiji.¹²⁸ They were Edgar Leopold (Leo) Layard, who had been appointed the previous January as British Consul, and Captain James Goodenough, Commodore of the Royal Navy’s Australia Station. Four possible courses of action were envisaged: investing the Consul with magisterial powers over British subjects in Fiji, recognising the existing government, establishing a British protectorate, or outright annexation. The last option, which would involve making Fiji a Crown Colony, was opposed by Prime Minister Gladstone but favoured by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley.¹²⁹ Whatever decision the Commissioners eventually made would depend above all on the attitude of the chiefs, including of course the Viceroy. While one missionary castigated the chiefs over their adherence to the regime for the sake of the baubles of office, his admonition was already

124 Patrick Power to Minister of Finance, 28 Jul 1873, minute by Clarkson, CG Set 27.

125 Thurston to Sahl, 21 Jun 1873, CG Set 23.

126 *TA*, 17 Jun 1873.

127 Thurston to Hope, 28 Jul 1873, Letter-Journals III.

128 Cabinet minute, 7 Jun 1873, Gladstone Papers 44641/128, quoted in W.D. McIntyre, “New Light on Commodore Goodenough’s Mission to Fiji 1873–74”, *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 10, No. 39, Nov 1962, n. 12, 272.

129 *PP*, 1873, xlili, (HC 337), 1 et seq.

somewhat dated.¹³⁰ The great chiefs of Fiji, despite their seats in Parliament, their official titles and their uniforms, had become disillusioned with the cupidity and naked self-interest of their self-appointed masters. While that disillusion had yet to affect the functions of government, at least some of the planter oligarchy in Levuka appeared astonished to learn that the two principal chiefly supporters of the King, namely the Viceroy and Tui Cakau, had seceded from the government.

On Saturday 28 June, at a meeting of the Cakaudrove Provincial Council at Somosomo, Tui Cakau announced, through the Warden for Taveuni, Henry Parsons, that he had "in conjunction with the Viceroy seceded from the Fijian government. He gave no reasons for having taken this step". Parsons was surprised at the suddenness of Tui Cakau's actions, since "up to the very day he seceded he assisted me all in his power, in the discharge of my duties".¹³¹ With the meeting abandoned, the secretary hurried down to Levuka with the news, arriving with Ma`afu aboard the *Xarifa* on 3 July. The same evening, Ma`afu climbed aboard HMS *Dido*, fortuitously at anchor off Levuka, in order to consult Captain Chapman. While Ma`afu's intentions beyond the act of secession were unknown, much could be inferred from the presence of certain "visitors" then encamped in his and Tui Cakau's domains. When Parsons made his announcement at Somosomo, Ma`afu was waiting on board the *Xarifa*, riding at anchor offshore. Tui Cakau, although not noticed by two Justices of the Peace who had travelled from Levuka for the meeting, was possibly on board as well. More significantly, some 150 Tongan "visitors" were camped on shore, with the same number reportedly present at Lomaloma. To the Taveuni correspondent of the *Fiji Times*, all of this came as no surprise, in view of the "rumours" which had long been "flying about". For the government to attempt to compel the chiefs to withdraw their secession "would be absolute madness", opined the correspondent. "There is no doubt Ma`afu means mischief now ... with the assistance of Tui Cakau, whom he appears to lead by the nose, he will try his best to upset the government, at any rate as far as this part of the group is concerned". The chiefs' principal motivation was supposedly their disquiet over the prospect of one of Cakobau's sons succeeding him as King. The settlers in Cakaudrove were expected to side with Tui Cakau.¹³²

Ma`afu's early visit to the *Dido* involved more than a social call, with settler Edward Turpin claiming that Captain Chapman had "promised to protect Ma`afu from the Government".¹³³ Whatever truth lay behind that assertion, Ma`afu certainly had more than protection on his mind. Less than a week after

130 Rooke to Benjamin Chapman, 18 Jun 1873, MOM 103.

131 Henry Parsons to Thurston, Acting Minister for Native Affairs, 3 Jul 1873, CG Set 10.

132 *FT*, 9 Jul 1873.

133 Edwin J. Turpin, Diary, 5 Jul 1873, NAF.

meeting Chapman, he called at the Levuka store of German trader Frederick Hedemann. There, he signed an agreement for the supply of 200 rifles and 500 rounds of ammunition, to be ordered from Hamburg on account. The rifles cost £6 each, with ammunition “at current market price”. Payment was to be made in cash, coconut or copra within six months of delivery, which would be taken at Lomaloma.¹³⁴ While this agreement, fraught with implications following Ma`afu’s secession, remained secret, the two chiefs’ secession was public knowledge.¹³⁵ According to the *Fiji Times*, “the attitude of [Ma`afu and Tui Cakau] has been almost neutral, they have stood aloof from participation in the Government, have not paid their taxes, nor been paid their salaries”. Yet the editor, tongue in cheek as so often, excused the two chiefs’ lack of enthusiasm, owing to the “liabilities” with which Fiji was burdened. Ma`afu, readers were tactfully reminded, was “a man who knows the meaning of borrowing” and who could see moreover “that the resources of the country are overtaxed, and that there has been almost a cessation of immigration and influx of capital for private enterprise”. Discarding the cloak of irony, the editor articulated the dilemma now confronting Fiji:

Ma`afu is imbued with Tongan intelligence and Tongan hauteur. The progress of Tongan influence and ... power in Fiji has been such as to cause Bau to look upon Lau ... with considerable jealousy, and Ma`afu has felt that he was the rival of Bau, if not the superior of Cakobau. When ... Cakobau [was] proclaimed ... king, and Ma`afu was led to take allegiance to him, it was not unlikely that a man of Ma`afu’s foresight and political strength would, upon seeing that ... the country [was] in debt without any prospect of relief, secede from the Government and endeavour to retain his and ... Tui Cakau’s territory intact. ... Bau is too weak to coerce them, to compel their submission by force of arms.¹³⁶

Was it coincidence only that these words were published on the very day Ma`afu placed his order for the rifles?

Swanston, aware that Ma`afu was procuring arms, was not concerned, believing that “pressure could be placed on Ma`afu at any time to check any harmful action”.¹³⁷ Whatever his immediate plans, Ma`afu sailed that day for Savusavu, having resisted pleas from government ministers to withdraw his secession. He did promise that, in the event of hostilities, he would protect the lives and property of white settlers in his domains.¹³⁸ Missionary Frederick Langham,

134 Agreement, 9 Jul 1873, between Ma`afu Tui Lau and Frederick Caesar Hedemann, Hedemann vs Ma`afu papers, CG Set 31.

135 For a discussion of the agreement and its aftermath at the time of Cession, see John Spurway, “‘Ma`afu’s word is in the hills’: the role of Tui Lau in the Cession of Fiji”, *JPH*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2004, 3–21.

136 *FT*, 9 Jul 1873.

137 Swanston to Editor, *FT*, 20 Sep 1889 (copy), Swanston Journal, No. 2.

138 *ibid.*, 12 Jul 1873.

still stationed at Bau, claimed to have foreseen the secession and noted that many more chiefs were likely to support Ma`afu than would remain loyal to the King. The chiefs had been "sour and irritated almost beyond endurance by many things" since the "new regime" was established. Particular chiefly grievances included loss of influence and the exactions of taxation.¹³⁹ Yet within two days, Langham reported, Ma`afu had been indirectly informed by some ministers "that he must either continue as viceroy or be taken into custody as a Rebel". In the latter case, he would probably be executed the same day. The missionary was not sanguine concerning Ma`afu's intentions: "It will now be simply a question of time or circumstances with him".¹⁴⁰

With Ma`afu having retired from Levuka, a curious public debate ensued among the European community, and doubtless among many Fijians as well, concerning the Viceroy's intentions. Settler Duncan Murray, secretary to a Nadroga chief, declared that the secession would "hasten the decadence" of both supporters and opponents of the government, given the deleterious effect it would have on Fiji's economic prospects.¹⁴¹ Astonishingly, the *Fiji Gazette*, ever at odds with the *Fiji Times*, claimed that two days before Ma`afu's departure, government ministers had "cleared all misunderstandings" with the Viceroy, whose loyalty and co-operation was now assured.¹⁴² The *Gazette* was unconvincing, however: Ma`afu remained bent on secession. At Somosomo, he and Tui Cakau attended a gathering of more than 500 people from all over the province on 14 July. Then, according to the *Fiji Times*, "the leading chiefs spoke in favour of secession as after two years' trial, the Government was found to be quite unsuited to the natives on account of its great expense, its extreme intricacy and its very barren results. [Ma`afu and Tui Cakau] proposed to set up a new and separate government having the lotu ... as its mainstay and seeking to encourage and protect white settlement".¹⁴³ The latter assurance appeared to echo the one Ma`afu gave to some ministers before he left Levuka. The Cakaudrove chiefs' reported views provide a consummate statement of the failings of the Cakobau Government from a Fijian perspective. Yet to secede was one thing; to form a new government quite another. Everything would depend on whatever plans Ma`afu and his apparently steadfast ally had for the immediate future.

Although Ma`afu and Tui Cakau were often uneasy in alliance, they demonstrated a marked solidarity following their joint secession. A report from Savusavu at the time of the large July gathering paints a picture of a province that, despite the formal and reluctant adhesion of its paramount chief, had never properly formed part of the new Kingdom of Fiji. Tui Cakau, it was said, had led his

139 Frederick Langham to Benjamin Chapman, 9 Jul 1873, MOM 103.

140 Langham to Chapman, 11 Jul 1873, MOM 103.

141 D.W.L. Murray to the Editor, *FT*, 12 Aug 1873. See also "Nobody" to the Editor, *FT*, 19 Jul 1873.

142 *FG*, 12 Jul 1873.

143 *FT*, 23 Jul 1873.

lesser chiefs to believe that the "Government of Tui Viti" possessed jurisdiction only over "the whites and their foreign labourers" in Cakaudrove, a reassurance which left intact the despotic powers of the lesser chiefs. The supreme authority of "Tui Viti", acknowledged by Tui Cakau in Levuka, evoked no echo in Wairiki. Kept in ignorance, the lesser chiefs were not forced to tolerate the application of the kingdom's criminal law within their local domains. However, with the impending establishment of Government Police Courts in Taveuni and Savusavu, the enforced repeal of the "old native laws" and the dispersal throughout Cakaudrove of magistrates and police loyal to the government, the end of the *matanitu* as an independent political entity was at hand. So long as Levuka did not attempt to enforce its authority, its existence was tolerated. Now that the chiefs were being told that "they would have to attend the white man's court (as they persist in calling it) if they transgressed", the time had come to "kick this monstrous and absurd creation of the white man's out of the country". Tui Cakau repudiated all connection with "Cakobau's white government", even threatening violence against the inhabitants of three Cakaudrove villages that had adhered to it. Emissaries had been sent to Macuata inviting that province to send men to meet Tui Cakau at Savusavu. Some of the petty chiefs declared "that if Tui Cakau would only give them orders for a secret rising, there would not be a white man alive in the morning". That chief was stated to be "secretly in league with Ma`afu to overturn Cakobau's Government".¹⁴⁴ Thurston placed the blame for the secession plans squarely with Ma`afu. Writing while Ma`afu's guest on board the *Xarifa*, at anchor in Savusavu Bay, Thurston recorded that Ma`afu had just requested Tui Cakau to come on board so that the two chiefs could visit the King.¹⁴⁵ Such was the state of mind prevailing at the Savusavu gathering, presided over by Tui Cakau in the presence of his honoured guest, His Excellency Ma`afu, Viceroy of the Kingdom of Fiji.

Ma`afu, subtler than Tui Cakau in his political manoeuvres, sought to define his secession in less inflammatory terms. With the *Dido* now at anchor off Savusavu, George Bayley formally advised Captain Chapman that Ma`afu and Tui Cakau had "withdrawn from the Fiji government solely on account of its maladministration, great expense and intricacy and the general inadequateness of the Constitution for the welfare and advancement of the country". While these words accurately describe the Kingdom of Fiji, they only begin to reveal the reasons for the Viceroy's repudiation of that kingdom and his part in its government. Bayley proceeded from obfuscation to prevarication, advising Chapman that the two chiefs "wish me to assure you that their secession is not a political combination against Bau. They wish to remain on friendly terms with that power and believe that the feeling is reciprocated".¹⁴⁶

144 *FT*, 16 Jul 1873.

145 Thurston to Woods, 20 Jul 1873, CG Set 10; *FG*, 26 Jul 1873.

146 Bayley to Capt. Chapman, 19 Jul 1873, CG Set 11.

On the day that Bayley wrote, the *Fiji Gazette* asserted "most distinctly that Ma`afu has *not* [italics in original] seceded from the National Government ... his loyalty to the monarchy and the principles of national union have become more firm and assured than ever".¹⁴⁷ This seeming defence of the Viceroy reflected the mounting acrimony between the *Gazette* and its rival, the *Fiji Times*, rather than any political acumen on the part of its editor. The secession was real, and Ma`afu and Tui Cakau, in conjunction with their European settlers, were to draft a code of laws that would be "laid before" Captain Chapman for his "information". Most surprisingly, Bayley was to inform the US Consul that the two chiefs had been "threatened by the Honourable John Thurston with the forcible intervention of an American man of war ... pledged to assist Bau in maintaining ... the unity of the kingdom".¹⁴⁸ This letter was an attempt to maintain the goodwill of the British captain, clearly a valuable ally, by representing the secession as an act of altruism, while raising the spectre of American intervention, a development which, as Ma`afu well knew, would likely be held anathema by Captain Chapman. The reference to Thurston's hostility might well have been an attempt to distance Chapman from Thurston, the Minister from whom Ma`afu had the most to fear.

There is no evidence that the threat of American intervention was any more than a flight of fancy on Ma`afu's part. Thurston in fact proceeded to Savusavu at once, eager to influence both chiefs to reverse their secession. Fearful at first that he would have to request Woods to send down troops, Thurston was able to reassure the premier that "patient diplomacy will do it". Again writing from Savusavu, he reported Ma`afu as "highly indignant" over the "lie" published in the *Fiji Times* that he had seceded, although it was a lie the Viceroy appeared curiously willing to tolerate. If he did nothing, Thurston warned him, "the consequences will be the same as if it were true". Suspecting Ma`afu of "playing false", he informed Woods that both the Viceroy and Tui Cakau "cannot grasp the nature of the situation". Clearly doubting Ma`afu's probity, Thurston, a Taveuni planter of years' standing, sought ways to lessen his influence with Tui Cakau, with whom he possessed a strong rapport.¹⁴⁹ He did succeed in persuading both chiefs to return with him to consult Cakobau, at the same time advising Woods of his belief that the origin of the secession movement lay with Ma`afu, "acted upon by certain persons". Ma`afu, informing Thurston that he had not authorised Bayley's letter to Captain Chapman, now sought to withdraw the letter.¹⁵⁰ If the newspaper reports of Tui Cakau's attitude are correct, Thurston appears to have underestimated the grievances of his old friend and his determination finally to sever connections with "Tui Viti". As for

147 *FG*, 19 Jul 1873.

148 Bayley to Chapman, 19 Jul 1873.

149 Thurston to Woods, Premier, 18 Jul 1873, CG Set 10.

150 Thurston to Ma`afu, "Sunday morning" [20 Jul] 1873, CG Set 10.

Ma`afu, he was clearly “playing false”, as Thurston suspected, appearing intent on mollifying the Chief Secretary while gathering as much support, moral and otherwise, as he could.

Ma`afu’s denial of intent, manifested in his feigned indignation at the false reports concerning his actions, were characteristic of him on any occasion when he was confronted with his misdeeds. Thurston’s suspicion that Ma`afu was “playing false” marks the beginning of his disillusionment with the Viceroy, a sentiment which would culminate in his virulent denunciation of the Tongan in the presence of Fiji’s leading chiefs during the Cession conference eight months later. In the meantime, seemingly in response to Ma`afu’s dissimulation, the strange saga of claim and counterclaim resumed in the press. On 19 July, by which time Ma`afu had apparently conferred with the King, the *Gazette* again asserted that the Viceroy had not seceded and that his loyalty was firmer than ever.¹⁵¹ The *Times* was quick to contradict its rival, again recounting the events in Savusavu of 14 July, although emphasising that the Cakaudrove chiefs, so at odds with the whites of Levuka, sought peace rather than a confrontation with Bau.¹⁵²

It is important to remember that Ma`afu and Tui Cakau, united in their determination to secede, were pursuing different goals. Tui Cakau sought a truly independent Cakaudrove, subject to no interference from the turbulent whites of Levuka and enjoying peace between the *taukei* and the European settlers. If Ma`afu’s aims appear to us less clear and more sinister, many of the settlers in Cakaudrove were in no doubt concerning the Viceroy’s intentions. At a meeting held at Somosomo on 26 July, James McConnell, a planter on Taveuni, addressed his fellows on the subject of the recent secession:

I fear Ma`afu is a place hunter ... feeling disappointed that his name was not placed in the Constitution giving him the right to be the successor of Cakobau, it is a well known fact that is his object, he now comes forward at the present crucial time ... expecting to have the support of that portion of the public to secede from the Government, with a view to making him king of the Windward Isles or Tui Viti ... will any Briton forget himself, so far as to become the tool of one of the most designing and ambitious men of this kingdom? Who is he that we should support him in becoming king of Fiji or any portion of Fiji? ... If he has seceded I hope the Government have done their duty, and placed him in Totoga gaol; let him be impeached and vanished [sic] from the Kingdom ... last year he made laws, and at the closing of Parliament said that is the

151 *FG*, 19 Jul 1873.

152 *FT*, 28 Jul 1873.

whites wished to live in the country they would have to submit to the laws ... Is there any white man in this Kingdom [who] would ... submit to such insolence?¹⁵³

While McConnell's words constitute one of the more savage diatribes levelled against Ma`afu, among many during his life, it should be remembered that these were the views of a settler in Cakaudrove and not in Lau. McConnell stood up at the meeting to denounce the Viceroy, but not the paramount chief of Cakaudrove, who had seceded along with the Viceroy. His views bear witness both to the divergence of purpose between the two chiefs and to the fear and deep distrust with which Ma`afu was often regarded beyond the boundaries of the province of Lau.

With the fact of the secession apparently still in dispute in Levuka, the *Fiji Gazette*, anxious as always to score points over its rival, published some correspondence between Ma`afu and Captain Chapman of HMS *Dido*. The letters, if accepted at their face value, appear to clarify the Viceroy's actions. He wrote to the captain denying all knowledge of Bayley's letter wherein the joint secession was announced. The Viceroy also absolved the Chief Secretary of having threatened American intervention. Significantly, Ma`afu did not deny that he had seceded. Chapman, in response, simply forwarded to him Bayley's letter, the existence of which Ma`afu purported to doubt. Ma`afu wrote again, denying that he had authorised Bayley to write and asking the captain not to accept any letter from him unless it bore his, Ma`afu's, signature. Further, the captain was enjoined to pay no heed to reports of Ma`afu's intentions unless such reports came from Ma`afu's own lips. He advised Chapman that he had indeed met various ministers at Levuka, "discussing with them certain matters of importance to the State, as well as certain matters which affected myself, and Tui Cakau more particularly". Ma`afu had informed the ministers, Chapman was assured, that he was determined to adhere to the government "and to use his utmost power to assist in consolidating the Kingdom". This correspondence passed back and forth on the same day, with Ma`afu on board the *Xarifa* as it rode at anchor off Levuka. He informed Chapman that he was awaiting the arrival of Tui Cakau "in order that with the King and Ministers the best mode of meeting our difficulties may be discussed".¹⁵⁴

It is certain that pressure had been brought to bear on Ma`afu, pressure which Commodore Goodenough came to believe emanated from William Hennings in one direction and Captain Chapman in the other.¹⁵⁵ There might have been some truth in this view, since both men, for different reasons, were likely to

153 *FT*, 6 Aug 1873.

154 Ma`afu to Captain Chapman, 25 Jul 1873 [2 letters], Chapman to Ma`afu, 25 Jul 1873, *FG*, 26 Jul 1873, 2.

155 Report of Commodore Goodenough..., 3.

assert their considerable influence in support of stability and peace. Hennings, though, apparently caught unawares by Ma`afu's secession, wrote to Carl Sahl seeking advice as to his best course of action.¹⁵⁶ According to a letter to the *Fiji Times*, probably from Langham, during the Cession negotiations, Ma`afu, when on board the *Xarifa* at Levuka in July 1873, was confronted by several ministers who told him that he might land as Viceroy or as a rebel prisoner. If he landed as a prisoner, he would likely face a military court-martial and be shot the same day, since the King could not afford to let him live. Securing Ma`afu's co-operation would have the added advantage of forestalling the expected arrival in Levuka of Tui Cakau "with two or three double canoe loads of armed men".¹⁵⁷ Bayley meanwhile, awkwardly placed following Ma`afu's repudiation of his letter, asked the public, through the pages of the *Fiji Times*, to "suspend their judgment" until the matter had been resolved. Choosing his words carefully, Bayley wrote that the "flat contradiction" of his letter had been "instigated by men of such probity and honor as members of the present government".¹⁵⁸ As for Tui Cakau, rumour was to attribute his change of mind to the gift of a ketch called *Maria Louise*, very possibly from some of those same "men of ... probity and honor".¹⁵⁹

It seems clear that Ma`afu had indeed seceded, as announced by Bayley in his first letter to Captain Chapman, only to succumb to the most intense pressure from ministers prepared to go to any lengths to preserve the facade of the kingdom's administration. Thurston, writing again to Captain Hope at the end of July, made no mention of the Viceroy's secession, probably considering the matter resolved. He did, however, touch the core of several fundamental problems then facing Fiji. Ma`afu and Tui Cakau, as well as the King, he said, "have discovered that the Europeans intend to thoroughly subordinate them socially and politically. The scheme of a mixed Legislature for a mixed people they find is a delusion and a snare". The whites looked upon Fiji as their domain, with the conviction growing that the people of the land, the Fijians, must be content in the role of "husbandmen" or must be driven away. Such indeed were the concerns of Fiji's great chiefs, concerns that would help sound the death knell of the Kingdom of Fiji. More pertinent to the present crisis were the views Ma`afu had expressed to Thurston one day earlier:

Ma`afu remarked yesterday that he was sick of the papalangis' everlasting talk and bluster, and if there was any of it in the next session [of Parliament] and Ministers were abused again he should propose to the King to turn the members out of the house and lock it up. The notion was quite unusual in a Polynesian and remarkably Cromwellian.¹⁶⁰

156 James G. Goodenough, *Journal*, 25 Jan 1874.

157 "Spectator" to the Editor, *FT*, 11 Mar 1874. See also Forbes, 335–336.

158 Bayley to Editor, *FT*, 30 Jul 1873.

159 *FT*, 31 Dec 1873.

160 Thurston to Hope, 28 Jul 1873.

Ma`afu would pursue the struggle within the ramshackle framework of the kingdom whose Viceroy he remained. Having initially placated Thurston with a lie, Ma`afu had quickly been forced, probably at the threat of his life, to an unambiguous renunciation of his grasp for power. Required to work within the system he abhorred, Ma`afu, by his words to Thurston, revealed that he did so with gritted teeth. In the meantime, he was to join the King and the other great chiefs to meet the ministers at the House on 29 July. At that gathering, Thurston proposed to be clear in his advice: "The present Constitution must be either torn up and thrown to the winds and a shorter simpler one granted providing for a Legislature partly nominated and partly elected and for more power in Native lands – or the King and Chiefs had better offer the Kingdom to Great Britain without further delay". With the stark choices confronting Fiji, Ma`afu, despite the forced disavowal of his secession, would remain at centre stage, even though, as Hennings had reminded the gathering of Europeans at Lomaloma two years earlier, the stage he now trod was a different one.¹⁶¹ The rifles were on their way from Germany and the armed Tongan "visitors" remained encamped to windward, while increasing chaos was descending on the querulous European community at Levuka.

161 See n. 1 above.

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.