

11. “Ma`afu’s word is in the hills...”

Whatever Ma`afu’s immediate goals were when he announced his secession from the Kingdom of Fiji, he is unlikely to have been thinking of Thomas Jefferson’s aphorism, “a little rebellion now and then is a good thing”. After he had repudiated his own little rebellion, the issue of secession faded from public debate in Fiji, although not without a cautionary note from the *Fiji Times*:

Ma`afu ... is a very ambitious man and has long been a formidable rival of the King’s, and whenever he may see a favourable opportunity of forwarding his power, he is not a man to let the chance pass by unimproved.

The newspaper also noted that, with Ma`afu and Tui Cakau now appearing “recalcitrant”, the latter chief had done nothing to quell “disturbances” which had been occurring in Savusavu for more than a month.¹ The public was urged to keep a watchful eye on these two leaders, whatever chiefly humble pie might have then been on the menu. The larger question of the day was one of at least 15 years’ standing in Fiji: annexation. The only form of recognition the British government was prepared to extend to Cakobau was limited to his “jurisdiction” over those Fijian chiefs who, in accordance with Fijian custom, owed him some measure of allegiance.² It would be they, along with Cakobau, who would ultimately decide on annexation. One British journal, reflecting the political savvy of many of the long-serving missionaries in Fiji, noted the growing support, in both Fiji and Britain, for the process to be concluded. The journal wisely added a caveat: “But before our Government take any steps in that direction, they would do as well to compare their ideas with the meanings of annexation with those of the Fijian chiefs. Much after-misunderstanding might thus be prevented”.³

Wise words indeed, but who in Fiji would pay them heed?⁴ Despite the growing opinion favouring annexation, Whitehall continued to look askance at the prospect of yet another Crown Colony. *The Times*, raising the spectre of “a series of wars like those which have marked the occupation of New Zealand”, declared against annexation on the grounds that it “would contribute nothing to British wealth, prosperity and power”.⁵ These concerns, important to the makers of policy at Home, received scant consideration in Fiji itself. The settlers, placed at the end of a long and tenuous line of communication with Whitehall, were liable

1 *FT*, 9 Aug 1873.

2 *ibid.*, 21 May 1873.

3 *The Wesleyan Chronicle*, Vol. II, 20 Aug 1873, 139.

4 For a brief history of earlier annexation attempts, see *FG*, 30 Aug 1873.

5 *The Times*, quoted in *TA*, 29 Aug 1873.

to seize whatever opportunities offered to state their increasingly diverse views. Commanders of visiting warships received social calls, official from those in power and informal from members of the settler community. Deputations were received, petitions or formal addresses were presented and opinions sought, all as part of a process that drew a visiting naval commander into the vortex of political life in Fiji in 1873. Commodore Frederick Stirling, officer commanding HMS *Clio*, which arrived in Fiji early in August, proved no exception, even though he came with "no official instructions relative to Fiji".⁶

When Stirling called formally on the King at Nasova, near Levuka, it was apparent, through the screen of official protocol, that certain settlers had already rushed to state their case to the Commodore. A deputation headed by Dr James Cruikshank, a Taveuni planter, had urged him "to protect the Whites' rights ceded by the Chiefs of Fiji through the Constitution".⁷ Stirling duly presented Cakobau with "a statement of certain matters", effectively an address of grievances. It sought the King's acceptance of his ministers' resignations, previously declined, and referred to the earlier dissolution of Parliament as illegal. Cakobau, supported to the hilt by Chief Secretary John Thurston, repudiated the "statement" and expressed full confidence in the ministers, whom he desired to remain in office.⁸ The Viceroy, also present at the meeting, himself addressed to the Commodore:

I rise to confirm what the king has said. There have been two epochs in Fiji, one when Christianity was introduced, and the other when the present form of Government was adopted. When the missionaries came here, the resident whites told us that Christianity was an evil thing, and the missionaries were bad men. But we believed they were wrong, and we embraced Christianity and found it a good thing. Now we the Chiefs of Fiji have formed a Government, because we believe it will benefit our country, and the whites are united in saying that the government is no good, and the Ministers are bad men. ... If any trouble arises, it will be caused by the whites, on account of their unceasing evil speaking, to which there is no end. We believe that if we retain [the Ministers] in office, it will be well with us, and the Kingdom will prosper; but that nothing but ruin would come of following the advice of the whites who are opposed to them ... The king and I are of one mind in all these matters, and have one common desire: ... the good of Fiji.⁹

6 *FT*, 13 Aug 1873.

7 *ibid.*, 6 Aug 1873.

8 "Reply of the King to the petition of grievances presented by Commodore Stirling" [drafted by Thurston], *FG*, 16 Aug 1873.

9 *FG*, 9 Aug 1873. See also Stirling to Adm., 13 Aug 1873, Adm 1/6261 and FO 58/153.

Ma'afu delivered what was, in the context of a meeting governed by Western protocol, at once an exemplar of chiefly eloquence and laconic statement of the ignoble history of settler self-interest in Fiji. Not for the first time, he sought to reassure his audience that Viceroy and King were one in their desire to ensure the peace and prosperity of Fiji. Stirling, new to the political factions of Fiji, appeared reassured. The others treated to Ma'afu's oratory likely kept their fingers discreetly crossed behind their backs, well out of sight of the King, the Viceroy and their distinguished guest.

Four days later Cakobau and Ma'afu, accompanied by their usual entourage, paid a brief farewell call on Commodore Stirling on board the *Clio*.¹⁰ The Commodore, seemingly content with the united front presented to him at Nasova, noted that the two chiefs, as well as Tui Cakau, "appear ... to have been much annoyed at the attempt of the Europeans to reduce them to a subordinate status".¹¹ It was reported in Australia that the Commodore's visit to Fiji "had favourably impressed him with the desirability of annexing those islands", an indication that he lacked sympathy for the partisan views brought to his notice. The outcome Stirling supposedly favoured was stated to be the only honourable course the British government could adopt.¹² In the meantime, events occurred which, to one informed observer, rendered any form of British administration less likely than ever.

With the *Clio* barely over the horizon, Ma'afu sailed to Moala on 11 August "for the purpose of procuring supplies", returning two days later.¹³ Still in port at Levuka was another warship, HMS *Blanche*, Captain Cortland Simpson, whose arrival had preceded that of the *Clio*. Although Stirling had expressed satisfaction with the determination of the King, and apparently also the Viceroy, to retain their ministers in office, the disaffected settlers who had sought the Commodore's intervention, according to the *Fiji Times*, "would never be satisfied" until Thurston and the Premier, George Austin Woods, whom they considered as traitors, were removed from office.¹⁴ By the first week of September, several Levuka merchants, German as well as British, had closed their stores in protest against the taxes imposed by the government they despised. Frederick Hedemann, who had accepted Ma'afu's order for the Snider rifles, attempted to send his clerk to open his bonded warehouse in Levuka. The clerk was thwarted by 20 armed men, acting on government orders, owing to Hedemann's earlier refusal to pay duty on goods in the warehouse. The immediate consequence of this confrontation was a meeting later that day of Levuka inhabitants, which passed two unanimous

10 *FG*, 16 Aug 1873; *FT*, 13 Aug 1873.

11 Litton Forbes, *Two Years in Fiji*, London 1875, 163. See also Stirling to Adm., 13 Aug 1873.

12 *TA*, 22 Sep 1873.

13 *FT*, 13 and 16 Aug 1873.

14 *ibid.*, 6 Sep 1873.

resolutions. The Executive was declared unauthorised to receive “monies, taxes or duties”, while Levuka’s white residents were urged to “act as a deputation to the King at once, to represent the present state of affairs to him”.¹⁵

Hedemann meanwhile consulted the acting German Consul, Gustav Hennings, who invited Captain Simpson to intervene. As a consequence, an officer from the *Blanche* was sent ashore to order the Fijian soldiers, agents of the government, away from Hedemann’s store. The proposed “deputation” to the King was bent on intimidation rather than simply representing “the present state of affairs”. With the “deputation” thwarted from confronting Cakobau *en masse* at Nasova, its spokesman reiterated to him that the government and ministers had lost the confidence of the Assembly. If the King continued to accept their advice, it was claimed, he would no longer be acting as a constitutional sovereign. The “deputation” then agreed to return the following day at 2 p.m. to receive the King’s reply.

On the following morning, Friday 5 September, a fresh attempt by government troops to arrest Hedemann’s clerk would have led to bloodshed had not the clerk placed himself under Consul Hennings’ protection. Several British traders, most of them armed, appeared to support the Germans. That afternoon, some 150 Europeans proceeded to Nasova to hear Cakobau’s reply. Finding their way blocked by armed Fijians and Tongans, under the command of Ma`afu and appearing “in a terribly excited state”, the unarmed Europeans retired. There were a number of scuffles and a Tongan was wounded.¹⁶ The *Fiji Times*, in its narrative of the events at Nasova, gave no hint of their dire implications. Thurston however, writing urgently to Captain Simpson a few hours after the “affray”, referred to threats made to depose the King and the Viceroy, following other threats and abuse which they had suffered the day before. “Persons”, Thurston declared, were arming “in order to attack the King and Ministers tonight”. Thurston had learned that Cakobau and Ma`afu had ordered the Fijians and Tongans not to fire on the Europeans, although “the next time they come into contact with whites they will certainly be less considerate”.¹⁷ Simpson had already issued a proclamation on the Thursday, advising British subjects that he would hold them responsible for the consequences if they took up arms. Now, in a rapid response to Thurston’s letter of the following day, he issued a second proclamation from the *Blanche* advising “all British subjects that any armed resistance to the action of the Fijian authorities will be at their own peril”.¹⁸

Thurston, aware that the tactical retreat solved nothing, described Ma`afu’s part in the “affray” to Robert Swanston a few days later. The Europeans had retreated “at a rate of 8 knots – chased by Ma`afu and a party of Tongans – King

15 *ibid.*

16 *ibid.*

17 Thurston to Captain C.H. Simpson HMS *Blanche*, 5 Sep 1873, CG Set 31.

18 *FT*, 6 Sep 1873; *FG*, 13 Sep 1873.

raving mad – many whites bruised, 3 prisoners, one Tongan shot in shoulder – nasty wound". Ma`afu again appeared as a force for law and order. Thurston emphasised to Swanston that the Viceroy had been "very staunch", even joining with Cakobau's son Ratu Epeli Nailatikau to place 200 men each "under drill" and to increase the permanent force to 1,200. Fearing more than ever for Fiji's future, Thurston despaired of the British government's "bothering" with Fiji, while "the chiefs now say if we are treated like this by a handful of men what would be our lot if the country was full of them".¹⁹ Premier Woods, although describing as "great fun" the sight of one prominent trader running for his life, reminded Swanston that "the two days' proceedings will not be forgotten by the chiefs of Fiji".²⁰ While there might have been fun for Woods, there is evidence that Ma`afu's staunchness in support of the government lost him much sympathy among Europeans in Fiji. Writing in February 1874, a planter in western Fiji declared that Ma`afu

finally and forever destroyed the confidence, which has been the growth of years, felt in him by the white settlers, by the very prominent part he took against the whites in the row at Nasova in September last. The officer from HMS *Blanche*, who accompanied the deputation that afternoon to Nasova and saw the whole affair, publicly stated (and which was a self-evident fact) that Ma`afu and his Tongans were responsible for that savage attack upon unarmed men.²¹

While the probable consequences for Fiji of the Nasova "affray" were lost on neither Thurston nor Woods, Ma`afu's unequivocal support for King and Constitution possessed implications that appeared to pass unremarked. A few days after the riots, with Ma`afu and Ratu Epeli away "organising powerful supports in case of necessity arising", the government determined to arrest the ringleaders of Nasova. Following his proclamations, Captain Simpson advised the government that "he would feel compelled to land his men with the object of avoiding bloodshed". In an uncharacteristic move, Cakobau informed Thurston that he would regard such a landing "as a declaration of war and would act as the interest of himself and people may demand". At a subsequent conference between the King, Thurston and Simpson, a "Convention" was arranged whereby Simpson agreed to confine any intervention to the suppression of "all resistance to ... arrests under due process of law ... made by this government".²² The King's assertion of his government's authority and of the rule of law appeared

19 Thurston to Robert Swanston, n.d. [Sep 1873], Methodist Mission, Correspondence and Papers relating to Ba Military Campaigns 1873, PMB 1093.

20 Woods to Swanston, 12 Sep 1873, *ibid.*

21 "Spectator" to Editor, *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

22 Thurston to Carl Sahl, 8 Sep 1873, CG Set 23.

unambiguous. Ma`afu, still Viceroy and acting in apparent contradiction of his attempted secession of a few weeks earlier, aligned himself firmly with a government whose interests he had so recently sought to abrogate.

The rebellious traders and settlers wished for more than simply a return to the 1871 Constitution. They were contemptuous of the government's attempts to assert its authority in Fiji, refused to pay taxes to a regime they despised and were resolved never to accord indigenous Fijians any equality under the law. Commodore James Goodenough, one of the Commissioners sent to determine the wishes of Fiji's chiefs concerning annexation, would describe Nasova as "a rough protest against the supposed unconstitutional action of the persons holding office in the Fijian government ... intended to test their power and resolution".²³ Ma`afu's support for the teetering government should be seen as a determination to oppose such obstreperous dissent, rather than a declaration of common purpose with Cakobau and his ministers. Thurston had already noted the awareness by Cakobau, Ma`afu and Tui Cakau that Europeans in Fiji intended "to thoroughly subordinate them socially and politically".²⁴ Now, the Chief Secretary was writing of the determination "by the whole of the whites ... to get men returned to the Assembly whose declared intentions are to clear the niggers out".²⁵ The alternative to such a bleak prospect would have been "the establishment of a new Constitution with Thurston and Woods as permanent heads of the Government and [a] parliament composed of Natives and Whites elected on a Census basis by the two races", a scenario described by missionary Jesse Carey as "not likely".²⁶ In the face of attempts "to clear the niggers out", King and Viceroy could pass easily into open alliance.

The events at Nasova demonstrated the impossibility of the existing Ministry's continuing in office. The government was unable to maintain order in Levuka, other than by armed force, and could collect only a small portion of the taxes it imposed. Goodenough, new to Fiji but enjoying the acquaintance of many in the islands, observed that the

taxes, imposed by an Assembly elected under that [discredited] Constitution ... could have been collected in no other way short of the employment of Fijian soldiery, armed and commanded by Englishmen, against the majority of the white settlers, of whom five-sixths are also Englishmen. The proceeds of taxation are, moreover, being spent by the Government ... Such a condition of things cannot be allowed to continue.²⁷

23 James G. Goodenough to Adm., 23 Oct 1873, James G. Goodenough, Letter-Books 1873–1875.

24 Thurston to Capt. C.W. Hope, 28 Jul 1873, Hope Letter-Journals III.

25 Thurston to Hope, 25 Sep 1873, *ibid.*

26 Jesse Carey to Joseph Nettleton, 15 Sep 1873, Carey, Letterbook 1867–1874.

27 Goodenough to Adm., 27 Nov 1873, Goodenough Letter-Books.

The sad story of the government's finances is best summarised in the words of the two auditors who prepared a report as part of the Commissioners' investigation of Fiji's affairs:

Looking at the revenue received from October 1871 to 31 Dec 1873 ... viz £42,063-18-0, we find that the debt contracted during that time was £82,000, so that the establishment and maintenance of the Government has cost £124,000, or three times as much as the revenue received. There does not appear much hope of relieving this under present circumstances...²⁸

Apart from the government's imminent insolvency, Fiji's nominal head of state, Cakobau, could not but be ignorant of the forms of constitutional government and would never be more than a puppet of those in power. Thurston and Woods, who claimed to hold such moral high ground as existed in Fijian politics in 1873, proposed a new constitution, to which the Privy Council agreed on 27 September and whose aim was to permit "the two races [to] meet on an equal footing".²⁹ The constitution would be submitted to provincial governors, including Ma'afu, who would consult the leading chiefs in their provinces.³⁰ While Ma'afu's views of the proposal were not recorded, he might have taken a passing interest in Paragraph 18:

The Successor to the Throne shall be the person whom the King in Privy Council may nominate, as such, during His (the King's) life; but should there be no such nomination, then the Successor shall be chosen by the Native members of the Privy Council, by ballot, in Council assembled.³¹

It is unlikely that these words gave the Viceroy any pause for thought. Given their years of enmity, and Cakobau's rightful mistrust of his fellow chief, the King would never have nominated his Viceroy as his successor, nor would "the Native members" of the Privy Council have voted for him while "in Council assembled". During these weeks Ma'afu, having renounced his attempted secession, appeared to devote himself to his vice-regal duties. Writing as "Viceroy and Chief Officer of the Army", he expressed his appreciation of the efforts of Europeans who participated in the Ba campaign, making particular mention of their courage in the field.³² Ma'afu was also one of several signatories to a Memorandum of Association which provided for "The Fiji Banking and Commercial Company

28 The auditors were Thomas Horton, Levuka manager of the Fiji Banking and Commercial Company, and Carl Ludwig Sahl, Special Commercial Agent of the Kingdom of Fiji and German Consul in Sydney. Horton & Sahl Report, 16 Mar 1874, *Report of Commodore Goodenough and Mr Consul Layard on the Offer of Cession of the Fiji Islands to the British Crown*, PP 1874 [C.1011], XLV, Encs 6, 29.

29 Minute by Thurston, R.B. Leefe to Woods, n.d., CG Set 1.

30 For the full text of the proposed constitution, see *Fiji Government Gazette Extraordinaire*, 6 Oct 1873; *SMH*, 4 Nov 1873, 3.

31 Para. 18, New Constitution for Fiji, *FGG Extraordinaire*, 6 Oct 1873.

32 Memorandum from His Excellency the Viceroy Henerie Ma'afu, Commander-in-Chief, etc, GHP Bundle 18(4). See also G. Wright, "Fiji in the early Seventies", *TFS*, 1916, 17-66.

Limited” to commence operations in Fiji.³³ Then, in the same week as the Nasova “affray”, Premier Woods wrote formally to Ma`afu asking him to convene a Court Martial to hear charges against the ringleaders of a recent rebellion in Naitasiri.³⁴ Of greater significance for Fiji’s future than any of these events was an Order issued by the Privy Council on 22 September, with Ma`afu in the Chair. The Order forbade any subject of the King from selling land to Europeans until “the nature and terms of the proposed sale” had been endorsed by both the relevant provincial government and the Department of Lands and Works.³⁵ This Order, if properly observed, would have addressed a long-standing source of disaffection between Fijians and settlers. The matter would not be properly resolved until the establishment, under British colonial rule, of the Lands Claims Commission in 1880. In the meantime, the same Privy Council awarded the erstwhile rebel, still Viceroy of Fiji, an annual salary of \$4,000.³⁶

Once Ma`afu had returned to Lomaloma, away from the need to toe the line in Levuka, old tensions resurfaced. In October, both he and George Bayley, his unofficial secretary for the previous six months, requested Cabinet confirmation of Bayley, whom Ma`afu had appointed over the head of John Giblin, the government’s official nominee.³⁷ Thurston and Woods both believed that Ma`afu had been urged to Bayley’s appointment by William Hennings, who knew it would not be approved, “or else the conduct of the Viceroy is of a nature not here to be characterised”. If Ma`afu insisted on formal confirmation, the question would have to be placed before the King in Cabinet.³⁸ Thurston was hinting at corruption. The Viceroy and his perpetual creditor, Hennings, saw their own man as the best means of ensuring that nothing more than a trickle of taxes ever left the shores of Lau. As if by way of reassurance to a rightly cynical Thurston, Ma`afu advised the Minister of Finance that three tons of copra, “native taxes” to a value of £16–3–10, had been sent down to Levuka, while Bayley, apparently diligent at his unofficial post, proceeded with Lau’s next tax assessment.³⁹ Ma`afu had long favoured copra production by the Fijian and Tongan residents of Lau, in contrast to the European settlers and their cotton, as a means of ensuring the prosperity of his *matanitu*. The three tons of copra sent to Levuka were but straws in the wind.

One of the greatest difficulties we face in assessing Ma`afu’s career in both Tonga and Fiji lies in reconciling the widely divergent opinions of him found in the

33 Order in Council, 19 Aug 1873, Goodenough – Layard *Report*, Appendix 27, PP [C.1–1011].

34 Woods to Ma`afu, 2 Sep 1873, CG Set 33.

35 Order in Council, 22 Sep 1873, Im Thurn Papers, Section I, 2.

36 Resolution of Privy Council Meeting, 24 Sep 1873, Clerk of Council to Auditor-General, Oct 1873, CG Set 2. Cakobau’s salary was fixed at \$7,500.

37 Ma`afu to Thurston, 10 Oct 1873, George Bayley to Woods, 10 Oct 1873, CG Set 10. See also Ch. 10, ns 91–93.

38 Ma`afu to Thurston, 18 Oct 1873 (minute by Thurston, 21 Oct 1873).

39 Ma`afu to Minister of Finance, 22 Oct 1873, CG Set 27; P. Power to Minister of Finance, 3 Nov 1873, *ibid*.

voluminous missionary writings. Those opinions ranged from John Thomas's denunciations of the young chief's moral calumnies in Tonga to Richard Lyth's exasperation at the frequent falls from grace evinced by the newly appointed Governor of the Tongans in Fiji, still a young man, at Lakeba during the 1850s. Ma'afu's more mature years, as Tui Lau, Viceroy and finally Roko Tui Lau under British rule, were sometimes characterised by missionary praise of the enigmatic chief for his personal example and qualities of moral leadership. In Lakeba again late in October 1873, Ma'afu was lauded by a resident Wesleyan missionary, Thomas Rootes, for having issued a proclamation "favourable to the cause of religion and morality". Ma'afu had declared the ancient custom of *vasu*, whereby a man enjoyed unlimited claims on the property of his mother's family, to be *tabu sara*, that is never to be practised again. Chiefly feasts, with their concomitant burdens on people who were expected to supply immense quantities of food, often at personal cost, were similarly outlawed. There was even a move towards what would today be termed women's liberation: "the women of Fiji have found in His Excellency a friend", Rootes enthused, "and are no longer to be 'hewers of wood and bearers of heavy burdens'". Ma'afu reassured the missionary: "I am constantly being made ashamed by what whites say to me about our treatment of our women. Let them be vakamareqeti in the future" (that is, people to be treasured and nurtured).⁴⁰ The Viceroy had seized upon three matters of which many Europeans, by no means all missionaries, who enjoyed some acquaintance with Fijian society had long been critical. Was this proclamation a manifestation of Ma'afu's social conscience, a further example of the leadership qualities evident in many other aspects of his rule as Tui Lau? Or was it perhaps one of several carefully considered moves to ensure that the missionaries of Fiji, who bore no love for the self-seeking settlers in the islands or for the regime in Levuka, remained fully in sympathy with the Viceroy?

Cakobau kept a low profile during these weeks, despite his formal installation as Tui Viti, at Ma'afu's suggestion, in November. Annexation remained uppermost in the public mind, at least among resident Europeans. The *Fiji Times* declared itself encouraged by growing support for such a move in Britain, even though a motion for annexation was defeated by 86 votes to 50 in the House of Commons.⁴¹ Despite continuing opposition from the Prime Minister, William Gladstone, it was said to be only "a matter of time until [the government] gave way before the agitation on the subject".⁴² No such "agitation" could bear fruit unless supported by Fiji's chiefs, including of course the Viceroy, who retained his earlier dignity of Tui Lau. On 16 November, Commodore Goodenough, Commander of the Royal Navy's Australia Station, reached Levuka aboard HMS *Pearl* to begin the consultation process. Several months earlier, New South

40 Rev. T.B. Rootes to Benjamin Chapman, n.d. [c. Oct 1873], *WMN(A)*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Jul 1874, 46–47.

41 In June 1872, a similar proposal was defeated by 135 votes to 84. See Ch. 10, n. 48.

42 *FT*, 1 Oct 1873.

Wales Governor Sir Hercules Robinson had described the Fijian government as a charade meant to retain power for a minority of self-interested Europeans.⁴³ Earlier still, intervention by two naval commanders, Commodore Stirling and Captain Simpson, had been responsible for keeping the peace in Levuka's highly volatile European community. Goodenough's arrival may well have prevented the outbreak of civil war between the main factions, on one side Woods, Thurston, other government ministers and most merchants and professionals of Levuka and on the other the majority of planters living elsewhere in the islands. The planters' principal motivations were a desire to further their own interests and a firm belief in the inherent superiority of the "white race". Such a view was articulated in the *Fiji Gazette*:

We are aware that annexation is regarded as the grand cure for all Fijian troubles. What is wanted by a certain class of men, is a utopia of rampant Anglo-Saxons, with a subject population of Fijians ... among whom to live, and among whom to find, or make, hewers of wood and drawers of water...⁴⁴

Although, according to Goodenough, nine-tenths of the Europeans in Fiji favoured annexation, it was but one of four alternatives the Commissioners were bound to consider.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the British government would not necessarily accept any recommendation the Commissioners might eventually make. Although Thurston welcomed them, he had earlier expressed concern that their brief did not allow for sufficient consultation with the existing government.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the wider process of consultation could now commence. Ma`afu, still at home in Lomaloma, was "requested" to come to Levuka immediately for a meeting to discuss "important things".⁴⁷ The Viceroy could not comply, his secretary advising the Premier that owing to Adi Elenoa's "severe illness", Ma`afu was unable to come down, but would do so "directly Elenoa gets a little better".⁴⁸

At this early stage, Ma`afu's absence was of no great moment. The Melbourne *Argus* spoke of Fiji's "long-impending crisis", while other newspaper opinion in both Australia and Great Britain increasingly advocated annexation as the only solution for the islands' many problems.⁴⁹ "The Government of Fiji is as bad as

43 Robinson to Kimberley, 27 Jan 1873, G.C. Henderson, ed., *Fijian Documents, Political and Constitutional 1858-1875*, Sydney 1838, 58 et seq.

44 *FG*, 5 Nov 1873, 2; Goodenough to Adm., 10 Jan 1874, Goodenough Letter-Books. For a discussion of the failure of the Commissioners properly to understand settler attitudes, see Deryck Scarr, "John Bates Thurston, Commodore James G. Goodenough and rampant Anglo-Saxons in Fiji", *HSANZ*, Vol. II, No. 43, Oct 1964, 361-382.

45 See Ch. 10, n. 129.

46 Thurston to Hope, 25 Sep 1873.

47 Minister of Lands, Works, Naval and Military Affairs to Ma`afu, 28 Nov 1873, CG Set 33.

48 Bayley to the Premier, 6 Dec 1873, CG Set 1.

49 *TA*, 6 Oct 1873, 4; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 Nov 1873, quoted in *TA*, 19 Jan 1874; *The Australasian*, quoted in *FT*, 12 Nov 1873.

it well can be ... [it is] kept in office in defiance of the wishes of the people".⁵⁰ In Fiji, among the more than 2,000 Europeans, there were few who thought differently. When missionary Samuel Brooks, writing from Vuna Point in Taveuni, declared, "the feeling in this neighbourhood is decidedly in favour of annexation", he might have been speaking for Fiji's entire planter community.⁵¹ For the present, such initiative as there was remained with Goodenough, whom one settler described as enjoying "the confidence and what is rarer still the respect of the whites in Levuka".⁵² The confidence was not misplaced, since Goodenough later acknowledged that his sole intention in coming to Fiji was "that of seeking the interest of the English. ... The only reason for my being here is regard for 1,500 whites here of whom the greater number are British subjects".⁵³ Nevertheless the Commodore, working alone until the return to Fiji of his colleague, British Consul Leo Layard, had not been properly briefed on the situation in Fiji and, even more importantly, lacked authority to negotiate with the islands' chiefs over annexation. Even if the chiefs were to offer to cede Fiji, an unlikely prospect at the end of 1873, Goodenough could not have accepted. Rather, he would convey the offer to his masters in Whitehall. Following his first meetings with Cakobau, it was clear that Goodenough would not accord him proper respect as Fiji's nominal king and as spokesman for the principal chiefs. When Cakobau stated that, although he would certainly consult his fellow chiefs, his own preference was "to keep Fiji", Goodenough described this view as "the exclamation of a semi savage not likely to part with any power or dignity now that he has ministers to help him". Asked by Goodenough why, if he wanted to "keep Fiji", he had raised the question of annexation with the British government, Cakobau replied, "'I only asked that we might talk about it'". Goodenough also despaired of the Europeans, reporting to the Admiralty, "It would be difficult to find so bankrupt a community anywhere else". He, too, saw annexation as Fiji's one hope of salvation.⁵⁴

One additional difficulty during these days was the increasing tension between Goodenough and Thurston, who were never to achieve a comfortable working relationship. Their antipathy meant that Goodenough, in his dealings with Cakobau and the other chiefs, was unable properly to take advantage of Thurston's long experience of Fiji and intimate knowledge of its people and, more importantly, its modes of thought. Goodenough reported to the Admiralty with characteristic candour:

Mr Thurston ... speaks of the white population as turbulent, treacherous and threatening personal violence, and even assassination, to the

50 *TCJ*, 28 Feb 1874, 342.

51 S.W. Brooks to Chapman, 4 Dec 1873, MOM 165.

52 G.H.W. Markham, *Diary*, 7 Dec 1873.

53 James G. Goodenough, *Journal*, 1 Feb 1874.

54 Goodenough to Goschen, 2 Dec 1873, Adm 1/6274.

Ministers; self-government of natives being, in his view, the direction of affairs by himself, Mr Woods and Dr Clarkson, who, like many other bold, confident men, believe that they alone are honest and have the secret of ruling ... The great majority of [the settlers] whom I have seen only wish for the security of a strong Government to enable them to prosecute their industrial pursuits ... not one is favourable to the action of the present Government unless he is actually in receipt of a salary from it.⁵⁵

Thurston believed, with reason, that his views were being ignored.⁵⁶ He deplored Goodenough's overbearing attitude towards Cakobau when Commissioner and King met again on 22 Dec.⁵⁷ When informed that the government of Fiji was not working properly, Cakobau admitted that he had signed many papers without being aware of their content. He also expressed concern at Goodenough's attitude, accusing the Commodore of attempting to come between him and his ministers. According to Thurston, the Commodore had advised the King that "he must understand that I will have no persons between him and me", meaning that the final decision concerning Cession must be his alone.⁵⁸ "What can I do?" Cakobau lamented. "I shall be adrift".⁵⁹ Yet he remained the nominal King of Fiji, while for Goodenough, however much he desired an offer of Cession, none was likely to appear.

During this time of feint and counter-feint between Commodore and King, Ma`afu remained at Lomaloma. While it has been said that absence makes the heart grow fonder, that was patently untrue in the case of Ma`afu and his once and future opponents, Cakobau, Thurston and Goodenough. The Viceroy, both wayward and loyal as suited his purpose, was at least not forgotten. Thurston even mentioned him in the context of racial equality, recalling to Captain Hope Ma`afu's earlier statement that "he only joined the Government upon the positive understanding that the whites and blacks were under one law. That they were not now one people but two people".⁶⁰ It was rare for a notion of moral principle and the person of Enele Ma`afu to be associated in John Thurston's mind. More typical of the view normally taken of the Viceroy by others in power in Levuka were the words of Cakobau in one of his early interviews with Goodenough. The King had outlined for the Commodore the history of Ma`afu's career in Fiji, regaling Goodenough with the inaccurate statement that the Viceroy "was now actually ousting the natives from their hereditary rights, and establishing [himself] in

55 Goodenough to Adm., 10 Dec 1873, Goodenough Letter-Books.

56 Thurston, Diary, 1 Jan 1874. See also Thurston to Hope, 24 Dec 1873, Hope Letter-Journals. For Goodenough's thoughts, see his Private Journal III, 1 Dec 1873 et seq. For some insights into the strained relationship between the two men, see David Routledge, Pre-Cession Government in Fiji, PhD thesis, ANU 1965, 242 et seq.

57 Thurston, Diary, 1 Jan 1874.

58 Thurston to Hope, 24 Dec 1873, Hope Letter-Journals.

59 Cakobau's words, translated by David Wilkinson, Goodenough Journal II, 24 Dec 1873.

60 Thurston to Hope, 6 Dec 1873, Hope Letter-Journals.

sovereign power". Although Ma`afu exercised customary rule in Lau, Cakobau, ever resentful of Ma`afu's power and rightly distrustful of his ultimate ambitions, could not acknowledge that fact to Goodenough. The exchange that followed neatly articulated Ma`afu's place in the rapidly crumbling edifice still dignified as the Kingdom of Fiji. Speaking of Ma`afu's supposed usurpation of power,

the Commodore pointed out that this was what took place every day all over the world, and said, 'Look at the hermit crabs on your coral beaches; they take the shells of others'. 'True', rapped out Cakobau, 'but the hermit crab always takes the empty shell'.⁶¹

The year ended with Cakobau and Goodenough barely having cleared the ground for the negotiations ahead. The *Fiji Times*, rightly attributing Fiji's failure to progress in 1873 to "the unsatisfactory state of politics" and to the low price of cotton in Britain, also railed against "the detrimental influence upon the progress of Fiji" of the attempted secession of Ma`afu and Tui Cakau.⁶² In the meantime those two chiefs had gone, if not to ground, at least to their respective *matanitu*, while during their absence the second Commissioner, Consul Layard, arrived in Levuka. Instructed to respect the *de facto* government, Layard formally called on Thurston on 2 January 1874.⁶³ Goodenough, meanwhile, pursued a somewhat terse correspondence with Thurston, reminding the Chief Secretary that, in relation to Cakobau's complaints of intervention between King and ministers, the King "owes the consolidation of his power to the intervention of English officers", a reference to the actions of various naval commanders in Fiji in 1873 and earlier.⁶⁴ The Commissioners also outlined for the King the conditions necessary for acceptance of an offer of Cession. It was emphasised to Cakobau that Cession could only be considered if it were freely offered by the chiefs of Fiji. If the chiefs were to conclude that they should remain in control of their islands, their decision would be respected, provided that indigenous Fijians and the increasing number of European settlers could live in peace. With the number of settlers increasing, the King was reminded that maintaining peace between them and his own people would become increasingly difficult.⁶⁵ During the same few days, Layard also wrote twice to Thurston, warning that the Commissioners' recognition of the government would cease if the government were to seek "to change its character ... in any illegal or constitutional manner", which effectively meant an attempt to introduce the proposed new constitution of 1873, wherein the franchise would be extended to indigenous Fijians.⁶⁶ With

61 *TA*, quoted in *FT*, 13 Jan 1875, based on Goodenough, MS Journal, 27 Jan 1874.

62 *FT*, 31 Dec 1873.

63 Lord Granville to E.L. Layard, 29 Sep 1873, FO58/135; Thurston to Layard, 1 Jan 1874, Im Thurn Papers, Sect. 1.

64 Goodenough to Thurston, 10 Jan 1874, CG Set 10.

65 Chief Secretary's Dept, Official Correspondence, James G. Goodenough and E.L. Layard to Cakobau, 12 Jan 1874, Levuka 1874.

66 Layard to Thurston, 10 and 16 Jan 1874, CG Set 11.

the process of chiefly consultation having barely begun, the disparity of views between the Commissioners and Thurston was widening. Meanwhile, it was reported that Ritova and Tui Cakau wished “to speak to the commissioners in their own district where they can speak without fear”.⁶⁷ Ma`afu could be relied upon to speak “without fear”, whether in his own district or elsewhere. There was no word, in early January, of what his thoughts might be.

The Viceroy, although delayed by Elenoa’s illness, seemed extraordinarily tardy in responding to the summons to come down to discuss “important things”. He was a chief among chiefs, of course, and would respond when it suited him. Perhaps, in the manner of those who know they are actors in an unfolding drama, Ma`afu was delaying his entrance so as to achieve a heightened effect. He knew that the negotiations over Cession bade fair to become the battle of his political life, a battle that would determine whether his ambition to rule Fiji would be forever dashed, or whether, in the event that the chiefs declined to offer the islands to Britain, the field might be cleared for a final confrontation with Cakobau. The *Xarifa*, carrying “Ma`afu and suite”, finally arrived off Levuka on 23 January, the “suite” including his son Siale`ataogo and Sione Mafi, Ma`afu’s long-serving *matapule*.⁶⁸ Thanks to Mafi, we have some notion of what was in Ma`afu’s mind when he sailed down from Lomaloma. Sixteen years later, with Tui Lau long in his grave and Fiji peaceful under British rule, Mafi recalled, “On the way from Lau Ma`afu had been strong in mind that we should not seek to be annexed to Britain as the chiefs would lose all power in Fiji”.⁶⁹ This was his private view, as he came down to enter the fray, and not one he was likely, so early in the process, to vouchsafe either to the King or the Commissioners.

It was well for Ma`afu to remain tight-lipped to all but his trusted confidant, since Cakobau’s manoeuvring to exclude him from the negotiations began only three days after Ma`afu reached Levuka. At another meeting on 26 January, the Commissioners asked Cakobau if he had any questions before they began consultations with the other principal chiefs. The King insisted that he knew the minds of all the great chiefs except Ma`afu and Tui Cakau: “All were for annexation but them and Ma`afu was not a Fiji chief but a Tongan and they wished him to go back but Ma`afu said, how could he go back? How could he ... deputed by Tonga to rule parts of Fiji, give up his task?” Cakobau sought to influence the Commissioners against Ma`afu, whom Goodenough had yet to meet. Although Ma`afu’s rhetoric, as conveyed by Cakobau, was valid enough, Cakobau was disingenuous in attributing to the Viceroy the claim that he had been “deputed by Tonga to rule parts of Fiji”. Ma`afu, who had ruled Lau as

67 *FT*, 28 Jan 1874.

68 *FT*, 24 Jan 1874; *FG*, 24 Jan 1874.

69 Statement of Mafi, 23 Jul 1890, C.R. Swayne’s Notes on Ma`afu, G.K. Roth Papers.

a chief of Fiji since 1869, exercised an authority entirely legitimate within the polity of Fiji. Cakobau's misrepresentation of the powers of Tui Lau sprang from his long-held fears of Ma`afu's ambition to rule all the *matanitu* of Fiji.

Goodenough, in some measure prepared for Cakobau's prevarication, assured them that if Ma`afu, alone among the chiefs, held out against Cession, he would proceed to Lau to consult the "lesser chiefs" under Ma`afu's rule. Cakobau assured the Commodore that only "foolish people", all of them Tongans, supported Ma`afu's views. Hastening to bolster the Commissioners' support against his Viceroy, Cakobau compared oppressive Tongan rule with the prospect of British control. "Tonga oppresses but ... Fiji will be well governed by England. [Cakobau's] only fear is Ma`afu; let him be sent away. The only chief who pays attention to Ma`afu is Tui Cakau. The chiefs under Ma`afu detest his rule". Cakobau ended by reiterating to the Commissioners that, among the principal chiefs, "Ma`afu alone keeps off and would like to take a piece of Fiji and give it to Tonga ... Ma`afu keeps his people in the old state of semi-slavery. All should not be made for the benefit of one man". His diatribe against his rival was effectively a plea to the Commissioners to ensure the political integrity of Fiji by ridding it, once and for all, of the Tongan interloper. In a reference to Consul William Pritchard's successful moves 15 years earlier to exclude Ma`afu from the decision-making process, Cakobau recalled, "on Ma`afu being declared a foreigner, it was twice agreed that he should not sit at the meeting as a Fijian chief. This was a *manawa lailai* [small man of war]".⁷⁰ Goodenough was wary, however, and sought to reassure the King without agreeing to dispense with Ma`afu:

if the chiefs were of one mind, with the exception of Ma`afu, and we were told that Ma`afu did not really represent the opinions and wishes of the ... chiefs and people under him, we would then enquire directly from those chiefs and people, without necessarily calling in Ma`afu himself.⁷¹

Even before this exchange, which Goodenough thought significant enough to record at length in his journal, the Commodore was well acquainted with the reputation, if not the ambition, of the chief of Lau. He had already advised Swanston, Minister for Native Affairs, that he and Layard could only "respect the rights and powers who are in existence, however they were acquired in the past". Ma`afu could not be cast aside. Nevertheless, the Commissioners were prepared to proceed against his wishes, especially if they learned that the lesser chiefs of Lau were not of one mind with their paramount. A sensible approach, certainly, although the Commodore, after all he had heard, appeared already prejudiced against the Viceroy: "We could not, of course, listen for a moment

⁷⁰ *Manawa lailai*: small man-of-war, a suggestion that Ma`afu was of little consequence. I am grateful to Mr Sitiveni Yaqona for explaining this obscure phrase. Goodenough, MS Journal, 26 Jan 1874.

⁷¹ Goodenough, MS Journal, 26 Jan 1874.

to his [Ma`afu's] claims of independence, when we know what he has said and done".⁷² Goodenough, in the face of his ill-concealed antipathy for Thurston and his growing familiarity with Cakobau's various anxieties, evinced both confidence and a sense of moral rectitude in dealing with both the King and the leaders of Fiji's embattled government. He must have been curious to lay eyes on the chief whose name had had heard above all others. Sailing from Levuka on 26 January, three days after arriving from Lau, the *Xarifa* pulled alongside HMS *Pearl*, which lay at anchor off the Rewa delta.⁷³ The long-awaited meeting occurred when, after going ashore in the morning to confer with Cakobau, Goodenough returned at 11:20 "and sent for Ma`afu who came. Ma`afu staid [sic] to lunch. He is a man of the world and we were soon on winking terms". Following some banter where the two men took each other's measure, Ma`afu revealed something of his worldly wisdom in his response to Goodenough's query about the perennial problem of Lauan taxes:

Ma`afu once very happily hit off the great blot in the Fijian government – the utter want of proportion between its expenditure and the results achieved. He had come alongside the *Dido* in his pretty little yacht, the *Xarifa*, once the pride of Port Jackson. After admiring for some time one of the two enormous guns the *Dido* carries amidships, he said to Captain Chapman, 'Xarifa carry that gun, eh, Captain?' 'Oh no', replied Captain Chapman, 'Xarifa too small. Put that on Xarifa, and Xarifa go down'. When this same chief of Lau was asked by Commodore Goodenough why he would not send his taxes down to the Government in Levuka, he gave a pointed answer, not at all flattering to the authorities. 'Why should I?' he asked. 'I live in the Windward islands. When I cut down a coconut tree it floats down to the Leeward islands, but, like the taxes, no part ever comes back'.⁷⁴

Along with Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, a fellow luncheon guest, Ma`afu remained on board long enough to witness the anchor weighed before the *Pearl's* departure. He was able to enjoy a final riposte with his host, who asked him, "Have you an English secretary?" "No a Tongan", Ma`afu replied. "When you take over the government, I will ask for an honest English man for my secretary".⁷⁵ Ma`afu did of course have an English secretary, or at least a British subject, in the person of George Bayley. In speaking of the day when Goodenough would "take over the government", Ma`afu judiciously neglected to mention that that task was one he hoped to fulfil himself.

72 Goodenough to Swanston, 21 Jan 1874, Correspondence with (mainly from) Commodore James G. Goodenough of HMS "Pearl", Doc. 36.

73 Jesse Carey to Chapman, 12 Feb 1874, Jesse Carey Letterbook.

74 TA special correspondent, quoted in *FT*, 13 Jan 1875, adapted from Goodenough, MS Journal, 27 Jan 1874.

75 *ibid.*

Early in February, the *Fiji Times*, lamenting the "prostrate" economy of the islands, expressed optimism at the prospect of imminent change. "Cakobau and Ma`afu are both favourable to the project [of annexation]", the editor enthused, an ingenuous view considering the opinion the Viceroy privately expressed to his *matapule*.⁷⁶ Many parts of Fiji were certainly in need of change: following a visit to Cakaudrove, Swanston reported that "the people are crying out in despair at the lala of their chief, and their women are turned by the chief to his own account without stint". These were some of the same afflictions Ma`afu had recently outlawed in Lakeba. Macuata, Swanston added, was reputed to be "in an utterly disorganised state so far as Government is concerned".⁷⁷ Moreover, despite Ma`afu's reforms "favourable to the cause of religion and morality" at Lakeba, there was dissension even there. Percival Friend, Government Agent on the island, complained of Ma`afu's decree that the old *Tovata* laws should be the only legal authority, an edict that earned the displeasure of his kinsman Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, Lieutenant-Governor of Lau. Further, the chiefs refused to submit their taxes in kind "without an order direct from [Tui Lau]". George Bayley had come down to collect, on Ma`afu's behalf, rents from European leaseholders on the island. Friend correctly observed that "the future prospects of good government ... depend on Tui Lau", as long as he understood "that the laws of the Kingdom alone be in force ... and that Tevita has power to act on his own responsibility in Ma`afu's absence".⁷⁸ Even Hennings protested about Ma`afu's hold over the Lakeba chiefs, with the consequence that Cabinet formally conferred with Ma`afu on the subject. The Viceroy ordered a messenger to proceed to Lakeba with instructions for them to hand over their taxes, although with what result is unknown.⁷⁹ Despite his social reforms, Ma`afu's power over the chiefs, people and settlers on Lakeba remained as strong as ever. It seemed that annexation was the only means whereby that power might be broken.

Ma`afu unintentionally brought an uncharacteristic unity to Fiji's cabinet. On 9 February, co-incidentally the day Tui Cakau arrived from Wairiki, Thurston recorded "dissension" in Cabinet, with the Premier and Treasurer at odds over the means to reduce expenditure. "The harmony of Cabinet is destroyed", Thurston lamented.⁸⁰ Yet there was one matter on which Cabinet was unanimous: Tui Lau's unpaid taxes. The next day, a letter was despatched instructing him to submit "without further delay" the native taxes from Lau for the year ending 30 June 1873, as well as rents from the same period for Lakeba, Moala, Totoya and Cicia, altogether estimated to be worth £2,500. Ma`afu was also required to "cause" the immediate collection of the equivalent taxes and rents for the first half of the

76 *FT*, 7 Feb 1874.

77 Swanston, Journal, 5 Feb 1874.

78 P.S. Friend to Hon. Howard Clarkson, 6 Feb 1874, GHP Bundle 15.

79 Hennings to Clarkson, 8 Feb 1874, minute by Clarkson, 13 Feb 1874, CG Set 10.

80 Thurston, Diary, 9 Feb 1874.

current financial year. Cabinet viewed “with extreme regret” Ma`afu’s failure to honour his promise of five months earlier, when he had agreed to submit the taxes and, in the event of his failure to comply now, would consider the overdue revenue a charge on his personal estate, which appears to indicate a willingness to sue the Viceroy.⁸¹ In the light of pressures building on the government, it is likely that Cabinet sought to force Ma`afu either to offer his support, through payment of his outstanding taxes, or to leave Fiji altogether.⁸² These instructions were sent to Ma`afu on the same day as Consul Layard advised Thurston that the Commissioners’ support for the government would be withdrawn if any attempt were made “to change its character in an illegal and unconstitutional manner”.⁸³

Following his delayed arrival from Lau and despite these peremptory instructions from the government, Ma`afu would remain a central figure in the continuing negotiations over Cession. He returned to Levuka from Bau on 12 February, much to the puzzlement of Thurston, always suspicious of the Viceroy’s activities.⁸⁴ Frederick Langham, superintendent of the Wesleyan mission in Fiji and a long-time resident of Bau, who might be considered an impartial observer, reported at this time that Ma`afu, “hitherto ... opposed to annexation”, had changed his mind after realising that the Fijian chiefs were unanimous in their support for the idea. The Viceroy moreover, Langham believed, had undergone “a most satisfactory interview with the Commissioner”, a reference to the meeting on board the *Pearl*. Langham noted that Woods and Thurston were both seeking to influence the chiefs against ceding their islands to Britain, “notwithstanding the Kingdom is in a state of bankruptcy, heavily in debt ... and with such an uncertain revenue”.⁸⁵ More significantly, the Commissioners, in a confidential despatch to the Colonial Secretary, reported their discussions with Ma`afu and advised that “both Cakobau and Ma`afu have assured us of their desire that the country should be Governed by Great Britain and have severally told us that the chiefs and people will follow their leading”. The two chiefs, along with others whom the Commissioners interviewed on Viti Levu, reported widespread resentment “on account of the poll tax”, which was fixed at 15 shillings per head for males aged 15 and over and four shillings for females, “far beyond the capacity of natives to pay”. The “general indebtedness of the country” was also a matter for chiefly concern. The Commissioners were preparing, reluctantly, to assume a temporary protectorate over Fiji, in order to prevent bloodshed. They favoured the British government’s assuming a much closer interest in the islands’ affairs: “the formation of ... Fiji ... into a Crown Colony seems to us ... the surest

81 Executive Council to HE the Viceroy, 10 Feb 1874, CG Set 2.

82 *FT*, 7 Feb 1874; Frederick Langham to Mr Alderman McArthur, 13 Feb 1874, CO 83/5.

83 Layard to Thurston, 10 Feb 1874, CG Set 10.

84 Thurston, Diary, 12 Feb 1874; *FT* 14 Feb 1874; *FG*, 14 Feb 1874.

85 Frederick Langham to Mr Alderman McArthur, 13 Feb 1874, CO 83/5.

and best mode" of dealing with the islands' difficulties.⁸⁶ If Cakobau and Ma`afu were indeed of the same view and able to carry the lesser chiefs and people with them, prospects for a smooth path to Cession appeared favourable indeed.

One explanation for Ma`afu's apparent change of mind was that suggested by the Commissioners and Langham: he became aware, after his first consultations at Bau, of the unanimous opinions of the principal Fijian chiefs. By this time Tui Cakau, Katonivere from Macuata and other chiefs from Rewa, Namosi, Nadroga, Serua and Kadavu had all arrived at Bau, although Tui Cakau, perhaps finding the prospect of lengthy negotiations somewhat daunting, was reported to be "drinking hard" and "surrounded by hordes of Tongans".⁸⁷ An urgent message was sent to summon Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba from Lakeba,⁸⁸ although there was a report, one month later, that Tevita had been "kidnapped" and sent to Tonga "as ... a kind of hostage". The *Fiji Times* considered the report to be part of "a tissue of misrepresentations indulged in with respect to [Ma`afu]".⁸⁹ It emerged later that Ma`afu, while purporting to obey the recent direction from Cabinet to submit Lakeba's outstanding taxes forthwith, had sent a message to authorise their collection, while secretly ordering that they be retained at Lomaloma.⁹⁰ There is also evidence that when the message was sent to summon Ratu Tevita, Ma`afu was aware that Tevita was not on Lakeba and was, in fact, in Tonga. According to Percival Friend, Tevita had left the island on 2 February for Tonga "in consequence of having received a private message from Ma`afu to do so".⁹¹ There was, however, more to Ma`afu's change of heart in Bau than the apparent solidarity of the indigenous chiefs. The Commissioners had assured Tui Lau that he would continue to rule his province if Cession did eventuate.⁹² It is unfortunate that, during this crucial time of decision for both Ma`afu and Fiji, we lack reliable evidence of his true state of mind. His seeming unanimity with the indigenous chiefs might have arisen because he believed that, as a minority of one among them, he could not hope to see his opinion prevail. It is also possible that the assurance of his continued rule in Lau was enough to ensure his support for Cession. The most politically astute among all the chiefs of Fiji, Ma`afu must have realised, following the Nasova "affray" and its aftermath, that some form of British rule was inevitable. Yet there remained the order for the rifles: was Ma`afu quietly confident that the chiefs would, in the end, decide against offering their islands to Britain, thus enabling him to pursue his dream,

86 Goodenough and Layard to Lord Kimberley, 13 Feb 1874 (confidential), FO 58/144. See also Goodenough to Secretary, Adm., 18 Feb 1874, FO 58/144.

87 Swanston, Diary, 14 Feb 1874; Thurston, *The Cession of Fiji to Great Britain*, 22 Feb 1874.

88 Swanston, Journal, 24 Feb 1874; Thurston, Diary, 24 Feb 1874. Ratu Tevita was to succeed his uncle, Taliai Tupou, as Tui Nayau.

89 *SMH*, 5 Jun 1874, report dated 2 May [1874]; *FT*, 1 Jul 1874.

90 Friend to Clarkson, 2 Apr 1874, CG Set 10.

91 Friend to Clarkson, 2 Apr 1874 (second letter), CG Set 10.

92 Swanston to Ma`afu, 18 Feb 1874, CG Set 3.

expressed to William Pritchard a decade earlier, to become “chief at Bau”?⁹³ Whatever was in his mind, the problem of Lauan taxes, on which Cakobau and his ministers expressed common purpose, would not go away.⁹⁴ There also remained the matter of the labourers Ma`afu had removed from Beqa in 1870 to undertake plantation work in Lau: after three and a half years, they had still not been repatriated. Ratu Emosi, Tui Beqa, wanted them back.⁹⁵ As Ma`afu sailed aboard the *Xarifa* back and forth from Levuka to Bau, it seemed that, despite the Commissioners’ declared satisfaction over the unanimity of outlook, all would not be plain sailing in the quest for an agreement over Cession.

Goodenough had been disingenuous in reporting to the Colonial Office that Cakobau and Ma`afu both favoured Cession. It is rare, among the annals of nineteenth century Fiji, to find the King as articulate and as animated as he was in his early discussions with the Commissioners. He was effectively pleading with them to rid him of the turbulent Tongan and was willing to engage in prevarication and even outright deception to achieve that long-desired goal. But Ma`afu could not be sent away and, as his secret message to Lakeba revealed, he was pursuing his own agenda in defiance of his assurances to the Commissioners, the King and the ministers. They all distrusted him: Swanston, following a discussion with the King and Ratu Epeli at Bau on 20 February, noted their determination “that Ma`afu shall not be considered in any way in connection with annexation”.⁹⁶ Cakobau went further only three days later, asserting to Swanston “that in order to assure unanimity in the future, [Ma`afu] must retire from Fiji. The whole of his conduct ... since joining the government has been so false as to render any faith in him impossible. And this is the general feeling among the great bulk of the Fijian chieftains”.⁹⁷ Thurston noted on the same day, “Ma`afu seemed very uneasy and shifty. [He] asked me if it was true he was to be reduced in rank and placed below David [Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba]. He is evidently playing a double game all round”.⁹⁸ The Commodore had been long enough in Fiji to appreciate these sentiments. With the assembled chiefs apparently resolved to exclude Ma`afu from their councils, the Commissioners “determined to let it be no business of ours”.⁹⁹ So anxious was Goodenough to see his mission to a successful conclusion, which could be achieved by an offer of Cession, he was willing deliberately to distort the situation to the Colonial Office, as Cakobau had in turn distorted the facts to him, in order to coax into action a government which, as he well knew, remained reluctant to extend Great Britain’s imperial sway.

93 See Ch. 6, n. 203.

94 Memorandum for the Premier, 19 Feb 1874, GHP, Bundle 15.

95 Walter Carver (Secretary to Ratu Emosi) to Swanston, 26 Feb 1874, GHP Bundle 15. See also Ch. 9.

96 Swanston, Journal, 20 Feb 1874.

97 *ibid.*, 23 Feb 1874.

98 Thurston, Diary, 23 Feb 1874.

99 Goodenough, Journal, 25 Feb 1874. See also Thurston, Diary, 27 Feb 1874.

The consequences of Ma`afu's "double game" would not become apparent until the formal chiefly conclave began at Bau on Monday 2 March. In the meantime, the Commissioners attended a public meeting at Levuka on 25 February, where they were presented with a petition in favour of annexation, "signed by all but three settlers who have refused".¹⁰⁰ Later the same day, prompted by news of the imminent chiefly gathering, the Commissioners sailed for Bau.¹⁰¹ The "grand council", initially planned for Levuka, was moved to Bau on the orders of Cakobau, who declared, with reason, that whatever decision was reached should be communicated from Bau, "the recognised seat of authority among Fijians".¹⁰² Thurston was also aware that the chiefs could never be free of interference if they conferred at Levuka.¹⁰³ By 25 February, all of Fiji's principal chiefs, with the exceptions of Ritova from Macuata and Tui Bua, had reached Bau. Ritova had been in Levuka in January, supposedly bringing down his taxes, but was the victim of an attempt "to seize him and carry him off, a prisoner, to Bau", owing to his refusal to submit his taxes to the district warden "until the new government is formed". He possessed "a troop of his own", drilled daily, ready to resist any attempt to prise the taxes from him.¹⁰⁴ It was probably during this visit to Levuka that Ritova sent a *tabua* to Ma`afu "for armed help".¹⁰⁵ If these claims, made three months later, were true, it must have been apparent that Ma`afu was not the only provincial chief ready to use armed force to resist the waning authority of the central government.

During preliminary discussions in late February, Goodenough reminded the chiefs that the impetus for Cession had come from them rather than from the British government, which would prefer to see an effective local administration in place. Touching on the chiefs' principal concern, the Commodore advised them that their customary privileges would be preserved, should they decide in favour of Cession.¹⁰⁶ On 26 February, after returning to the *Pearl* from discussions on shore at Bau and noting the *Xarifa* riding at anchor nearby, Goodenough invited Ma`afu on board. The chief was asked to stay to dinner, where he joined two other guests, Thurston and Swanston. During the meal, Thurston thought Ma`afu "cold and sulky", a demeanour which probably resulted from the announcement by his fellow guests that his place in the new order would be "considered a Fijian question entirely"; neither Thurston, Swanston nor the Commissioners would play a part.¹⁰⁷ Sione Mafi remembered that during the "splendid dinner",

100 *FT*, 14 Mar 1874.

101 Thurston, "Cession"; Goodenough, Letter to William McArthur, 25 Feb 1874.

102 Thurston to Goodenough and Layard, 24 Feb 1874, CG Set 23.

103 *FG*, 28 Feb 1874.

104 Thomas Suckling HMS *Renard* at Levuka to HBM Consul, 29 Apr 1874, enc. in Goodenough to Adm., 3 Jul 1874, FO 58/145. See also A.E. Dupuis, Commander and Senior Officer, Fiji Station, to HBM Consul, 26 May 1874, Im Thurn Papers.

105 Swanston, Journal, 15 Dec 1874.

106 Goodenough, Journal, 25 Feb et seq.

107 Thurston, Diary, 27 Feb 1874.

Goodenough asked Ma`afu why he now favoured annexation. “‘ Because it was to give peace to the land’. The Commodore asked if he had any other reason. ‘No, I have worked in Fiji to stop cannibalism and fighting but it cannot be done’. Then we talked and looked around the ship”.¹⁰⁸ Goodenough, in marked contrast to Thurston and Swanston, appears to have developed a liking for Ma`afu, whom he described as “a fine fellow certainly”. Paying a social call to the *Xarifa* on the day after the memorable dinner, the Commodore, finding the Viceroy “out of sorts”, invited him to breakfast the next day.¹⁰⁹

During these preliminary discussions, the chiefs sought to guarantee their place in any new order with a series of proposals, put to the Commissioners by Thurston, which involved matters of status and salaries. It was envisaged that Cakobau would be Tui Viti for life, with £2,000 per annum and a yacht, while other chiefs were to receive lesser salaries determined by their places in the hierarchy. Also, the principal chiefs were to be appointed as governors of their *matanitu*. While the Commissioners’ initial reaction was to advise Thurston that these requests were “absurd”, they were careful to note Ma`afu’s delicate position in the imminent deliberations, informing the Colonial Office that Tui Lau was “detested by the Fijian chiefs [who] were ... seeking to turn him out of Fiji”. “We may here remark”, the Commissioners added, “that the result is that he is not turned out, but remains in possession of the Windward Islands”.¹¹⁰ This last piece of advice was given in hindsight, following the Cession deliberations. The Commissioners’ words nevertheless bear eloquent witness to the sense of frustration felt by the indigenous chiefs in the days before the Council. Even though they “detested” Ma`afu, their only hope of “turning him out” lay in British intervention.

Although the chiefs’ initial demands would never be met, they arose in part from the chiefs’ awareness that, in any transfer of sovereignty to a foreign power, something of their prestige as rulers of the Fijian people would be sacrificed. They also appear to have held a degree of mistrust for the Commissioners, whom they saw as representing European interests in Fiji and whom they knew to be consulting Ma`afu frequently. In the latter respect their fears were well founded, at least as far as the frequency of meetings was concerned. Goodenough, who evinced some sympathy for Ma`afu’s position if Cession were to come about, conferred with him again on Saturday 28 February, the last working day before the chiefs’ formal deliberations began:

Ma`afu came and we gradually got on to politics. I told him that the chiefs did not want to treat him as a Fijian chief and would not so

108 Statement of Mafi.

109 Goodenough, *Journal*, 27 Feb 1874.

110 Goodenough and Layard to Lord Kimberley, 19 Mar 1874, FO 58/145.

consider him, and he folded his arms and braced himself for the fight. I see some men shirk in time of danger but you rise superior to fate and are ready for a fight. `Ah,' he said, `I don't mind these Fijians but the whites are too many for me. What can I do?'

With Thurston still hoping that the existing government could continue in some form, albeit with a vastly reduced expenditure, Ma`afu, having retired to the *Xarifa*, came on board the *Pearl* later the same day. Goodenough, still in sympathy, "advised him to go to the Council of chiefs on Monday and to see Mr Thurston in the evening".¹¹¹ The suggestion that Ma`afu consult Thurston, although probably made in good faith, was unwise, in view of pressure the Chief Secretary had recently placed on the Viceroy. Having privately accused Ma`afu of "playing a double game", Thurston was less than straightforward himself. On Friday 27 February, he questioned Ma`afu privately

as to his views, and in learning that he was for annexation left him to return next day ... and to inform him that he was to be deposed from office as Viceroy. This before any trial had taken place, before accusations had been formally made or inquiry instituted in the presence of the other Governors, as was afterwards done. The object evidently was to frighten him, and thus induce him to acquiesce in views held by a few. But he was not to be frightened...¹¹²

Thurston's threat to Ma`afu was a measure of his desperation to preserve the existing government, rather than accept the loss of power which Cession would involve.

It is not difficult to discern Ma`afu's state of mind on the eve of the Council. Gazing from the deck of the *Xarifa*, he must have contemplated the bulk of HMS *Pearl* and the power it represented, a power with which he could never compete and which lay behind the European community, about whom he had despaired to the Commodore. There remained the Fijian chiefs, whom he felt he could overcome, despite their unremitting hostility, if only he and they were the only players on the field. On Sunday 1 March, the final day before the Council began, there is no record of Ma`afu's movements. It is certain, however, that thoughts of his looming confrontation with the chiefs, and perhaps also his plans for armed intervention against Bau, occupied his mind. He was not forgotten in discussions that day when Goodenough paid an afternoon call on Swanston. The Commodore was blunt with the Minister:

[I] told him very seriously that he must tell Cakobau that Ma`afu's position must be respected whatever happened and that nothing must be

111 Goodenough, Journal, 28 Feb 1874.

112 Langham to McArthur, 18 Mar 1874, enc. with McArthur to CO, 22 May 1874, CO 83/5.

done to make our presence here an injury to him. If there be annexation then we must take things as we find them and if there be no annexation Ma`afu must go back to his land untouched.

Swanston was requested to deliver these injunctions to Cakobau on the morrow, before the Council commenced, while interpreter Marshall Moore, also present, was to remind the other chiefs at the conclave, "especially Ratu Savenaca", Cakobau's brother.¹¹³ Goodenough, always ready to dictate to chiefs and ministers alike, was alone among the Europeans involved in Cession in his efforts to offer some support to Ma`afu.

The Viceroy's moodiness during the preceding few days bore witness to the fact that he harboured no illusions about the Council, where he knew he would have to fight to retain his power. Soon after deliberations began on the Monday, Ma`afu took the initiative by stating that he had come only to listen, not to speak. "I hear I am superseded", he added. When a vote of no confidence in the ministers was mooted, Ma`afu declined to participate, saying, "Let no-one do anything he does not understand. Why were we told last year that the great Powers believed in us and now we are talking about giving the land away?" His tactics failed, since "the King, Savenaca and others said they did understand, and Ma`afu was left in a minority of one".¹¹⁴ Seemingly undaunted and displaying a "very unpleasant" demeanour, Ma`afu asked for details of the charges against him. They were "appropriating the whole revenue of Lau for two years and a half, carrying on the Tovata laws and getting \$45,000 out of Treasury on the strength of his good faith and honour". After lunch, Ma`afu answered the charges by claiming that Louis Biganzoli, former secretary for Lau, had told him that he was to collect all revenues, pay his own salary and submit the balance to Treasury. Unfortunately, Ma`afu claimed, the revenues had never been sufficient even for his salary, much less payments to Treasury. He unwisely added that he had never believed in the government or the ministers, who possessed too many clerks. "Yet when shown Orders in Council signed by himself, he said he had forgotten". He proved himself a minority of one indeed, but worse was to come. "The King ordered Swanston to state his views to the Council which he did, reviewing all Ma`afu's antecedents, and finishing by telling him that he was no longer Governor of Lau and that he must ... go back to Tonga in three months". Ma`afu thereupon left the meeting, but was expected to return next day.¹¹⁵

Goodenough effectively summarised the day's proceedings with his comment that the chiefs had not gone into Cession at all but had "only spit out their venom against Ma`afu".¹¹⁶ Tui Lau's defence against the charges could have

113 Goodenough, *Journal*, 1 Mar 1874.

114 Thurston, *Diary*, 2 Mar 1874.

115 *ibid.*

116 *ibid.*, 1–2 Mar 1874.

convinced no-one, especially since Biganzoli would have acted on Ma`afu's orders, rather than Ma`afu on Biganzoli's. No tax collection arrangements could have functioned in Lau without Ma`afu's specific approval. Despite his ignominious departure, however, he was able to retrieve his position to some extent the next day. With the debate proving to be acrimonious, albeit this time on the question of Cession, Ma`afu admitted his misdeeds in respect of taxation and promised to pay his debts. Cakobau appeared to want the ministers to assume responsibility for ousting Ma`afu and when this proved impossible, he relented and said that Tui Lau might remain in Fiji. Cakobau allowed him to retain office after Premier Woods described Ma`afu as *tamata vuku* (a wise man). Humiliated by his failure to force the issue over Ma`afu and exasperated with Woods for failing to support him, Cakobau indignantly closed the meeting and informed the Commissioners that they would have an answer the following day.¹¹⁷

Ma`afu could expect continuing loss of face as the negotiations continued. He could not yet know what his position would be if a favourable decision were made, despite the briefings he received from Swanston, his former secretary. It is also likely that he held discussions with Joeli Bulu, the Tongan missionary who was a resident of Bau and well versed in the Bauan chiefs' political strategy. Ma`afu's manoeuvres were in any case a side issue from the confrontation in Council between Cakobau and Commodore Goodenough. When Goodenough adopted a peremptory tone, advising the King on the Tuesday that he expected to learn that night, at "what hour tomorrow he will give his reply", Cakobau's response was, "If the Commodore asks me for some yams or a pig I will tell him the hour he can send for them. If he is asking me to give him the country I must take my own time to consider and reply. He should remember that if our country is given to England it is parted with ... forever".¹¹⁸ For the King, this consideration eclipsed, at least for the moment, even his antipathy towards his Tongan nemesis. He was forced to retreat from this intransigent position when, on Tuesday evening and early on Wednesday, informal meetings of the other chiefs expressed their determination that he should not cede their islands to Britain. When formal deliberations resumed on Wednesday morning, Cakobau "expressed regret at his hasty actions of yesterday and stated [they] arose from his annoyance that Ma`afu had been reinstated". Ma`afu absented himself from a meeting of provincial governors, called to discuss Cession, instead sending word to Swanston that he wished to see him. At their conference, after complimenting Swanston for having "exposed the true mind of the Bauan chiefs", Ma`afu asked for his views on Cession. "I think with you if we do not have annexation we

117 Thurston, Cession of Fiji; Thurston, Diary, 3 Mar 1874; Swanston, Journal, 3 Mar 1874; Goodenough, Journal, 3 Mar 1874.

118 Thurston, Cession of Fiji, 3 Mar 1874.

shall have trouble', was Swanston's careful reply. 'True', said Ma`afu. Then, after a pause, he added, 'These men are going to reject annexation', [whereupon] he turned on his heel and left."¹¹⁹

An account of Ma`afu's state of mind, recorded almost 50 years later, presents a picture of a deeply troubled chief pacing the beach at Bau, "none of his followers daring to go near him".¹²⁰ While there is no contemporary evidence to support this anecdote, the picture it paints of Ma`afu wrestling with the decision confronting him is convincing. One evening during the Council, Ma`afu sent Tui Bua to consult Swanston, who was to recall the meeting:

'Ma`afu has sent me', said the chief, 'to learn your true mind about annexation, as he is undecided ... and Tui Cakau hates the idea'. Ma`afu was a very reticent man. He would listen but express no opinion until the moment for action arrived. I had already spoken with him twice on the subject of annexation so as to ... acquaint him with my reasons why I urged it should come about ... I entered fully into the matter with Tui Bua. I pointed out to him that Ma`afu, although a de facto ruling chief in Fiji, was a Tongan, feared, not loved by the Fijian chiefs, and that his value as a political weight to keep things from being whipped into confusion at the expense of any Fijian-born chief was a thing of the past...¹²¹

The fears Ma`afu had expressed to Swanston were confirmed. During the afternoon, the chiefs prepared a letter for the Commissioners, stating their "desire ... that we should retain, in connection with our King, the Government of our country Fiji, and not give it up to any foreign nation". Sixteen chiefs, including Tui Cakau but not Ma`afu, signed.¹²² Much to Ma`afu's subsequent ire, Sione Mafi signed in his place, having been persuaded to do so, against his better judgment, by Tui Cakau.¹²³ It is possible that Ma`afu's sudden support for Cession had some effect on the chiefs, although most of them, concerned over loss of status and power, were not willing to see the British take control of Fiji. That evening, Ma`afu again ventured on board the *Pearl* to ask Goodenough whether he should add his signature to those of the other chiefs. He informed the Commissioner that Woods had warned the chiefs that, if annexation went ahead, they would be driven into the mountains and shot like pigs.¹²⁴ The Commissioners, when meeting the chiefs the next day, pointed out that a return to the previous debt-ridden government should not be contemplated. They advised the chiefs that, in the event of Cession, existing land tenure in Fiji would

119 Swanston, Journal, 4 Mar 1874.

120 T.R. St Johnston, *South Seas Reminiscences*, London 1922, 119–120.

121 Swanston, undated notebook, 1874, inserted between the pages of his diary, NAF.

122 The Chiefs of Bau to the Commissioners, 4 Mar 1874 (translation), FO 58/145. See also *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

123 The Chiefs of Fiji to Commodore Goodenough and Consul Layard, 6 Mar 1874, FO 58/145; Statement of Mafi.

124 Goodenough, Journal, 4 Mar 1874.

be respected.¹²⁵ Thurston took offence at the Commissioners' manner, writing of "a general attack upon the Ministers" and "specious promises".¹²⁶ Despite the reassurance and perhaps because of the Commissioners' bullying, the chiefs became alarmed when Goodenough repeated the apparent warning about the consequences of annexation, with Ma'afu adding that the dire prediction had come initially from Thurston, who was present. Furious, Thurston "abused Ma'afu roundly calling him names and saying that he was the source of all the trouble in Fiji". Thurston went on to call Ma'afu a liar to his face, in the presence of the King, other chiefs and the Commissioners.¹²⁷ He was to record his horror the same evening: referring to the supposed statement that Fijians would be driven into the mountains and "shot like pigs", the King said,

'Several chiefs have told me this', and I asked him to name one. He said, 'Ma'afu, who else'. Ma'afu had said several chiefs heard it. I asked Ma'afu who said [it] and to my horror the wretched liar said, 'Mr Thurston I heard you'. [I] put it all to the chiefs and the King who all said it was false. Then I told Ma'afu he was a liar and he looked so.¹²⁸

When the senior chiefs denied having heard the supposed remark from Thurston, "Ma'afu stuck to his story, only saying that it was said of India and of Tahiti", meaning that some indigenous people in those countries had met a similar fate.¹²⁹ His words might have touched a nerve already raw, since the chiefs were aware of the fate of the Aborigines after European settlement in Australia and of the loss of land sustained by the Maori in New Zealand. Cakobau was later to confirm the falsehood of Ma'afu's slur against Thurston, although Sione Mafi, who was present, later asserted that "all the chiefs" had agreed with Ma'afu that it was Thurston who made the remark about the British shooting Fijians.¹³⁰ There was also a contemporary press report to the effect that outside the Council, some of the chiefs confirmed that Thurston had indeed made the statements attributed to him by Ma'afu.¹³¹ Whatever the truth of the matter, Ma'afu's cause was not well served by the antagonism of Thurston who, as Mafi would relate, bore him a grudge ever after.

After the King had retired, in order to permit the other chiefs to put questions to the Commissioners, Ma'afu asked if there were a war among the chiefs under

125 Layard to FO, 17 May 1874, FO 58/142.

126 Thurston, Cession, 5 Mar 1874. See also Memorandum 5 Mar, 8.30 pm, Thurston, Diary, 5 Mar 1874.

127 Thurston, Diary, 5 Mar 1874.

128 *ibid.*

129 Goodenough, Journal, 5 Mar 1874. According to the *FT*, the remark had come from "one of the ministers", (*FT*, 11 Mar 1874). See also The Commission at Bau, Meeting of the Chiefs of Fiji and the Commodore and Consul at Bau, 5 Mar 1874, FO 58/145.

130 Langham to McArthur, 8 Mar 1874, *enc.* in McArthur to Lord Carnarvon, 22 May 1874, CO 83/5; Statement of Mafi.

131 *FT*, 18 Mar 1874, editorial.

the present government, "what part would be taken by the Commodore?" Goodenough's reply was that "he should not interfere except to forbid all ... English subjects to take part with the military of either side and that he should not allow native quarrels to interfere with British interests".¹³² One of the most dramatic moments during the negotiations followed: "Ma`afu was asked ... to speak and said, 'What is the use of my speaking? You know ... I am in favour of annexation and that I have said ... the Nasova government cannot last'".¹³³ Swanston agreed, reminding the chiefs that only the presence of a British man-of-war had prevented bloodshed at Nasova. An astonished Tui Cakau asked Ma`afu the question he above all the chiefs was entitled to ask: why had he changed his mind? Ma`afu replied that the affair at Nasova had caused him to alter his opinion: "without a strong government, matters will become more complicated. The whites do not respect the Fijian government, you the chiefs do not, you do not work together and troubles will arise which will result in our fighting".¹³⁴ While nobody could dispute Ma`afu's reasoning, his words reveal his lack of probity. His apparent lie concerning the dire fate awaiting Fijians after annexation was a measure of his desperation. When Tui Cakau reminded him of his earlier plea to Cakobau not "to give their land to England", Ma`afu left, "silently angry".¹³⁵ Shortly afterwards the meeting broke up for the day, with the King expected to give a final answer on the morrow.

While the import of the events at Nasova would have been apparent to a chief of such political acumen, Ma`afu's principal motivation for changing his mind was a desire to preserve his power in Lau after Cession, which he viewed as inevitable. Swanston was to record his final discussion with Ma`afu, held before dawn on the day of decision:

I pointed out to him that in consenting to annexation, he would have an assured position with a good salary from which he could at any moment retire if displeased with it, or if he was called to Tonga; that I believed that England would deal liberally and generously with the chiefs, and that to oppose annexation was but to postpone it for a short while. [I quoted] an old Fijian proverb equivalent to abandoning the substance to chase the shadow. Ma`afu listened in silence some time and then said, 'Tui Cakau wants us to return to our old Tovata, Rewa will join and then we have Lau, Cakaudrove, Macuata, Bua and Rewa, and let Bau look to itself'. He was then silent. I waited a while and urged again the certainty of trouble eventuating, and of assured evil resulting to him ... I quoted another proverb: He who kicks the spear point will hurt himself.

132 The Commission at Bau, Meeting of the Chiefs of Fiji.

133 Goodenough, *Journal*, 5 Mar 1874.

134 Swanston, *Journal*, 5 Mar 1874. See also "The Commission at Bau", *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

135 Thurston, *Diary*, 5 Mar 1874.

Ma'afu replied that he would do as Swanston advised, but unwillingly. He did not forget to add that if things turned out badly, he, Swanston, would bear the blame.¹³⁶

As his words to Swanston reveal, Ma'afu was well aware of the strength of the alliance he could command against Bau. Yet, with heavy pressure being brought to bear on the King and the chiefs to accept annexation, Ma'afu also knew that the British were not going to leave Fiji. Despite his change of tactics, his position was equivocal at best when the King formally rejected annexation the next morning, Friday 6 March. Cakobau's advice read, in part, "Although Fiji is a small and weak country we [the chiefs and I] can govern it, if the governments of foreign nations are friendly towards us".¹³⁷ While the Commissioners assured the King of their support, they urged that government expenditure be reduced and Cabinet reformed. But the King had already accepted the proffered resignation of the Cabinet and the accompanying recommendation from Woods that Thurston be summoned to "construct" a new government.¹³⁸ According to one settler, who spoke to several chiefs and others, Thurston had advised Cakobau not to agree to annexation but instead to establish a government of chiefs with Thurston himself as Premier.¹³⁹ Cakobau did ask Thurston to carry on the government, with Parliament to reassemble under the 1871 Constitution.¹⁴⁰ Goodenough privately disapproved of the decision, however, later noting that he "must think less well of chiefs who are unable to know their own minds".¹⁴¹ He ascribed the chiefs' prevarication to their fears, exacerbated by claims from "some persons", of loss of authority and land under Cession.¹⁴² Ma'afu reportedly attributed the rejection of Cession "to the influence of Mr Thurston, although flatly denied by that gentleman".¹⁴³ The chiefs authorised Thurston to include Ma'afu in "a special Council of Advice" formed to discuss future strategies with the Commissioners.¹⁴⁴ Ma'afu was named as Lieutenant Governor of Lau, given £1,000 and a clear title to the Yasayasa Moala.¹⁴⁵ Although this largesse was to encourage his adhesion to whatever new administration emerged, he was not to be swayed. On 12 March, Ma'afu formally advised the Commissioners, "it is my

136 Swanston, undated notebook.

137 Goodenough and Layard to Lord Carnarvon, 19 Mar 1874, enc. 1: Cakobau to Commissioners, 6 Mar 1874, CO 83/5. See also "Meeting of the Commodore with the King and Chiefs of Fiji at Bau, 6th March 1874", *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

138 Woods to Cakobau, 5 Mar 1874, Cakobau to Premier, 6 Mar 1874, *FG*, 11 Mar 1874.

139 W.H. Bruce to Swanston, n.d. [c. Mar 1874], Swanston, *Journal*, Vol. 2.

140 *FT*, 18 Mar 1874; *FG*, 11 Mar 1874; Thurston to British Consul, 7 Mar 1874, FO58/145; Thurston, *Diary*, 6 Mar 1874; Swanston, *Journal*, 6 Mar 1874; Goodenough, *Journal*, 9 Mar 1874; Layard to FO, 17 Mar 1874, FO58/142; Layard to FO, 19 Mar 1874, Enc. 3, FO58/145.

141 Goodenough, *Journal IV*, 6 Mar 1874.

142 Goodenough to Lord Kimberley, 18 Mar 1874, Goodenough Letter-Books 1873–1875.

143 Charles St Julian to W.L. Green, Hawaiian Minister of Foreign Affairs, n.d., quoted in *FT*, 4 Jul 1874.

144 Thurston, *Diary*, 10 Mar 1874.

145 *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

wish that the chiefs of Fiji give up the government of Fiji to Great Britain".¹⁴⁶ He left for Lau on the same day amid much speculation and no little fear concerning his immediate plans.¹⁴⁷

Thurston, still smarting from his confrontation with Ma`afu, had been reassured on the evening of 6 March when most of the leading chiefs promised him their support in his efforts to carry on the government. Woods even offered Cakobau's ring to Tui Cakau "as my loloma to you [and] in support of Mr Thurston".¹⁴⁸ Ma`afu was not present. Attempting to thwart the Viceroy at every turn, Thurston had been scheming against him on his home ground. William Hennings, writing to Thurston from Lomaloma, stated his belief that in the event of war, Ma`afu's government in Lau would not accept Cession and that Ma`afu would be most unlikely to apply to Tonga for help. Rather, "one or other of the chiefs who charge him with treachery would be glad to join him in a raid upon Bau".¹⁴⁹ Thurston would advise a group of Levuka merchants that "Tui Cakau had been informed by Tongans that it was the intention of the Government to deprive him of his authority, and put in his place Ratu Kuila a subordinate chief".¹⁵⁰ If this is true, it is highly likely that the misinformation represented an attempt by Ma`afu to influence his fellow chiefs against Cession. Thurston had warned Tui Cakau "not to heed Ma`afu", promising that he would be restored as Tui Vanua Levu should annexation not proceed. Thus was Tui Cakau induced to vote against the proposal.¹⁵¹

The most damning evidence concerning Thurston's relations with Ma`afu was provided by Frederick Langham, who recalled Thurston's threat, before the Council began, to dismiss Ma`afu as Viceroy if he persisted in supporting annexation.¹⁵² Langham believed Ma`afu's secession to be imminent and that war would inevitably follow.¹⁵³ Cakobau's order for Ma`afu and all the Tongans to quit Fiji, even if it had not been rescinded, would have been impossible to enforce. Sione Mafi recalled Ma`afu's reaction:

The Commodore ... asked him what he was going to do now that he and all Tongans were told to leave. Ma`afu laughed and said, 'They want to fight, very well it must be so'. The Commodore then asked him if he thought he could prevail against Bau. Ma`afu said, 'With ease if you do not interfere'. The Commodore said, 'I am inclined to assist you'.

146 Statement of Ma`afu, 12 Mar 1874, FO 58/145; Goodenough – Layard *Report*, 323.

147 *FT*, 14 Mar 1874.

148 Thurston, *Diary*, 6 Mar 1874.

149 Hennings to Thurston 1 Apr 1874, CG Set 10.

150 *FT*, 18 Mar 1874.

151 Goodenough, *Journal*, 20 Mar 1874.

152 See above, n. 112.

153 Langham to McArthur, 18 Mar 1874.

The Commodore and Consul then went away to the Pearl. Ma'afu sent for Forakau [skipper of the Xarifa] and told him to get plenty of wood and water on board the Xarifa. He said to me, 'Get ready to go to Tonga. You will not land again until you land in Nuku'alofa'. He gave me all I was to say to Tupou.

Had I gone, I was to come back with an army.¹⁵⁴

Lest it be thought that Ma'afu was the only one making plans for armed conflict, notice should be taken of advice to the Foreign Office by Consul Layard that government ministers had spent a large sum organising an army, consisting of "several thousand" men, which had been drilled at Nasova by Premier Woods. This "army", as Thurston supposedly informed Goodenough, was meant to intimidate the white opponents of the ministers.¹⁵⁵ Since a force of "several thousand" would have had to involve every white man in Fiji, to say nothing of those whose intimidation was sought, little credence can be given to Layard's assertion, beyond the fact that Thurston was apparently prepared to use armed force against his opponents. Ma'afu, on the other hand, would have had little trouble in collecting reinforcements in Tonga sufficient to ensure victory over Bau. After giving orders to Mafi to proceed to Tonga and return with "an army", Ma'afu himself, still at Bau, had a vessel ready to sail to Samoa to collect the rifles ordered from Germany. He changed his mind when visited by Goodenough, who persuaded him to return home to Lomaloma and wait for him there. In the meantime he had, according to Mafi, received a death threat from Savenaca, although a force of Buan people, waiting at Levuka, was ready to defend him.¹⁵⁶ Such were the circumstances surrounding Ma'afu's departure from Bau on 12 March.

In Levuka, meanwhile, the reaction to the chiefs' decision not to cede Fiji, coyly described in the press as one of "disappointment", was in fact closer to shock and anger.¹⁵⁷ Layard referred to "angry knots of men ... everywhere ... The White Residents ... would not have a repetition of the farce of Responsible Government, nor would they be domineered over, and trampled under foot, by the trio who had so long oppressed them".¹⁵⁸ An overstated case, certainly, but Layard never lost hope that Cession would eventuate. Particular resentment was felt against Thurston, who was believed to have acted deceitfully in advising the chiefs against Cession, despite earlier professing to favour the idea. In his own words, he was seen as "a triple-eyed villain and traitor".¹⁵⁹ Like some other parts of

154 Statement of Mafi.

155 Layard to FO, 17 Mar 1874, FO58/142.

156 Statement of Mafi.

157 *FG*, 11 Mar 1874.

158 Layard to FO, 17 Mar 1874, FO58/142.

159 "The True Story of the Annexation of Fiji", *T CJ*, 6 and 13 Jun 1874.

Fiji, Levuka was in turmoil, with no effective government in place. Nevertheless Thurston, as he formally advised the Commissioners on 7 March, had consented to the King's request to form a government and proposed to call Parliament into session.¹⁶⁰ His policy was to reduce expenditure, re-establish overseas credit, secure recognition from foreign governments and, in the reconvened Parliament, to amend the 1871 Constitution Act which had never been repealed.¹⁶¹ With the previous government bankrupt in all but name and the taxation system in a state of chaos, such goals could never be achieved. Yet Thurston proposed a range of salaries from £2,000 per annum for Cakobau, who was to be Tui Viti for life, down to £100 per annum for some of the provincial chiefs.¹⁶² In the face of an inherited debt of £82,000, Thurston's injunction to provincial governors to collect taxes "to the full" assumes an air of pathos.¹⁶³ Goodenough remained opposed to this new regime, however, and was to work tirelessly during the fortnight after the Council at Bau to reverse the chiefs' decision.

Thurston, still at Bau, was initially undaunted by the Commissioners' lack of support. On 10 March, the day he returned to Levuka, he called a Council of Chiefs. Informing them "that the Queen's representatives had taken umbrage at [his] appointment and policy", Thurston diplomatically sought the chiefs' instructions. Playing things very safely, they authorised him to confer with the foreign Consuls before deciding on future policy. "After discussion, the chiefs named Ma`afu, Ratu Epeli, Tui Bua, Ratu Savenaca, Tui Levuka, Na Cagi Levu and Tui Cakau [agreed] to accompany [Thurston] to Levuka as a special Council of Advice".¹⁶⁴ Despite this apparent common purpose with the Chief Secretary, Ma`afu sailed to Levuka separately from Thurston, with whom he remained in open enmity. Indeed, the Council appeared a strange creature, given that another of its members, Savenaca, had supposedly threatened Ma`afu's life.¹⁶⁵ Yet Ma`afu made a short stay in the capital, attending the first meeting of the Council of Advice on 12 March, when Thurston adopted a tactical approach. He read the chiefs a letter from Goodenough to the King, wherein the Commodore accused Thurston of lies and deception and recommended that Cakobau send for Robert Swanston instead. Although the Commissioners refused to admit the King's right to appoint any minister without the express approval of themselves and the Consuls, the chiefs vehemently rejected their advice. During a seemingly animated discussion, "Ma`afu alone remained silent", finally deciding to follow

160 Thurston to BC, 7 Mar 1874, CG Set 23; Goodenough, Journal, 9 Mar 1873.

161 *FG*, 7 Mar 1874.

162 Thurston Papers.

163 CG Set 3, F1/3, Mar 1874.

164 Thurston, Cession of Fiji; *FT*, 11 Mar 1874.

165 Statement of Mafi.

Tui Cakau in support for Thurston.¹⁶⁶ With the breach between Thurston and the Commodore appearing beyond repair, it must have been easy, then, to overlook the ominous implications of Ma`afu's brooding silence.

While Thurston considered the Commissioners' "insulting and aggressive" attitude to be part of their determination to dictate the course of the new administration, Goodenough determined to "forbid Mr Thurston accepting office ... It is the only way".¹⁶⁷ But Cakobau was having none of it; in reply to the letter Thurston had read to the Council of Advice, the King blithely informed Goodenough that "Mr Thurston is my Minister. I have appointed him and I desire he may be recognised".¹⁶⁸ In the meantime Langham, writing from his hilltop mission at Bau, expressed to the Commissioners his view that the chiefs' decision against annexation was not their own and that both King and Viceroy had been united in their support for the idea. Langham had not been present at the Council, which might explain his apparent *naïveté*, although his accurate comments about the dangers facing Fiji suggest that he was doing what he could to ensure that the question of Cession be reopened.¹⁶⁹

The missionary made no mention of Ma`afu, beyond his supposed unanimity of purpose with Cakobau, yet if the feared war did eventuate, Ma`afu, former Viceroy and still Tui Lau, would certainly be involved. With Cession rejected, Fiji's future, along with Ma`afu's, remained fraught. Visiting the *Pearl* on 12 March, Ma`afu signed a terse and formal statement: "It is my wish that the Chiefs of Fiji give up the Government of Fiji to Great Britain".¹⁷⁰ It is likely that pressure in some form, possibly the promise of future advantage, was brought to bear on Ma`afu by the Commodore as an inducement to make the declaration. There remained much anxiety concerning Ma`afu's future plans, not least because of the role of Levuka's German traders in encouraging him, well before the Council at Bau, to work against annexation. Swanston later claimed that in 1873 and early 1874, he had been aware that Ma`afu was procuring arms with the co-operation of William Hennings. Swanston had paid little heed, "as pressure could be laid on Ma`afu at any time to check any harmful action initiating on this point". Years afterwards, a German trader vouchsafed to Swanston that he and other traders knew it was "all over" when they saw Ma`afu arrive at Levuka from Bau, knowing that he had voted in favour of annexation. On being pressed by Swanston, the trader added that he, Hedemann and others "had combined to urge Ma`afu to refuse annexation and return to Lau with the Tovata chiefs", awaiting the arrival of an "army", as well as the rifles from Samoa. Whether the "army" was the force Ma`afu stood ready to summon from

166 Thurston, *Diary*, 10 Mar 1874.

167 Goodenough, *Journal*, 12 Mar 1874.

168 Quoted in *FT*, 14 Nov 1874.

169 Langham to Chapman, 12 Mar 1874, MOM 103.

170 Goodenough – Layard *Report*.

Tonga was not revealed. Tui Bua was supposedly involved in the conspiracy.¹⁷¹ Beyond Ma`afu's order with Hedemann for the 200 rifles, there is little evidence that such plans were indeed afoot. Yet the story is plausible; indeed the absence of evidence during the days following the Council at Bau must have added to the rumour and apprehension prevailing at Levuka.

Every shade of opinion, and indeed every shade of story, could be heard on the Levuka Beach as the import of the chiefs' decision was absorbed. Not unexpectedly, many of the stories involved Ma`afu. The *Fiji Gazette* contented itself with a formal tone in its leader: "We ... unhesitatingly say that in the present state of Fiji, Annexation is the best remedy".¹⁷² The *Fiji Times* in contrast spoke of "high jinks" at Bau that involved Ma`afu. The decision to depose him as Viceroy had supposedly been made because he was "an avowed annexationist" and "a troublesome customer". The newspaper referred to Ma`afu's defence against the charges that he had failed to submit tax revenues from Lau. He had done so, declared the *Fiji Times*, "because he knew that the central government were such rogues, and that the balance would be safer with him".¹⁷³ The leader writer, for all his levity, was presumably unaware of the order for the rifles or of the "army" waiting in Tonga. The more serious question remained unanswered: why had Ma`afu, having earlier seceded from the central government of Fiji, come to favour annexation, a scenario which would extinguish forever his hopes for a definitive confrontation with Bau? One contemporary visitor to Fiji, likewise unaware of Ma`afu's secret plans, ascribed the change of heart to the proffered title of Lieutenant-Governor of Lau, an annual salary of £800, an ex-gratia payment of £1,000 and a clear title to the Yasayasa Moala.¹⁷⁴ While such trinkets might have soothed Ma`afu's troubled heart, the fact remained that his name did not appear in Thurston's schedule of chiefly positions and salaries. The Council at Bau during the previous week had seen Ma`afu suffer the most severe humiliation of his life. Chiefs and ministers alike had revealed their enmity, leaving Ma`afu no choice but to acquiesce in the decision against annexation. Thurston, writing later of the reasons why that decision was made, mentioned their resentment against the "constant intercourse" between Goodenough and Cakobau's "most bitter enemies", including Ma`afu, "against whom the King and the Principal Fijian Chiefs have the most deep-seated hatred and jealousy, and by no means without cause".¹⁷⁵ In the immediate aftermath of the decision, Thurston who, according to Mafi, would forever carry a grudge against Ma`afu, was now bent on Ma`afu's permanent exclusion from whatever form of government might ensue in Fiji. When, on 12 March, only two days

171 Swanston, undated notebook.

172 *FG*, 14 Mar 1874.

173 *FT*, 14 Mar 1874.

174 Forbes, 300.

175 "The True Story of the Annexation of Fiji".

after returning to Levuka and immediately following his visit to the *Pearl*, Ma'afu set sail for Lau, Layard reported Ma'afu's return to his Viceroyalty "in high dudgeon ... he, Tui Cakau and Tui Macuata are ready for revolt".¹⁷⁶ Even Goodenough "'had not withheld his countenance'" from Ma'afu's plans, Thurston would later write, a claim lent credence by the Commodore himself when he visited Lau at the end of the month.¹⁷⁷

Layard was not alone in expressing fears about Ma'afu's future course of action. Langham, describing Ma'afu as being "disgusted" and "disappointed" at the treatment he had received, noted that the Viceroy had "gone to his home, no doubt fully intending to secede from the Government ... others will join him. The Government will try to coerce him. A war will be the result". The missionary believed that the presence of a British warship in Fijian waters was the only way to ensure peace.¹⁷⁸ Langham, like the Commissioners, believed that Ma'afu had been "from the first a strong advocate of giving up the government to Great Britain".¹⁷⁹ Thurston thought otherwise, as he explained to a delegation of six Levuka merchants who called on him on 18 March. He reminded them that while Ma'afu "was professing an ardent desire for Annexation" during the Council, he had been sending "emissaries" all over Bau,

In every house, working on the minds of the younger men, instilling ... an idea that whereas [it] did not much matter to King Cakobau, who was an old man, whether the country was ceded or not, it was robbing the younger chiefs of the territorial and seignorial rights they had so long enjoyed.

Thurston recalled for the merchants the advice to Tui Cakau "by Tongans" concerning the supposed consequences of annexation. The force of Thurston's argument was weakened somewhat by his reference to Ma'afu's being "constantly on board" the *Pearl* for consultations with the Commissioners, returning with charges "of various kinds" against Thurston himself. The Chief Secretary, chosen by Cakobau to direct a new government, saw a conspiracy. Throughout the Cession negotiations and since, he concluded, "The natives had ... seen Ma'afu made more of, as they thought, than the King, though the fact really was that he had made more of himself".¹⁸⁰

Thurston was determined that Ma'afu's days of making more of himself should be over for good. The day after his interview with the merchants, Thurston met the chiefs in Council at Draiba. The meeting was notable in two important ways: firstly, Thurston explained to the chiefs that he "could not form a Cabinet

176 Layard to FO, 17 Mar 1874.

177 "The True Story of the Annexation of Fiji".

178 Langham to McArthur, 18 Mar 1874.

179 Goodenough and Layard to Lord Kimberley, 19 Mar 1874, FO 58/145.

180 *FG*, 21 Mar 1874.

or carry on with the opposition offered by the British Commissioners. They passed a resolution asking me to hold office until things were settled". Only a reversal of the decision made at Bau could result in matters being "settled". Of almost equal significance was a Resolution passed by the Council dismissing Ma`afu from the governorship of Lau.¹⁸¹ Thurston wrote to the foreign Consuls, to the King of Tonga and to Ma`afu himself, seeking that "all extra territorial authorities" withhold recognition of "Henle Ma`afu, a naturalized Tongan Chief, and late Governor of Lau, whom the King and natural born Fijian chiefs have deposed". The King in Council, Thurston added, had no wish to interfere with Ma`afu's private rights,

but moved by the constant treachery and official malversation of the man, his incessant intrigue and spoliation they decree that Ma`afu no longer shall exercise gubernatorial [sic] authority or control over this and their people the natural born Fijians residing in ... Lau.¹⁸²

Ma`afu had, according to Thurston, "wilfully and wholly broken" the 1871 agreement whereby he joined the government of the Kingdom of Fiji and was recognised as a chief of Fiji.¹⁸³ The Chief Secretary's reasons for initiating the dismissal are complex, although they certainly involved the "grudge" arising from the Council at Bau. Thurston resented Ma`afu's continual intrigues behind the scenes at Bau and especially his evident lack of moral scruple, demonstrated by his continual changes of tack during the Council. Above all lay what Thurston saw as the Tongan's guile and deceit during the Council: his fury over Ma`afu's lies had metamorphosed into a determination to drive him forever from his adopted home.

Hennings, in his letter to Thurston referred to above, castigated him over Ma`afu's dismissal: "Twenty years' supremacy are not destroyed by a stroke of the pen".¹⁸⁴ Thurston's action was indeed fraught with potential for trouble. Swanston, still Ma`afu's confidant, would note that Ma`afu had been "in deadly earnest" concerning his plans for Fiji should annexation not eventuate. Swanston had warned Cakobau before negotiations began "that Rewa and Ma`afu had an understanding ... that Ma`afu and Rewa are prepared to go against you, and Ma`afu's word is in the hills". Ma`afu's resolve arose from his conviction that "the near future of Fiji and ... his own prosperity ... rested absolutely on the

181 Thurston, *Diary*, 19 Mar 1874.

182 Thurston, draft to all Consular officers, British first, to Ma`afu, the His Majesty the King of Tonga, nd [c. 19 Mar 1874], BC Papers.

183 Order in Council, 19 Mar 1874, CG Set 1.

184 See above, n. 148.

decision he might arrive at [concerning annexation]". Ma`afu believed that "for the moment, [he] had the power to say the word that would ... influence for all time ... the future of the group and its people".¹⁸⁵

When the Council of Advice, under Thurston's direction, passed its resolution dismissing him, Ma`afu was at home in Lomaloma, whence William Hennings was to write the most illuminating contemporary comment on the Council's action. Having been advised by Thurston of the dismissal, Hennings responded by informing the Chief Secretary that he could not act as the Warden for Lau in the new government without the authority of Ma`afu to back him.¹⁸⁶ He further declared that he would not proceed against Ma`afu until the various charges had been proven to the King and the chiefs. Hennings admonished Thurston for having sent "emissaries to preach revolt against Ma`afu's authority" in Lau, an action he properly described as "most ill-advised". According to Goodenough, who read Thurston's letter when he visited Lomaloma early in April, Thurston had advised Hennings that "mercenaries would probably be sent from Bau to order the people not to recognise Ma`afu as Tui Lau or to pay taxes to him, and saying that Ma`afu could not form an idea of the active and passive forces which would be brought to bear against him".

Hennings, in his response to the Chief Secretary, said it was he, Thurston, who could not "form an idea of the impossibility of removing Ma`afu". Hennings might have been referring to the rifles awaiting Ma`afu's pleasure in Samoa, as well as the "army" on standby in Tonga, arrangements of which the German trader was almost certainly aware. Furthermore, Thurston had not indicated to Hennings "to whom taxes were to be paid, or in whose name collected. A very proper letter", the Commodore thought Hennings' reply, with its measured response to Thurston's litany against his *bête noire*. Hennings advised Goodenough that Ma`afu, rather than applying to Tonga for help, would be more likely to launch a raid on Bau with the willing assistance of some Fijian chiefs. Ma`afu, Hennings declared, "can gain nothing by war, unless, of course, he is driven to defend himself and his position in Fiji". Hennings expressed the hope that the emissaries Thurston had sent would not retard the undeniable progress of Lau under Ma`afu's rule.

Hennings' letter effectively warned Thurston to abandon his plans to drive Ma`afu from Fiji. The trader was writing when the matter of Ma`afu's immediate future had been superseded as an issue of the moment by the announcement that the unexpected decision at Bau had been reversed. The *Fiji Times* articulated more moderate settler opinion in an uncharacteristically restrained leader on 18

185 Swanson, undated notebook c.1874 between the pages of his diary, FM. See also Langham to Swanson, 30 Sep 1889, Swanson Journals, Vol. 2.

186 Hennings had resigned as Warden four months earlier. Hennings to Thurston, 10 Nov 1873, CG Set 10.

March, when it referred to the exercise of “extraneous influence” on the chiefs at Bau, an influence that resulted in the decision against annexation. “We are now without any Government. The Commodore and Consul both state that”. More ominously, “Ma`afu and Tui Cakau have gone to their chiefdoms with a mutual understanding as to what their future action will be”. Although the editor, referring to the settlers’ bleak prospects, made no reference to the condition of the indigenous Fijians, his forebodings were real enough. A prospect of resolution had arisen the previous day when the Commissioners met the King at Nasova. Goodenough expressed his “surprise” at Thurston’s appointment as Minister, against his specific advice. The interview was marked by a bullying tone on the part of Goodenough, who reminded Cakobau that he could not hope to govern the resident Europeans and rebuked the King for the continuing excess of expenditure over income. Stating that it was “impossible to carry on the Government in the same way in future”, Goodenough advised the King to consult the foreign Consuls before another meeting the following day when, Goodenough declared, he would expect Cakobau “to listen to [his] advice about the Government”.¹⁸⁷

The Commodore’s tactics were successful. On 19 March, the King formally withdrew his letter of 6 March, wherein he announced that he and the chiefs would continue to govern Fiji. A formal offer of Cession, conveyed to the Commissioners on 20 March, stated, in part, “We offer to Her Majesty the Queen the Government of the Islands, but not the soil or the Fijian people”. As the Commissioners reminded the Colonial Office, the form of words reflected the principal chiefs’ greatest fears: loss of land and chiefly authority. Only the sovereignty of Fiji, and not the lands or their produce, was offered. Cakobau did not wish Fijians to become strangers in their own country “like the Tana or Api men who have come to work on European plantations”.¹⁸⁸ On 21 March, Cakobau and his chiefly entourage scudded out to the *Pearl* aboard the King’s *drua*. After being received with a 21-gun salute, Cakobau formally presented the Commissioners with a letter stating the chiefs’ desire “to cede the government of our state” to Queen Victoria, and advising that he had authorised Thurston to prepare the document outlining the conditions of Cession.¹⁸⁹ The King observed protocol to the extent of requesting Thurston to present the letter to the Commissioners “with English formality”.¹⁹⁰ A detailed account of the proceedings in the press noted that “the King and the chiefs had shaken off the sullen puzzled look of the last fortnight, and were particularly cheerful and friendly, and in high spirits, as if a weight were off their minds”. Among Fiji’s leading chiefs, Ratu Epeli, who

187 *FG*, 18 Mar 1874.

188 Goodenough and Layard to Kimberley, FO 58/145. Cakobau was referring to labourers brought from the islands of Tanna and Epi, in what is now Vanuatu.

189 *FT*, 25 Mar 1874; Deve Toganivalu, “Fiji and the Fijians during the 50 years now ending 1874–1924”, *TFS*, 1924, 15–24.

190 Thurston to Hope, 16 Apr 1874, Hope Letter-Journals.

was ill, and Ma'afu and Ritova, both absent from Levuka, were the only ones not present. Ma'afu was not thought likely to cause difficulties, being "known to have signified independently [his] wish for annexation".¹⁹¹

The Commissioners had achieved their object, although many of their difficulties along the way could be ascribed to Goodenough's heavy-handed approach which displeased the King and alienated Thurston, the most influential minister in the former government and one for whom the interests of the indigenous Fijians remained of crucial importance. Thurston, accepting the inevitable, expressed his hope "that when the British flag was hoisted [the Fijians] would cheer it instead of sitting down and regarding the change with dislike or sudden apathy".¹⁹² Consul Layard, who had never taken the lead in the Commissioners' dealings with the chiefs of Fiji, offered astute advice to the Foreign Office: "it is time Great Britain put down with a strong hand the pride and vagaries of a few upstart and dishonest British subjects".¹⁹³ While that day might soon be dawning, everything in the meantime would depend on Fiji's most powerful chief, nursing a wounded *amour-propre* at home. It is tempting to picture Ma'afu sitting alone in the Tongan enclave of Sawana, contiguous with Lomaloma, brooding over his defeats of the previous few weeks and making plans for his final move against Bau. In truth, the workings of his mind were closed to all those who recorded the historic change in Fiji's destiny witnessed in the brief ceremony on board the *Pearl*.

The reasons why Cakobau and his chiefs reversed their decision and presented their islands to Queen Victoria have been examined at length elsewhere. The King and chiefs, as Goodenough had observed, could not have governed Fiji's settler community, which in turn possessed no confidence in Thurston, Cakobau's appointee, whom they correctly considered as antipathetic to their largely selfish interests. There was no feasible alternative to Cession. On the day of the ceremony on board the *Pearl*, the *Fiji Times* spoke for many, both in Fiji and abroad:

And now at last the long-winded and expensive farce is drawing to a close. We have had an absurd Government, which has been to some the cause of inextinguishable laughter, and to others has suggested

`Thoughts that do lie too deep for tears'.¹⁹⁴

Aside from relief at the end of the "farce", the conditions accompanying the offer marked a crucial moment for Fiji. They were elaborated in a document of 19 Articles prepared by Thurston with the King's approval. The Articles detailed the future titles and salaries for Cakobau and other chiefs and, most

191 *FT*, 25 Mar 1874. See also n. 168 above.

192 *FG*, 21 Mar 1874.

193 Layard to Lord Granville, 17 Mar 1874, FO 58/142.

194 *FT*, 21 Mar 1874.

importantly, articulated the “broad principle ... that, the Fijian chiefs and people, in changing their allegiance retain all existing private rights real and personal”. On this basis, “the ruling chief of every tribe [was] to be recognised as the owner of the lands of his tribe, and guardian of their rights and interests”. These provisions, enshrining continuing Fijian ownership of land, were the reasons why the Colonial Office at first declined to accept the conditions. The new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Carnarvon, “Twitterers” to his friends, had been in office barely a month. He was an avowed imperialist who might have been expected to welcome a new Crown Colony to the Imperial embrace. Yet the Colonial Office, considering as “inadmissible” the principle laid down in Article 15 of the terms of Cession that the Fijian chiefs were to “retain all existing private rights, real and personal”, recommended to Carnarvon that the offer not be accepted.¹⁹⁵ Carnarvon did not agree, seeing annexation as the only means whereby the evils of the Melanesian labour trade could be eliminated, the anarchy prevailing in the large settler community and beyond brought under control, and the indigenous Fijians accorded a proper degree of protection which was conspicuously lacking under the settler regime. In Australia, people looked to “the restoration of commercial confidence in Sydney and Melbourne” which Cession might help to foster.¹⁹⁶ The conditions of Cession, so disquieting to bureaucrats of Whitehall, arose because of the chiefs’ determination never to relinquish control of land, the essence of their authority.

Cakobau, ever bewildered by the niceties of European constitutional debate, yet seemingly determined to preserve the traditional powers of Fiji’s chiefs, might have been motivated by cupidity as much as by a wish to preserve the ancient usages of his islands. According to a visiting naval officer, Thomas Suckling of HMS *Renard*, the King, who had lost two cutters through “carelessness”, was jealous of Ma`afu because of the fine yacht, the *Xarifa*, which that chief possessed. “Who says that Ma`afu can have a yacht and I can’t?” he was reported to have lamented. After a schooner, the *Lurline*, was built for him in Auckland and sailed to Fiji, Cakobau found himself unable to pay for it. Motivated by a promise from “that arch scoundrel Thurston” that he would be given the *Lurline* if he managed to prevent Cession, Cakobau ensured that the chiefs’ decision would be to retain control of the islands. When the schooner’s owners were apprised of Thurston’s offer, they in turn promised to present the King with her once the British flag flew at Levuka. “So the old boy came ... in a great hurry to withdraw his letter declining to annex the islands and has now signed ... It seems as if he were quite a little child and had set his heart on this toy”.¹⁹⁷

195 Robinson to Herbert, 11 Apr 1874, quoted in Ethel Drus, “The Colonial Office and the Annexation of Fiji”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, Vol. 32, 106.

196 *The Age*, 11 Apr 1874.

197 Letters of Thomas Suckling, 27 May 1874.

While the truth or otherwise of this assertion, which provides some comic relief from all the high drama of politics, cannot be determined, it was feasible, given Cakobau's delight in the trappings of office which had come his way from Europeans. Ma`afu, meanwhile, at home in Lomaloma with the *Xarifa* riding at anchor in the lagoon, took no part in the formal offer of Cession. Article Six of the offer formally appointed Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba as executive officer of the province of Lau in Ma`afu's place, with an annual allowance of £300.¹⁹⁸ Ma`afu remained absent from Levuka when a new and temporary administration was established, following consultations between Cakobau and Goodenough. The King appointed an Executive, later known as the Ad-Interim Government, comprising Thurston, who retained the designation of Chief Secretary, the two Commissioners, the American, German and Hawaiian Consuls, the Chief Justice Charles St Julian, and Ratu Epeli Nailatikau and Ratu Savenaca. A smaller Executive Council was also appointed, which included Thurston, planter Rupert Ryder as Minister of Finance and Trade, and Ratu Epeli and Ratu Savenaca as Ministers without Office.¹⁹⁹ This government was to administer Fiji until the decision of Whitehall concerning the Cession offer should become known.²⁰⁰ Although this new, streamlined administration succeeded, within three months, in paying the bulk of its outstanding debts, Fiji's economy remained severely depressed. The cotton industry had collapsed, many planters and traders had left Fiji and there was no significant inflow of capital. Yet, to read much of the official correspondence from the months following the offer of Cession is to gain the impression that, despite economic difficulties, Fiji had largely settled down following the turbulence of the Cakobau Government and the passions prevailing during the long and anguished debate over the future of the islands.

Frederick Langham believed that had the King and the chiefs not offered Fiji to Great Britain, Ma`afu would have remained distinctly aloof from government, as indeed Cakobau, the chiefs and Thurston were determined that he should.²⁰¹ Yet the earnest Langham, anxious as he was for Fiji's future, remained unaware of Ma`afu's plans. Ma`afu himself, in the aftermath of his deep humiliation at Bau, had seemingly been placated by the promise of a visit at home by Commodore Goodenough. The promise was kept on 31 March, when the *Pearl*, piloted by Ma`afu's coxswain, anchored "very neatly" inside the Vanuabalavu lagoon. The Commodore's social call has provided us with a rare picture of the public and private Ma`afu at his Fijian home.

198 Offered Cession of the Kingdom of Fiji to Her Britannic Majesty, Conditions thereof, enc. with Thurston to Goodenough and Layard, 11 Apr 1874, CG Set 23.

199 Resolutions adopted at a Conference of Representatives of the Natives and Foreign Residents in the Kingdom of Fiji, 23 Mar 1874, CG Set 21.

200 For public reaction to the Ad-Interim Government, see *FG*, 28 Mar 1874.

201 Langham to Chapman, 24 Mar 1874, MOM 103.

Shortly after the *Pearl* cast anchor, Goodenough and Ma`afu held an initial conference on board. Also present was missionary Isaac Rooney, who spoke “well” of Ma`afu and “highly” of King Tupou of Tonga. The Commodore then accompanied Ma`afu to his home, where he made the acquaintance of Elenoa, “a nice fat old lady”, and remarked on Ma`afu’s pet hawksbill turtles, which the chief kept in a trough and fed with small bivalve shellfish. At a subsequent meeting, evidence emerged of a growing rapport between Goodenough and the former Viceroy: “I told him, as a friend, of his deposition, letting him see that I thought very little of it indeed. He was a little bothered and confused but seemed gradually to pluck up heart as he saw that I was friendly to him”.

On shore again in the evening, Goodenough and Ma`afu sat by the green in Sawana to listen to the ship’s band. They were joined by “all the people of the town”, sitting in circles talking and enjoying the music. The Tongan community in Sawana, “very pleasant fellows” according to the Commodore, themselves sang in turn with the band. Goodenough appeared moved by the hospitality of a small, ordered society, seemingly at peace with itself, and by the quiet festivities held beside the engaging loveliness of the tranquil Vanuabalavu lagoon with its circle of small islands, while behind the village, massive in the encroaching night, rose the steep, brooding hills of the island’s mountain spine. The Commodore appeared at one with his hosts, calling out “Vinaka” when the songs finished, an acknowledgement which the Tongans returned in kind after the band ceased playing, shouting “mālie, mālie” in their turn.²⁰² “I certainly like those Tongans”, Goodenough would enthuse, “and wish they had been allowed to work their way in Pritchard’s time”.

The Commodore was referring to the actions of the former British Consul, William Pritchard, in thwarting Ma`afu’s rapidly maturing scheme for a final confrontation with Bau in 1858.²⁰³ Now, he had to consider whatever plans Ma`afu might have to achieve his long-held ambitions. On the morning after the musical treat, the beach at Lomaloma presented a very different scene: 180 of “Ma`afu’s men” were drilling there, “140 with rifles or arms of some sort and 150 in red jackets”. The red jackets were “cleverly always away from ships so as to be hidden”. Goodenough thought “amusing” the manoeuvres executed by the four companies of soldiers, although “they did a bayonet charge admirably”. Such a display would not have taken place unless Ma`afu had wanted the Commodore to see something of the military resources at his command. Goodenough proceeded from the beach to Ma`afu’s home, where he was presented with a great quantity of food, comprising a turtle weighing at least 450 pounds, as well as tons of fowls and yams. The ship’s company were in for a feast. Returning to watch the drill, Goodenough was in time to see

202 *Vinaka* (Fn) = thank you; *mālie* (Tn) = good, pleasing, splendid.

203 See above, Ch. 6.

the exercise conclude with a Fijian war dance and a shout, in unison, which the Commodore translated as "This is the club that shall destroy your enemies. With this weapon I will confound all who oppose you". Was the visitor meant to understand that Ma`afu would confound all those who opposed him in his long-delayed quest for power in Fiji?

Ma`afu and Goodenough held their final conference that evening, in Ma`afu's compound, with only Tongans present:

I told Ma`afu to abolish flogging the women and he promised to do so. Took him a present of £5 worth of ... soap, drill, blue jean, scissors combs etc which I hope will filter through to the people. He said it was the biggest present he had ever had. He is certainly a pleasant fellow to deal with. A rascal perhaps but a man and an open bold man without lying devices. Fearless and inviting confidence.²⁰⁴

On his final morning on Vanuabalavu, Goodenough rode with Siale`ataongo to visit local planter Charles Swayne, a future European Stipendiary Magistrate, and Henry Miller, son of a Wesleyan missionary and assistant to Ma`afu.²⁰⁵ His praise of the Tongans was undiminished: "They have brains". Furthermore, "all these [Tongan] girls seem to have the run of Ma`afu's house". Commodore Goodenough had clearly been impressed, both with Ma`afu and with the well-ordered and contented community of which he was the head. He had also witnessed a degree of military preparedness unequalled in Fiji. Given Goodenough's declared inclination, according to Mafi, to "assist" Ma`afu in the event of hostilities, it is likely that he parted company with his attentive host well disposed towards any move which Ma`afu might make towards a confrontation with Cakobau, should the offer of Cession be declined.²⁰⁶

Only a few days after the *Pearl* sailed from Vanuabalavu, Thurston received a "not very pleasant" letter from Goodenough concerning Ma`afu.²⁰⁷ Although the letter is apparently lost, it is likely that Thurston was displeased to read of the Commodore's favourable impressions of Tui Lau at home, as well as, perhaps, Goodenough's views concerning the illegality of the former Viceroy's dismissal. Whatever the nature of the unpleasantness, Thurston remained undaunted, writing to Captain Hope that he had "won the victory for the Fijians" in helping to achieve the offer of Cession.²⁰⁸ Part of that victory, in Thurston's eyes, entailed the dismissal of Ma`afu as Viceroy and Governor of Lau and, the Chief Secretary hoped, his final expulsion from Lau. Thurston lost little time in

204 Goodenough, Journal, 31 Mar – 3 Apr 1874.

205 Miller had leased 400 acres from Ma`afu in Dec 1870. By 1880 it had all been transferred to William Hennings, probably in payment of debts. LCC R953.

206 Goodenough, Journal, 31 Mar – 3 Apr 1874.

207 Thurston, Diary, 7 Apr 1874.

208 Thurston to Hope, 16 Apr 1874, Hope Letter-Journals.

formally advising the King of Tonga of Ma`afu's dismissal from his posts and of the offer of Cession. He felt it his duty, he wrote to Tupou, to "protest against any further dealings by Your Majesty's Government with [Ma`afu]". He also warned the King of the "disastrous results" of any favourable response by the King to Ma`afu's application for military assistance.²⁰⁹ Thurston's confidence was misplaced since, as Goodenough's visit had shown, Ma`afu remained firmly entrenched in Lau and in full command of his people. Percival Friend's earlier advice to Thurston had also shown Ma`afu to be in equal command of tax collection and distribution, and of the "executive officer", Ratu Tevita, who had been packed off to Tonga.²¹⁰

By apparent coincidence, a "Memorandum dated 6 April 1874 upon the Native Ownership of Land in Fiji", not published until 12 years later, made mention of Ma`afu's rights in Vanuabalavu under Fijian custom. "[The gift of] North Vanuabalavu by Tuikilakila to Ma`afu was in effect the disposition of the land ... and the services of the inhabitants. It was the services of the inhabitants, not his person, which was the subject of such a gift".²¹¹ While such might have been the intention of Tuikilakila 25 years earlier, the position was now very different. Ma`afu had long since established, through conquest and chiefly submissions, a sovereignty which Consul Henry Jones' enquiry in 1865 had found to be consistent with Fijian custom. Now, as Consul Layard reported to the Foreign Office, Ma`afu, despite his dismissal and the unremitting hostility of Fiji's *de facto* head of government, was determined to fight for his rights if the British rejected the offer of Cession.²¹² Indeed, an Australian newspaper correspondent reported on 16 April that "[Ma`afu] threatens war, and it is said he will commence hostilities against Cakobau shortly", although such a view reflected nothing more than idle gossip in Levuka.²¹³ For its part, the *Fiji Times* considered "a war between Cakobau and Ma`afu ... entirely out of the question at the present time". The leader writer, to take him at his word, believed Ma`afu to be "desirous of annexation", although "ready, in case of a negative reply from England, to swoop down on Cakobau".²¹⁴ Thurston was sufficiently concerned by this editorial to enclose it with a letter to Layard warning the Consul, as he had warned Tupou, against "any official recognition" of Ma`afu. Layard took note, while wisely reminding Thurston, "I never recognise newspaper reports".²¹⁵

While a decision from Whitehall was awaited, Ma`afu, at home in Lau, was probably little concerned either by Thurston's obsessive campaign against him

209 Thurston to HM the King of Tonga, 4 May 1874, CG Set 23.

210 See above, ns 91 and 92.

211 Memorandum (dated 6 April 1874) upon The Native Ownership of Land in Fiji, Suva 1886, Para. 7.

212 Layard to FO, 15 Apr 1874, FO 58/145.

213 *TCJ*, 9 May 1874.

214 *FT*, 18 Apr 1874.

215 Thurston to HBM Consul, 27 Apr 1874, CG Set 13; Layard to Thurston, 27 Apr 1874, CG Set 11.

or by rumours about his immediate intentions. Of greater significance for his prospects was the *Report* of Commodore Goodenough and Consul Layard, which they submitted to the Colonial Office on 10 April. In a lengthy consideration of Ma`afu's history and present circumstances, the Commissioners expressed the view that "had it not been for the influence of white men, and for the direct intervention of the Foreign Consuls and ships of war, Ma`afu would, before this, have become the principal, if not the sole, chief of Fiji". They also observed that in governing his people in Lau and in the management of his property, Ma`afu revealed "greater ability" than the other chiefs, who were "jealous of his influence and position". The *Report* suggested that the Commissioners had Ma`afu's measure, since they referred to efforts by the indigenous chiefs "to make use of British presence here" to turn Ma`afu permanently out of Fiji. They also observed, for the information of the Colonial Secretary, that "in his own district ... [Ma`afu] is greatly looked up to and is not disliked by the lesser Chiefs; and he is respected and liked by the white planters".

The Commissioners had shown fairness and objectivity in their consideration of Tui Lau. They continued in similar vein, referring to Ma`afu's absence from Levuka when the offer of Cession was signed and to the "paper" which he had earlier given them, "confirming his spoken wish and opinion that the islands should be offered to Great Britain". Revealing their distance from Thurston on the subject of Ma`afu, the Commissioners wrote that "We think [Ma`afu] would be the proper person to retain in the position of Chief of Lau ... though he has not attempted to make terms for himself. He has hitherto been in receipt of £800, and has probably made much more than that by contributions from natives". The Commissioners avoided any reference to Ma`afu's undoubted tax anomalies, knowledge of which might have influenced Lord Carnarvon against acceptance of the Commissioners' recommendations concerning Ma`afu's future. The Commodore and Consul had been unable fully to appreciate the cultural context in which Ma`afu operated. The prerogatives of a chief, whether Tongan or Fijian, had never included the enforced payment of taxes to a central bureaucracy.

The Commissioners, meticulous in the details they passed on to the Colonial Office, were careful to correct Thurston's comments on Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, made in his paper accompanying the offer of Cession. As they reminded Lord Carnarvon, "Tevita was merely a chief of the island of Lakeba, and has acted hitherto under Ma`afu, against whom he dare not do anything". Ratu Tevita was heir to his aged uncle, Taliai Tupou, as Tui Nayau, although his degree of subservience to Ma`afu was accurately described. The Commissioners erred in one other important respect, advising the Colonial Secretary, "It is true that Ma`afu is a Tongan and a stranger". A Tongan he certainly was; a stranger he could never be, considering the long history of Tongan involvement in Lau, to say nothing of Ma`afu's blood ties to the Vuanirewa family. The Commissioners

also described Cakobau's claims to control the Yasawas and other areas of western Fiji as "no better than those of Ma`afu over [Lau]". They might more accurately have stated that Ma`afu's claims, in respect of Lau, were considerably better than those of Cakobau in the west.

The Commissioners' final word on Ma`afu in their *Report* places Tui Lau in a correct context within the contemporary polity of Fiji. It also reflects their recent visit to Lomaloma:

It would please the Fijian chiefs to see Ma`afu expelled, but the rights of the latter in Lau are as good as many of theirs elsewhere, and his personal government of his own portion of the group is much more real and evident than that of any other Chief in Fiji.²¹⁶

Considering the circumstances surrounding the offer of Cession, to say nothing of the apprehension felt in Fiji about Ma`afu's future course of action, he had been well served by the Commissioners' accommodating remarks. He continued to administer Lau as though there were no momentous changes in the wind: visiting Lakeba in early May, he announced that there was no government in Lau except himself, in co-operation with the Commissioners.²¹⁷ Whether or not this statement was meant for Thurston's ears, it did constitute an effective refutation of the Chief Secretary's efforts to undermine his authority. Of course, no opinion of Ma`afu's, however prescient, would stop Thurston, who on 12 May moved in the Legislative Council that "a letter be written ... to Ma`afu, chief of Vanuabalavu, demanding an immediate payment of the taxes due for the Province of Lau up to 1 January 1874, and acquainting him that the same estimated to value £3,750 will remain a charge while unpaid against his personal estate. Question put and passed".²¹⁸ The *Fiji Times*, accurately describing this demand as "preposterous", questioned the right of the Ad-Interim Government, "appointed to maintain order and to prevent us from falling into a state of anarchy", to call on Ma`afu "to pay up for past delinquencies". The old Constitution had been abrogated, yet Ma`afu was being called to account under the old laws. The question was also asked as to how the Legislative Council had arrived at the figure of £3,750.²¹⁹ Layard supported the government, of which he was a member, to the extent of telling Ma`afu that he had no right to keep the taxes and reminding him that if he were patient, the Commissioners' promises to him would be kept. "The end is not yet come", wrote the Consul, who signed himself as "Your friend".²²⁰ It was hypothetical in any case. On Lakeba, Ratu Tevita, back from Tonga, handed over £67 worth of taxes in kind

216 Goodenough – Layard *Report*, Para. 57.

217 Friend to Thurston, 9 May 1874, CG Set 10.

218 *FG*, 26 May 1874, 2; *FT*, 30 May 1874.

219 *FT*, 30 May 1874.

220 Layard to Ma`afu, 29 May 1874, BC Papers.

to the Government Agent, Percival Friend, while Ma`afu had given all the oil collected in southern Lau to William Hennings. In the meantime, he continued to collect his rents for plantations leased to Europeans.²²¹ Ma`afu even found time to send his secretary, George Bayley, to complete a trigonometrical survey of the island of Cicia.²²² As for Hennings, aside from the money owed him by Ma`afu, the firm of which he was a partner, F. and W. Hennings of Levuka, Lomaloma and the Rewa River, had passed under "annexation" to the house of Rabone, Feez and Co. of Sydney. That firm's agent, Carl Sahl, told a meeting of creditors in Sydney that Hennings was indebted to Rabone, Feez for £60,000.²²³ With all these considerations, to ask Ma`afu to submit taxes to Levuka, however lawful or otherwise such a request might be, was to ask for the moon.

Although Ma`afu, no longer Viceroy or Governor of Lau but still Tui Lau, continued to administer his province, he did so in a kind of political limbo during the months of waiting for a decision from Whitehall. His position was considered with some discernment in a *Fiji Times* leader which, questioning the validity of the Ad-Interim Government's dismissal of Ma`afu, referred to that government's curious determination to maintain the laws of the former Kingdom of Fiji, even though the Commissioners had declared that the Kingdom's Constitution was annulled. If the old laws were considered to be still in force, then the Ad-Interim Government should have sought to impeach Ma`afu, as Governor of Lau, under the Executive Act, which defined a set of procedures for so doing. The Act provided for a "memorial" to the King, through the Legislative Council, after which the King would appoint three Supreme Court judges to hold a hearing to determine the justice or otherwise of any accusations raised in the "memorial". If the government were not prepared to follow the letter of the law, the newspaper opined, it should "leave Ma`afu alone". The government had no authority or right "to sit in high and irresponsible court over any man ... in the kingdom", especially since the Commissioners had informed the chiefs at Bau, during the Council in March, that they possessed no right to dismiss Ma`afu from his offices as Viceroy and Governor of Lau.

The newspaper's well-argued case recalls the Commissioners' assertion in their *Report* that Ma`afu enjoyed respect and support among Europeans living in Lau. It appeared from the *Fiji Times*' defence of his rights that he enjoyed such support elsewhere in Fiji. The newspaper mentioned the "iniquitous" demands on Ma`afu to pay taxes, demands based largely on estimates. The leader writer went to the heart of the campaign against Ma`afu:

221 Friend to Thurston, 19 May 1874, CG Set 10; Receipt, signed by Ma`afu, to Capt. Sewell for £7-16-0, being rent for Na Salia plantation, Cicia, for the year ending 31 Dec 1874, HP.

222 *FT*, 9 May 1874.

223 *TCJ*, 9 May 1874.

We can understand Cakobau being in favor of the course pursued, because he is ignorant of the principles of liberty, and moreover is jealous of Ma`afu's power and would gladly see him driven from Fiji at any price. We can comprehend Mr Thurston favoring the scheme because he has some spite to serve.

Other Fijian chiefs, readers were reminded, had failed to furnish their taxes. Why should Ma`afu alone be singled out? "There appears to be neither law nor equity about it".²²⁴

Such a defence of Ma`afu's rights would have awoken some sympathy among readers, although Thurston was unlikely to pay it heed. He was not to have his way, however, receiving a check from an unexpected quarter. Ratu Tevita, whom Thurston had appointed as Governor of Lau, advised Thurston that he was unable to act in Ma`afu's place. "I have always followed him hitherto and your letter [of appointment] does not alter my position or that of Ma`afu". Although expressing his willingness to act for the government of Fiji, Ratu Tevita urged Thurston "to leave matters as they were". In the meantime, he would attend "to the speedy gathering of taxes overdue".²²⁵ Although the newly appointed Special Commissioner for Lau, Charles Drury, believed that Ma`afu had pressured Tevita to resign, he was right in recalling Tevita's belief that Ma`afu was his father.²²⁶ Ma`afu was Tevita's older kinsman and one time companion in arms of Tevita's actual father, Vuetasau. Under Tongan and Fijian custom, Tevita could not but defer to Ma`afu in all things. In attempting to put Tevita in Ma`afu's place, Thurston had seriously miscalculated, evidence of a judgment clouded by "spite". Altogether, Thurston lacked the finesse necessary to deal with Ma`afu who, as so often, had made promises in Levuka and Bau which he had no intention of keeping. If Thurston had succeeded in expelling Ma`afu from Fiji, he would have effectively removed Cakaudrove and Macuata, as well as Lau, from government control, leaving the Ad-Interim Government exercising its authority only in Lomaiviti and a few other areas of central Fiji.

There is some evidence that Ratu Tevita, despite manifesting an unwavering loyalty to Ma`afu, might at least have tried to take up his proffered appointment. Lieutenant Suckling recorded that Tevita had come up to Lomaloma "to take up his new title", accompanied by about 50 followers. "Ma`afu saw his chance and at once sent 250 men under his son down to (Lakeba) on a visit all armed with muskets so that the new Tui Lau was in a fix". With Ma`afu's men having easily secured Lakeba and Tevita a virtual prisoner at Lomaloma, he wisely resigned "his new dignity" after ten days.

224 *FT*, 3 Jun 1874.

225 Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba to Thurston, 10 Jun 1874, CG 1/Temp. 18.

226 C.W. Drury to Thurston, 15 Jun 1874, CG Set 10.

Like many other visitors, Suckling took time to record his impressions of Tui Lau. "He is a fine fellow stands about 6 ft 3 and big in proportion". Ma`afu's determination to have his people learn trades was also noted. "There is not a carpenter's tool in existence he ... does not know how to use. He has a most wonderful collection". In addition, Ma`afu was "the possessor of some 4 or 5 breech loading double-barrelled guns [and] some half dozen breech loading rifles". Suckling continued:

On going into his house you will generally find him sitting on the floor (which is boarded) smoking and doing something generally sharpening some of his carpenters tools etc but always doing something. He will offer you a chair which I always decline. We are great friends and he laughs and pats me on the arm or shews me some other mark of friendship. His wife Eleanor is generally by him she is some what large and I should say weighs some 20 stone but she also is always busy. Charlie their son was away ... Charlie is a most veritable scamp and his father has often banished him for different periods.²²⁷

Ma`afu, it seemed, carried on his domestic life unconcerned by the various anguished debates elsewhere in Fiji, while public opinion, in so far as it was reflected in the press, remained sympathetic to him. One settler wrote of Ma`afu's help in securing the offer of annexation and cautioned against "assisting Thurston in venting his spite against Ma`afu".²²⁸ Although such sentiments were directed more against Thurston than in favour of Ma`afu, there remained a feeling that for all his admitted misdemeanours in respect of Lauan taxes, Ma`afu had, when dismissed as Governor of Lau, been denied an opportunity to defend himself. A resident of Levuka, writing to a friend in Sydney, declared that "Ma`afu is a vigorous, stern and (when it suits his purpose) cruel ruler", who denied some rights to his Lauan subjects, whom he nevertheless kept "in good order". Furthermore, it was "nonsense", the resident supposed, to imagine that in the event that Whitehall rejected annexation, the Commissioners would support Ma`afu in a "war".²²⁹ The *Fiji Times*, ever more vehement in its denunciation of the Provisional Legislative Council's edicts against Ma`afu, thought that the ministers must consider him "an utter fool". After all, the "Agreement on Windward taxes" had expressly permitted William Hennings to collect taxes in Lau, in money or kind, and to pay the Viceroy's salary from the proceeds, before submitting any surplus to Treasury. Under the terms of the Agreement, Hennings had placed the sum of £739-6-11, representing the proceeds of native taxes collected from 30 June 1872 to 31 May 1874, to Ma`afu's credit in his account at Hennings'

227 Letters of Thomas Suckling, 11 Jul 1874.

228 "A Looker On" to Editor, *FT*, 10 Jun 1874.

229 *SMH*, 10 Jul 1874.

store in Lomaloma.²³⁰ Tax collection methods in Lau were seen to be faulty, while the province had been “systematically neglected ... by an unscrupulous settler regime bent on fashioning Cakobau into their willing tool”.²³¹

While these opinions are illuminating, they tell us nothing of Ma`afu’s life on Vanuabalavu while he, along with the rest of Fiji, awaited news from London. Charles Drury, diligent in his duties, arrived at Lomaloma and found Ma`afu “in a very docile frame of mind”, keenly aware of his position and seemingly ready to “fall in” with Drury’s plans to gather overdue revenue. Drury, finding many irregularities in the administration of justice in Lau, sought permission from Thurston to have Tongan laws abolished in the province, as a means of reducing the magistrates’ tyranny over the people. Ma`afu, to Drury’s surprise, both acquiesced in the planned reforms and agreed to see that taxes were collected promptly. Drury, whose acquaintance with Ma`afu was as yet brief, would not have recognised a reversion to old habits when Ma`afu blamed the taxation difficulties on Hennings and Ratu Tevita. The Special Commissioner would soon learn, however.²³²

Ma`afu’s assurances to Drury recalled the “firm views against the passage of tax money out of Lau” which he had expressed to Commodore Goodenough five months earlier.²³³ Ma`afu enjoyed long experience of soothing the ears of his interlocutors with words he knew they wanted to hear. Now, though, with Thurston and his emissary baying at his heels, words in his defence from another would not go astray. They came in the form of a long letter addressed to the “Ministers ... representing the Government of Fiji” from William Hennings, who presented a reasoned defence of Ma`afu’s relations with the government. Ma`afu, Hennings declared, had exceeded all other chiefs of Fiji in “liberal and generous spirit”. Moreover, from July 1871 until March 1874, affairs of state had made Ma`afu almost a stranger to his people in Lau. Hennings outlined in some detail Ma`afu’s long service as Viceroy, while his influence was declared to be crucial in persuading Tui Cakau to join the Cakobau Government. Ma`afu’s “troops”, despatched to Levuka and elsewhere in defence of the Kingdom, were all “taxable men” who could not be expected to pay their taxes while absent on active service. Furthermore, the enforced departure from Lau of all Tongans “not properly settled” had deprived the province of much revenue. Most Fijians in Lau were “unable to work up the raw material” of their taxes, to say nothing of damage caused by successive “gales”. Finally, Hennings loftily advised Thurston, “I am not aware that [Ma`afu] has ever looked upon the fact of being deposed by men most of whom are his personal friends and some of

230 Statement by George Bayley, Secretary for Lau, 15 June 1874, CG 1/Temp. 18.

231 *FT*, 17 Jun 1874. See also *ibid.*, 24 Jun 1874.

232 Drury to Thurston, 23 May 1874 and 12 Jun 1874, CG Set 10. Drury did receive from Hennings a draft on Rabone Feez for £157 in payment for coconut oil, collected “as per Government contract”. Receipt dated 15 Jun 1874, CG 1/Temp. 18.

233 Goodenough, *Journal*, 27 Jan 1874.

whom owe their very existence to him – as a very serious matter". There was something in Ma`afu's soul, Hennings would have Thurston believe, that rose above the sordid politics of Levuka.²³⁴

Thurston, predictably, was uninterested either in Ma`afu's soul or in his reputation. In a detailed memorandum on Hennings' letter, apparently penned the day it came to hand, the Chief Secretary declared that the government had not impugned Ma`afu's career, as Hennings implied. It simply required Ma`afu to submit to Treasury the amounts of taxation he had misappropriated. Precise as always, Thurston pointed out that the taxation agreement cited by Hennings in Ma`afu's defence was no longer operative. He was right: the agreement, dated 4 January 1873, permitted Hennings to collect all taxes in Lau "which are or may become due at any time during this present year, 1873". The agreement was as much with Ma`afu as it was with Hennings, Thurston claimed, since it provided for Ma`afu's salary to be paid from taxation revenue. Thurston had long since done his homework on the subject of Lauan taxes; he was aware, for example, that Hennings had shipped taxes in kind from Moala and some nearby islands to Hamburg "in a German barque". He queried Hennings' claim that the amount of £739–6–11, deposited into Ma`afu's account at Hennings' store, was the most that could be gathered from the rich province of Lau.²³⁵ Other less well-endowed provinces had provided much greater revenue and in any case the 1873 agreement had provided for all taxes to be collected, not merely those sufficient to pay Ma`afu's salary.

Thurston's measured attack on Hennings, and through him Ma`afu, was not confined to the many shortcomings of Lauan tax arrangements. He explicitly refuted the German trader's assertion that Ma`afu, as Viceroy, had provided his services to the King "in a liberal and generous spirit", and that only Ma`afu had been able to quell "disturbances and troubles" in parts of Fiji beyond Cakobau's direct authority, such as western Viti Levu. Thurston recalled, again with reason, that Ma`afu had ignored requests to assume his responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief of Fiji against mountain people in Viti Levu who had murdered European settlers. With fighting under way in three separate quarters (upper Rewa, Wainunu on Vanua Levu and the mountains near Ba), Ma`afu had merely said that he would consult the other chiefs concerning the course of action "most conducive to the interests of Fiji and the welfare of the Whites in the disturbed Provinces". "All the while", Thurston declared, "Ma`afu remained inactive in Lau, waiting for the final overthrow of the King's forces, which he did not believe could sustain the effort it was called upon to make".

234 Hennings to Thurston, 15 Jun 1874, CG 1/Temp. 18.

235 See above, n. 223.

It was not the first time that Ma`afu's influence had been felt in the mountains of Viti Levu. Writing from England in 1869, missionary James Calvert recalled an appeal from two settlers whose plantations had been destroyed in raids by mountain tribes. The settlers, George Burt and Archilles Underwood, had "got up a petition to Ma`afu to come and clear out the mountains and reign there. Seventy white men on the Rewa river signed the petition, but Drew, the Vunivalu's secretary, prevailed upon him to give up".²³⁶ Now, though, the speed with which Thurston produced his diatribe against Ma`afu was as remarkable as the breadth and detail of its content. Not satisfied to portray a dissembling Viceroy waiting to pounce on a weakened King, the Chief Secretary denied that Ma`afu had been sent on "frequent political missions" in his official capacity. His vaunted mission to Cakaudrove in July 1873 had been "for the purpose of staying a general war throughout Vanua Levu – a war solely instigated by him". In a charge others levelled against Ma`afu, Thurston asserted that Tui Lau had sent Tongan missionaries to Macuata, Cakaudrove and elsewhere, "secretly inciting the people to resist the government".²³⁷ While such espionage, of its nature undocumented, can never be proven against Ma`afu, using the Tongan missionaries, in modern parlance, as secret agents, would have been fully consistent with his wider ambitions. In 1874, though, no proof was needed. Thurston would no more see the missionaries as innocent purveyors of the Gospel than he would accept that the European residents of Lau had applied to Ma`afu for protection, as Hennings claimed. The Chief Secretary's final verdict on Ma`afu, as a decision on Cession was awaited, was that "the records of Government and the experience of the oldest Foreign officials unite in proving Ma`afu to be an active instigator of treachery – a dangerous, dissembling man".²³⁸

While, as the *Fiji Times* was never loath to point out, Ma`afu was by no means the only tax defaulter among the chiefs of Fiji, there is no doubting the justice of many of the charges, at least those concerning native taxes, levelled against him by Thurston. Charles Drury, whose correspondence reveals his intimate knowledge of tax arrangements in Lau, expressed to Rupert Ryder, the new Finance Minister, his puzzlement concerning the fate of the bulk of those taxes, given that the people had apparently contributed the full amount.²³⁹ Drury, initially willing to accept Ma`afu's assurances, was becoming disillusioned. He believed that George Bayley, still Ma`afu's secretary, was influencing his master not to honour his assurances to Drury. If only six months' taxes were paid for the current year, instead of 12 months', the resulting large surplus would permit Bayley to recoup the back salary Ma`afu owed him. The idea was Bayley's, rather

236 James Calvert to Admiral Erskine MP, 25 May 1869, CO 881.

237 See Ch. 6, ns 53, 144 and 165 for the views of William Pritchard and Berthold Seemann concerning Ma`afu's use of Tongan missionaries as his "agents".

238 Chief Secretary's Memorandum on letter and enclosure from William Hennings, dated 15 June 1874, CG Set 1/Temp.18.

239 Drury to Rupert Ryder, 30 Jun 1874, CG Set 10.

than Ma`afu's, Drury advised Ryder.²⁴⁰ Drury, although a new chum in Lau, had quickly taken the province's pulse. Agreeing with Thurston concerning the need to rid Lau of the "tyranny" of Tongan laws, he announced plans to appoint Fijian magistrates in place of Tongans. Ma`afu had promised to co-operate, Drury assured a sceptical Thurston. Further, Drury would raise with Ma`afu the matter of Beqan labourers brought to Lau in 1870 and still awaiting repatriation. Drury pronounced himself aware of Ma`afu's talents for making "fine promises", although he was willing to use Ma`afu as far as he could without compromising the government. The greatest danger, Drury felt, lay in the possibility that the sympathetic opinion appearing in almost every issue of the *Fiji Times* might lead Ma`afu to believe that he was being hardly used.²⁴¹

This chapter began with a consideration of a chastened Ma`afu cooling his heels at home in Lomaloma following the failure of his attempt to secede from the ailing Cakobau Government. His fortunes had improved a year later, largely in consequence of the tumult accompanying the chiefs' offer of Cession. Yet, after one year, a time when he had occupied centre stage during some of the most dramatic days in Fiji's history, Ma`afu was again at home and again facing an uncertain future. In June, he generously lent his "paddock" for a match between the Lomaloma Cricket Club and an XI from the visiting HMS *Rosario*.²⁴² If Ma`afu strolled across to watch play, he could have been excused for appearing *distract*. A greater game awaited, if only the field could be cleared for a final confrontation between Tui Lau and his oldest rival. He must have been aware, as he watched the motley Lomaloma XI do battle against the sailors, that his chance of mounting a final challenge for Fiji had all but vanished.

240 Drury to Ryder, 25 Jul 1874, CG Set 10.

241 Drury to Thurston, 30 Jun 1874, CG Set 10.

242 *FT*, 20 Jun 1874.

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