

12. “Sa oti, Ma`afu”

The last chapter closed with an imaginary glimpse of Ma`afu watching a cricket match at Lomaloma, distracted by thoughts of the greater game being played in Whitehall, a game that would determine the course of his future life. To venture a description of his state of mind during these months of waiting is merely to speculate, since there was no window into Ma`afu’s heart. During the six months following the chiefs’ offer to cede their islands, Ma`afu, along with most people in Fiji, awaited the response of the British government.

While, in the eyes of Whitehall, Ma`afu was the chief of the Windward Islands and, in consequence, of less moment that the “King” of Fiji, he was not forgotten in the corridors of power. During a debate about annexation in the House of Lords, Viscount Canterbury referred to the Commissioners’ *Report*:

It was a remarkable fact that one of the most influential chiefs in Fiji – Ma`afu – of whom it was said that other chiefs ‘had always been jealous of his influence and position’ was not mentioned by the Commissioners as among those who assented to the arrangement they proposed; and the question was, whether he would consider himself bound by it?¹

It was seen, well before the British government had made a decision, that Ma`afu’s adherence was essential if Cession were to proceed. In Fiji itself, the correspondence of the Ad-Interim Government officials revealed no sense of unease concerning Ma`afu. Indeed, the Governor of Lau appeared to be fulfilling his role to perfection. In July, Charles Drury, Special Commissioner for the province, noted that “everything has gone on smoothly” with tax collections, thanks to arrangements he had made with Ma`afu. The church, too, reported favourably on Ma`afu’s realm, with missionary Isaac Rooney advising his General Secretary in Sydney that “we are all lotu here [in Vanuabalavu] – a quiet civilized community”.² According to Rooney, every missionary meeting at Lomaloma was a “gala day” for which people prepared carefully and dressed their best, under instructions from Ma`afu,³ while on Lakeba, adult schools had been resumed at Ma`afu’s suggestion. “In this, as in every department of our work, much is due to Ma`afu for his active and willing co-operation and support”.⁴ Writing at Lomaloma while a meeting was in progress, Rooney bestowed on Ma`afu the highest praise the chief had yet received from a missionary:

1 *SMH*, 5 Oct 1874.

2 Isaac Rooney to Benjamin Chapman, 27 Jul 1874, MOM 165.

3 Rooney to Chapman, 15 Jun 1874, MOM 98.

4 Rooney, Lomaloma Circuit Report, 1874, MOM 13.

the church is crowded now, and Ma`afu, the head chief of the island, is called to the chair. Ma`afu is perhaps the most liberal supporter of the Mission funds in the Southern Hemisphere. His annual contribution is £70. This year he gave £90. Only one third of this amount is in his own name. The remainder is in the names of his nephews, nieces and dependents. Every year he gives four sovereigns in memory of two of his children who died young. Ma`afu had money laid by for this occasion; but last week, while he was away at another island, it was stolen; so he actually sold his steam launch yesterday in order to get money for the meeting. Not many chiefs in Fiji would do that, or a Papalangi either. But while I am telling you about Ma`afu, he is going on with his speech. He is a fluent and powerful speaker, and is giving good advice to his people, interspersed with telling illustrations. Then he calls on two or three speakers, and the meeting concludes with a Hymn and prayer.⁵

Rooney's tribute stands in contrast to some earlier missionary opinion, most notably from John Thomas and Richard Lyth, who castigated a younger Ma`afu for his dubious moral character and failure to set an example as a Christian chief. Now Tui Lau appeared to have metamorphosed into a moral exemplar whose leadership qualities could not be gainsaid. Yet during the same month, as we saw in Chapter 11, Ma`afu was castigated for "tyrannical conduct" and "barbarity" for having "sold" 240 Beqa men for £3 per head to planters in Lau.⁶ After supposedly promising to repatriate them after six months, Ma`afu had instead rehired them in various parts of Lau, where they remained three years later. Drury found on enquiry that there were only 100 Beqans, most of whom, in July 1874, were working on three different plantations. Arrangements were made to return them all to Beqa once the current crops were picked and the men were paid their full wages.⁷ Owing to the verbal nature of "contracts" Ma`afu made with different planters concerning these men, it is not possible to determine the extent of his culpability in failing to honour his original agreement. Even though the men appear to have been paid wages on their plantations, there seems little doubt that Ma`afu exploited them and their labour for personal gain, conduct at odds with that praised so fulsomely by Isaac Rooney. While there was nothing new in the dilemma posed by such conflicting views of Ma`afu, this time the dilemma was easier of resolution. He had made an agreement with Hedemann and Company of Levuka for the supply of 200 rifles and 500 rounds

5 Rooney to Chapman, Jul 1874, MOM 98. According to various genealogies, the three children of Ma`afu and Elenoa Gataialupe were Siale`ataongo, Makakaufaki and Hoboatefua-i-Tonga. The last two apparently died young.

6 See above, Ch. 9.

7 "A Looker On" to Editor, *FT*, 18 Jul 1874; Drury to John Thurston, 30 Jul 1874, CG Set 10.

of ammunition. A second agreement, dated 6 June 1874, some 11 months after the first, indicated that Ma`afu still intended to take delivery of his order.⁸ All would depend on the decision from London.

In the face of widespread ignorance of Fiji among British Parliamentarians and the opposition of Prime Minister William Gladstone to either protection or annexation of the islands, a campaign by one Member "to rouse public opinion" resulted in a growth of public sentiment in favour of annexation.⁹ Even Queen Victoria took an interest, advising her Ministers that the offer of Cession could not be accepted under the conditions imposed by the chiefs and Thurston. She approved the plan by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Carnarvon, to send the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Hercules Robinson, to Fiji with instructions to advise the chiefs of the British government's position. Robinson would be authorised to accept the offer if it were made unconditional.¹⁰ During these weeks, with Ma`afu having retired to Lomaloma, the War Office advised Carnarvon that, despite the "alarm" caused by his "incursions" into Fiji in years past, "he has always expressed himself anxious for British rule".¹¹

Such a view reflected Whitehall's ignorance of the *Realpolitik* of Fiji. Ma`afu and his old *Tovata* allies remained a threat to the integrity of any Fijian administration, whether the present Ad-Interim Government or any colonial regime which might succeed it. Ma`afu's deposition as Governor of Lau in March 1874 had caused him to withhold taxes from the central government and to insist that only the *Tovata* laws held sway in Lau. With a response from Britain still awaited in July and August 1874, Ma`afu remained in absolute control of all the *Tovata* lands. Should the British decide against Cession, he was ready to challenge Cakobau. Charles Drury advised Thurston from Lomaloma that Tui Cakau had arrived there and "Rumour says that he will remain ... until the annexation question is settled". In addition, a visiting naval officer noted in July the presence of "about 150 Tongans over on a visit" at Lomaloma, where Ma`afu "keeps them in case annexation does not come off".¹² Drury, concerned for the immediate future, had made extended enquiries among the European residents of Lau "as to what course they thought the natives of this province would take in case of non-annexation. The universal reply was that they thought Ma`afu, Tui Cakau and Tui Macuata would join together to fight Bau, and then each

⁸ Agreement at Lomaloma between Frederick Hedemann and Enele Ma`afu, Hedemann versus Ma`afu papers, CG Set 31.

⁹ W. MacArthur to G.L. Griffiths, 1 Jun 1875.

¹⁰ Henry Ponsonby, Private Secretary to Queen Victoria, to Lord Carnarvon, 20 Jun and 14 Jul 1874, Carnarvon to Ponsonby, 21 Jun 1874, Carnarvon Papers.

¹¹ War Office to CO, 24 Jul 1874, enc. 36 in CAFI.

¹² Letters of Thomas Suckling, 11 July 1874.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

of the three chiefs would govern their own respective territories as in former days". Even the missionaries considered that war was inevitable if the British declined to accept Fiji. Drury continued:

I have never heard a word on this point ... from Ma`afu, but I know that Ma`afu has been keeping all the Tongan mob that Tui Cakau had down at Nasova ... a year ago from returning to their homes (to the disgust of all who have to feed them) until he knows whether annexation takes place or not.¹³

The presence of this "Tongan mob" under Ma`afu's aegis did not pass unnoticed in Levuka. The *Fiji Times* reported a "native feast" at Lomaloma in September which appeared "to have a political significance of an extraordinary kind". The newspaper's correspondent noted:

The more than common friendship of Ma`afu and Tui Cakau, the close secrecy [sic] observed as to the immediate object of those two powerful chiefs, the preparation for hostilities, under the ostensible reason of chastising some refractory tribes, and the general call for contributions in money and food, all point to concerted aggressive movements in contemplation. If ... Fiji should not be annexed a war may be expected ... Ma`afu and Tui Cakau are it would seem determined to shake off at once and for ever the restraining yoke of Bau.¹⁴

In fairness to the opinion of at least a few settlers in Fiji, mention should also be made of a refutation of the *Fiji Times'* views that appeared in the pages of its rival, the *Fiji Argus*:

There is not a word of truth in [the *Fiji Times'*] assertion and innuendo as to a combination between Ma`afu and Tui Cakau for hostile purposes against Bau. Ma`afu, who has been all along held up as a bugbear and a bogey, is *effete*. That he is indeed a perfidious man, who would like to kick up a row for the purpose of enriching himself, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt: a treacherous withholder of the revenue; a renegade to his sworn fealty; a traitor to his oath of allegiance. But that he has any fangs to bite with left, is out of the question. He is perfectly *effete*. ... The native taxes are being paid [in Lau] ... without any fear of menace or hurt from the Tongan usurper.¹⁵

The purpose of this tongue-in-cheek journalism by the *Fiji Argus* was to heap scorn on its rival, rather than to offer any balanced view of current politics. Yet *The Sydney Morning Herald's* correspondent was of like mind, describing the notion

13 Drury to Thurston, 26 Aug 1874, CG Set 10.

14 *FT*, 12 Sep 1874.

15 *FA*, 18 Sep 1874 (italics in original).

that Ma`afu and Tui Cakau were preparing for hostilities against Bau as "nothing more ... than a mischievous piece of *bosh*".¹⁶ More significantly perhaps, Isaac Rooney saw no menace in Ma`afu and his "Tongan mob". The missionary averred that Tui Cakau had for several years been building a large canoe for Ma`afu. With the canoe at last complete, Tui Cakau had brought it to Lomaloma and presented it to his old friend "in the usual Fijian style". He was now waiting for Ma`afu "to present property to him in return", after which he would return home. In the meantime, cooked food was being presented to the visitors every day. Rooney could not resist the opportunity to rise to Ma`afu's defence:

This fabrication is of a piece with the series of gross misrepresentations of which Ma`afu has been made the victim during the last nine months. Why do not those who charge Ma`afu with appropriating the Lau revenues hold a court of enquiry and investigate the matter? They know better. They know that an enquiry would clear Ma`afu, and inculcate others whom I need not mention. Much is said about Ma`afu by people who know nothing about him. All who are acquainted with him know that he is the friend of the white man, and at the same time the protector of the native. In no province in Fiji is such order maintained as in Lau, and if Ma`afu were to leave the group tomorrow, both whites and natives, in this part of Fiji, would soon wish him back again. Ma`afu is not immaculate. Doubtless he has his faults like other people. But, notwithstanding that he was born and brought up a heathen, he will compare favorably with some who have had all the advantages of education and civilisation.¹⁷

Rooney forbore to add that Ma`afu was also a generous contributor to the mission. If the missionary's words are accepted at face value, it is difficult to credit such a degree of *naiveté* to someone who had lived close to Ma`afu for several years. Could he have been Ma`afu's dupe, or perhaps his ally? Did he harbour a desire to see Ma`afu, so long an ardent supporter of the Wesleyan cause, achieve supremacy in Fiji? While it was true that Lau was the best administered of Fiji's provinces, it is unlikely that Rooney would have found many to agree with such a benign assessment of Ma`afu's activities. Thurston certainly did not; he had been informed that Ritova, still in name Tui Macuata but facing dissent in his *matanitu*, had repudiated his allegiance to the Ad-Interim Government. The fractious chief was supposed to be in communication with Ma`afu and to have hoisted the Lauan flag in Macuata. Thurston urged Consul Layard against visiting Ma`afu at Lomaloma "lest the King and chiefs think there is a connection between you and Ma`afu".¹⁸ Rooney's apologia for

16 *SMH*, 13 Oct 1874 (italics in original).

17 Rooney to Editor, 17 Sep 1874, *FT*, 30 Sep 1874.

18 Thurston to HBMC, 6 Aug 1974, Im Thurn Papers.

Ma`afu, widely read as it would have been among the settler community, was unlikely to have convinced many that the former Viceroy was, as Whitehall apparently believed, eagerly awaiting Cession.

Thurston's intransigence towards Ma`afu arose as much from the long-standing antipathy between them as from any apprehension the Chief Secretary might have felt concerning Ma`afu's plans if Cession did not eventuate. Yet he was not overly cautious in urging Layard to keep his distance from the dragon's lair. Thurston had instructed the Governor of Lakeba and Ma`afu's subordinate, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, to proceed to Bau, where he would join other chiefs in discussions with Robinson, shortly expected from Sydney. Ratu Tevita demurred, with his secretary, Edgar Reid, advising Drury that Ma`afu had prevailed upon Tevita not to go to Bau. According to Drury, Tevita was "offside" with Ma`afu and found himself in a dilemma: how could he adhere to Thurston's wishes without further offending his paramount chief?¹⁹ There was more to this story: Thurston, having "dismissed" Ma`afu as Governor of Lau and appointed Tevita in his place, later invited Tevita to proceed to Lomaloma "to take up his new title". Accompanied by about 50 followers, Tevita complied, only to find himself a virtual prisoner of Ma`afu when he arrived. No longer formally Governor, but still Tui Lau, Ma`afu sent 250 men under his son Siale`ataongo, all armed with muskets, to Lakeba, leaving Tevita "in a fix".²⁰ After ten days, he sent his resignation to Thurston.²¹ Ma`afu had himself gone to Lakeba, where he advised the local chiefs that there existed no government in Fiji and that he, along with Goodenough and Layard, were the "principal rulers".²² Although, in Lau, Ma`afu could always defy the Ad-Interim Government, he was safe from interference only while there was no agreement between Fiji's other chiefs and the Queen's representative concerning Cession.

Robinson's task was to ensure that the chiefs of Fiji were content, even anxious, to cede their islands unconditionally. In April, Commissioners Goodenough and Layard had concluded in their *Report* that no government of Fiji established within the islands, however constituted, "could become tolerable to the native or white planter". Any such government would be bound to consider the indigenous Fijian only "as a payer of poll-tax, a possible labourer and a consumer of imported goods". Annexation in the form of a Crown Colony was seen as much the best solution by the Commissioners and by the European community in Fiji. Yet, "the broad principle [that] ... the Fijian chiefs and people, in changing their allegiance, retain all existing private rights, real and personal", could not be accepted.²³ When Robinson reached Fiji on 23 September, one of his officers

19 Drury to Thurston, 27 Aug 1874, CG Set 10.

20 Letters of Thomas Suckling, 11 Jul 1874.

21 See Ch. 11, ns 223–225.

22 Percival Friend to Thurston, 19 May 1874, CG Set 10.

23 James G. Goodenough and E.L. Layard, *Report on the Cession of the Fiji Islands*, 20, PP XLV.

noted that much land had been cleared "on account of the probability of war between Ma`afu with Tui Cakau Ritova etc against Cakobau". The officer was not alone in anticipating such an outcome if Cession did not proceed.²⁴

Robinson's instructions from Lord Carnarvon were precise:

I request you ... to proceed to Fiji and explain to all parties that Her Majesty's Government cannot accept cession on conditions proposed by Mr Thurston, but if all questions as to constitution, titles and land, compensation and pensions are freely left to their decision all claims and interests will be fully enquired into and fairly dealt with. ... Reasonable rights and interests of chiefs would be recognised as far as consistent with British sovereignty and colonial form of Government.²⁵

Despite what the Melbourne *Argus* described as Fiji's "condition of suspended animation" and the "fretful uncertainty which had prevailed for so long", difficulties were anticipated because of "the peculiar nature of native land tenure", peculiar, of course, from a colonial European perspective. The position of the Colonial Office was that, in a Crown Colony, all land should be at the disposal of the Crown. The Cakobau Government had been anxious to resolve the many problems associated with land tenure but had been unable to do so, owing to the uncertainty over the question of annexation and to the risk of alienating either settlers or indigenous Fijians. In pre-Cession Fiji, there was no equivalent of Crown land, which could be defined as land at the disposal of the government in the name of the nominal king, Cakobau. Most land was vested in a local *mataqali*, while some holdings had been "sold" to Europeans who would be averse to any administration that did not recognise their tenure. Meanwhile Ma`afu, according to the *Argus*, was preparing for war with Cakobau who, "in the absence of any interference from the whites, must ... go to the wall".²⁶

While the need for such a warning had largely passed by the time it was published, the threat posed by Ma`afu and his allies remained real when, on 25 September, Cakobau came aboard the *Dido* for a formal "Conversation" with Robinson on the question of Cession. The Governor's essential task, in this and subsequent meetings, was to ensure that Cakobau and the other principal chiefs understood all the implications of "giving" their country to Queen Victoria. The King quickly announced his acceptance of the need for the offer to be unconditional:

If I give a chief a canoe, and he knows that I expect something from him,
I do not [attach conditions], but I give him the canoe right out, and trust

24 W.F. Carslake, Diary of HMS Pearl Sep 1874 to Sep 1875, 24 Sep 1874.

25 Secret telegram in cypher, Lord Carnarvon to Sir Hercules Robinson, 10 Aug 1874, CO 537/115.

26 *TA*, 16 Oct 1874.

to his generosity and good faith to make me the return ... he knows I expect. If I were to attach conditions, he would say, 'I do not care to be bothered with your canoe; keep it yourself'.

Robinson's purpose was to leave no doubt in the minds of Cakobau and the other chiefs of the implications of the Deed of Cession. The Governor appeared to do his work well, quietly insisting on an unconditional transfer of sovereignty and assuring Cakobau that chiefly status would be respected and maintained. Cakobau quickly revealed a comprehensive and indeed statesmanlike view of the question, by way of contrast with his past ineptitude in the face of constitutional matters. With respect to English law that would prevail in Fiji after Cession, the king informed Robinson that "law, peace and rest is [sic] what we want. These are our riches ... Tumult and disquiet are poverty. If matters remain as they are, Fiji will become like a piece of drift wood on the sea, to be picked up by the first passer-by". The chiefs were indeed more concerned with the dire consequences of continued misgovernment, such as they had experienced for several years, than they were with any loss of sovereignty entailed in Cession. Yet there remained two "elements" to be considered: the whites and Ma`afu. The former could be summarised without difficulty: "The whites who have come to Fiji are a bad lot. They are mere stalkers on the beach". Ma`afu, though, could not be dismissed so easily:

Ma`afu's desire has been and is to conquer Fiji. Some years ago, he took possession of an island south of Rewa, and sent an insulting message to me: 'Fiji is now divided, but when I take Rewa it will be united', that is under his own government. I disliked his policy, not his race, when he joined us the dislike ceased on my side. This is my mind. It is otherwise with him. Since he has joined the present Government he has found it impossible to carry out his plans, so he is trying to foment discords as to prevent Cession, and thereby further his own ends.

Robinson reassured Cakobau that after Cession, he, Ma`afu and all other Fijians would be subjects of the Queen. Cakobau declared his belief that the presence of Robinson as Governor of Fiji would render harmless the "seeds of disaffection" which Ma`afu had always sought to scatter in the islands.²⁷

Ma`afu, it may safely be assumed, was uninterested in becoming a subject of Queen Victoria. Remaining at home in Lomaloma, he did not attend a meeting of chiefs which Cakobau called at Nasova on 28 September, following the apparent success of the King's two meetings with Robinson. Cakobau, "sick and tired of the ceaseless anxiety and worry caused to him by his difficult and

27 Robinson to Carnarvon, 3 Oct 1874, Notes [by W. Hely-Hutchinson] of a Conversation on board HMS *Dido* between Cakobau and Sir Hercules Robinson, GB PP 1875, lii [C.114], 3, 7-9. A transcript of the "Conversation" appears in *TA*, 21 Oct 1874, 6.

undefined position as King *de facto*, and not *de jure*", was determined to see Cession a reality. He "declared his intentions in respect of annexation, and directly invited the concurrence of the chiefs in his views, which was very cordially given". If the words of the *Herald* correspondent accurately reflect proceedings at the chiefly conclave, it was apparent that, for Cakobau at least, the days of consultation were past. "Concurrence", rather than discussion, was invited from the assembled chiefs, who included Tui Bua and Isa Keli, the latter representing Tui Cakau who, although ill and unable to attend, declared through his spokesman his support for Cession. The correspondent noted, tongue in cheek perhaps, "The wily chief Ma`afu is said to have been quite taken aback at the unexpected news – completely floored at it, in fact. Isa Keli ... says that Ma`afu's face lengthened when [in advance of the meeting] he heard what was about to take place: "*Ma`afu sa dua tani sara matana*", literally, "Ma`afu has quite a different face on him ever since", meaning that Ma`afu's demeanour changed considerably as he absorbed the news.²⁸ Ma`afu, of course, throughout his career in Fiji, had shown himself adept at changing face, in the metaphorical sense, and was to do so again before the Cession of Fiji became a reality.

The *Herald's* view of Ma`afu's reaction to the news was not shared by all commentators of the Fijian political scene. The *Fiji Argus* protested against such a "wholesale condemnation" of Ma`afu, "more especially because it is asserted that he has lost the confidence of the whites. Ma`afu has always been spoken of by the whites ... [in] Lau as the most straightforward and intelligent Chief in the group. [He] seemed only to desire the abolition of the abortive *de facto* Government, and that, we believe, he was determined to effect by force, if not done by cession to Great Britain".²⁹ In publishing this view, the newspaper was probably motivated by a wish to subvert the influence of Thurston, whose hand they claimed to discern in the *Herald* report. In its attribution of benign intent to Ma`afu, the *Fiji Argus* is unique among contemporary journals.

Cakobau, secure in the belief that Ma`afu's fangs were to be drawn at last, offered the unconditional cession on which Robinson insisted.³⁰ The Governor, authorised to make formal acceptance of the offer "if unconditional or virtually unconditional",³¹ nevertheless welcomed reassurance and support from other quarters. He was not alone in his need for reassurance: four days after the "Conversation" with Cakobau, Thurston wrote at length to Robinson to advise that Cakobau and other chiefs had been pressing him for advice as to whether Cession "would be good or bad for them". They were especially anxious about the question of land tenure under colonial rule. While Thurston, as Chief

28 *SMH*, 23 Oct 1874. My thanks to Mr Sitiveni Yaqona for clarifying the Fijian expression.

29 *Fiji Argus*, 12 Dec 1874.

30 Layard to Robinson, Despatch No. 15, Dec 1874, CG Temp. 18.

31 Telegram Carnarvon to Robinson, 25 Aug 1874, CO 537/115.

Secretary, did well to report these approaches to Robinson, he was disingenuous in advising the Governor “that Thakobau is not only styled Tui Viti but he is Tui Viti in fact ... Every ruling chief of Fiji, including the Tongan Ma`afu in full Council assembled – and according to ancient Fijian forms and customs elected him King of Fiji and did him service and homage. They still regard him as their King – not in name but in fact”. Ma`afu would have had something to say about that, had he been in Robinson’s company when the letter was read, instead of at home in Lomaloma sharpening his tools and feeding his “Tongan mob”. Thurston, who knew as well as any that such a description of Cakobau’s powers was wildly inaccurate, was probably seeking to take advantage of Robinson’s recent acquaintance with the *Realpolitik* of Fiji. He was somewhat more truthful in advising Robinson that most chiefs would not sign the Deed of Cession unless urged to do so by Cakobau.³²

That Robinson was well aware of the true extent of Cakobau’s power, and of the essentially farcical nature of the Fijian “government” with which he had to deal, is revealed in a private letter to Sir Henry Parkes, Premier of New South Wales, written the day after his meeting with the chief who, Thurston insisted, was “Tui Viti in fact”:

The farce they try to keep up of magnifying old Cakobau’s pretensions to the undivided sovereignty of Fiji, by use of European expressions and forms is simply ludicrous. But the climax of absurdity took place yesterday when they dressed up the poor old fellow in [a] “go-to-meeting” English suit to meet me – He had on an old white bell topper, and a long black Noah’s Ark frock coat – and looked a cross between a native teacher, and an Ethiopian serenader...³³

It was nevertheless Cakobau, bell topper and all, with whom Robinson had to negotiate. On the morning of 30 September, the Governor, accompanied by Goodenough, proceeded to Nasova, where “the King read and handed to me the formal resolution of the Council giving Fiji unreservedly to the Queen. The Deed of Cession was then read in Fijian, and the instrument was executed by the King and the four other ruling chiefs who were present”. Wishing to lose no time, Robinson invited Cakobau to accompany him at once on a tour to Vanuabalavu, Taveuni and Macuata, where the signatures of Ma`afu, Tui Cakau and Ritova, chiefs “whose assent was necessary to the validity of the Cession” could be obtained. The *Pearl*, carrying the Governor and the Commodore, escorted by the *Dido*, with Cakobau and Consul Layard on board, set sail at 4 p.m.³⁴ Their first port of call, as befitted the status of its paramount chief, was

32 Thurston to Robinson, 29 Sep 1874, Fiji correspondence of Sir Hercules Robinson.

33 Robinson to Sir Henry Parkes, undated [Oct 1874], Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence, Vol. 57, 179.

34 Robinson to Carnarvon, 3 Oct 1874. The four other chiefs were Ratu Savenaca, Ratu Epeli, Ratu Ezekeli and Tui Bua. See also Goodenough, *Journal*, 30 Sep 1874; *FT*, 30 Sep 1874.

Vanuabalavu, where the ships arrived off Lomaloma early on the morning of 1 October, noting, as they passed by nearby Mago, the *Xarifa* "bearing at the gaff, rather insolently", or so the *Herald* correspondent thought, "[with] the viceregal flag hoisted as if in defiance".

Before the official signing, a shore party from the *Pearl*, not including Robinson, called at Ma`afu's house, where they found Tui Lau seated on "native mats", surrounded "by good chairs, tables, pictures [and] chiffonieres ... The chief himself did not look well, having recently been suffering from ... bronchitis". Nearby, the official party noted "Ma`afu's large canoe, the *Ra Marama*", which had once been presented to Cakobau by King Tupou and which was "said to be very old and to be capable of carrying 400 men". In the course of their stroll, the visitors encountered "a very handsome young girl, with a scanty purple silk bodice on. She was a Tongan". With the *Dido*, carrying Cakobau, yet to arrive, the party was content to meander around Ma`afu's compound and beyond, noting, as other visitors before and later, the orderly nature of Lomaloma and the contiguous Tongan village of Sawana, as well as the spirited independence of the local residents. Another attractive young woman, met along the road, told that Cakobau and his sons were very soon to arrive, "looked pensive for a few seconds, then the light played in her lustrous dark eyes, and she said in vigorous Fijian, 'You lie!'"³⁵ It was, perhaps, hard to credit that the King, so long Ma`afu's bitter rival for supremacy in Fiji, was about to pay a social call. Yet call he did, bringing with him the end of all hope for Ma`afu to achieve the ambition that had for so long determined his every move in his adopted islands.

Among the visitors was Robinson's private secretary, George de Robeck, whose enthusiastic descriptions of Ma`afu at home provide us with a glimpse of the chief far removed from those who sought either to tame his ambitions or to impugn his integrity. As the visitors walked towards his house, they encountered "a woodland avenue ... bordered on each side by a neat reed palisade, within which breadfruit trees cocoa-nut palms and bananas flourish in tropical abundance". People were seen carrying baskets of produce, while the sounds of women making *tapa* could be heard. De Robeck soon came to the heart of Ma`afu's turf, "the enclosure within which dwelt his immediate retainers and domestics, not to mention the soldiers forming his bodyguard". De Robeck also noted Ma`afu's double canoe, 60 feet long, "drawn upon the beach ready for its owner's use ... But its owner's ideas of locomotion by water have long since gone beyond canoes. More recent additions to his navy have included a neat little yacht and a steam launch".

35 TA, 30 Oct 1874, 6.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

De Robeck and his companions found Ma`afu “lolling backwards” in a chair on the lawn. Seeing his visitors approaching, the chief retreated indoors to receive them formally. De Robeck was impressed:

Ma`afu is certainly a man of stately presence, with an inimitable dignity of carriage and gait ... His body is muscular and well proportioned, and ... His oleaginous skin is in colour a light bronze. The shapeliness of his small round head is the better shown by his thick hair, now slightly grizzled, being shorn close. His features are small and regular, and his face is smooth. It is difficult, nay, it would be impossible, to guess his thoughts by taking his visage as a guide. I read thereon an indifference slightly contemptuous, and nothing more. Singularly arched eyebrows, and eyelids drooping down heavily may cause this, together with the fact that the corners of his mouth turn downwards.

The room in which the visitors were received was “lofty and cool”, boasting “matting scrupulously clean”:

There was a curtained bed ... a harmonium (on which I afterwards heard its owner producing anything but a `concord of sweet sounds’), and ... four very common clocks, each recording a different hour, dispersed about the room. On the walls were coloured prints in wooden frames, such as one often sees in a peasant’s chimney-piece...

The visitors’ conversation with Ma`afu, described as “uninteresting”, touched on Siale`ataogo:

Inquiries were made after the chief’s eldest son, Charles by name; but Charles, like many other eldest sons, had chosen to be a rake, and had incurred the paternal wrath in consequence. A protracted course of misconduct had ended, some time before, by his being banished to ... Lakeba, where we heard it asserted afterwards, he amused himself far better than at home. His most pronounced weakness is said to be for gin. At the mention of this hopeful’s name, Ma`afu’s expression became a little stonier, a little more inscrutable, than it had been before.

Impressed as they were with the scene, the visitors did not fail to remark their host: “Ma`afu looks apathetically at the scene, and keeps looking on till the entertainment ends”.³⁶ Was his apathy induced by several months of enforced inactivity while a decision from London was awaited, or more likely, by his realisation that he would now have no choice but to add his signature to the

36 George de Robeck, “A day at Lomaloma”, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Sep 1879, Vol. CCXLV, 363–377.

Deed of Cession? And would he continue to "look apathetically at the scene" until the "entertainment" provided by the transfer of sovereignty of Fiji to Great Britain should similarly put paid to his ambitions for all time?

By the evening, the *Dido* had arrived and Robinson had come ashore from the *Pearl*. The *Dido*'s band played at the back of Ma`afu's house, after which a *meke* was performed in the Governor's presence as a gesture of welcome. Following a *kava* ceremony, the shore party returned to the ship. The business side of the visit occurred early the next morning, when the official interpreter, David Wilkinson, came ashore to acquaint Ma`afu with all that had occurred at Nasova. Tui Lau at once went on board the *Pearl* to pay his respects to the Governor. Meanwhile Wilkinson, alerted to the continued presence of Tui Cakau in Lomaloma, set off in search of him. Discovered asleep in his big canoe, Tui Cakau required a little time to dress before he, too, was taken on board the *Pearl*. With the *Dido* having anchored close by, the time was almost at hand for a meeting between Ma`afu and the King. First, though, in accordance with custom, Ma`afu and Tui Cakau sent presents to Cakobau. Ma`afu's was "a small cluster of a peculiar kind of cocoanuts (tabu to all but the chiefs)",³⁷ while the people of Lomaloma sent a roll of sinnet, five feet long and two feet thick, as well as a *tabua*. When the presents were taken on board the *Dido* by "two old Tongans and a couple of Fijian household officials", the King's reaction was carefully noted. With Ma`afu's envoys seated respectfully on the deck before him, Cakobau, who had brought no *matanivanua*, himself formally accepted the gifts with the words "I take this present in the spirit in which it is given, desiring the peace of the land, and the successful consummation of your present negotiation". Cakobau's endorsement of Cession was now beyond doubt but, as all present knew, everything would depend on the reaction of Ma`afu when he shortly came aboard to face his rival and, later, sign away the dearest wish of his life. Once he and Tui Cakau were on board, Cakobau, "in the course of a general conversation", suggested that they should all return to the *Pearl* the following morning, so the Deed could be signed. When Ma`afu indicated that "he was perfectly willing and desirous to sign ... and doubly so as he could sign it in connexion with the King himself, the king and he being of one mind respecting the cession. Cakobau remarked, 'If you and I are of one mind we need not ask a second chief in Fiji'". Wishing to reassure Robinson, Cakobau said, "The only two men who could possibly cause any trouble are now in our presence". As some present must have thought, these were fine words, but would the ancient foes still be of one mind the next morning?

The signing ceremony took place on board the *Pearl* at 10 a.m., when Ma`afu and Tui Cakau were formally received by Robinson in the presence of Cakobau, Goodenough and Layard. Ma`afu's arrival was described in the Australian press:

37 *SMH*, Oct 1874.

Ma`afu came up the gangway, and, on gaining the deck, shook hands with Captain Chapman, but did not even look towards the King. What was said to him by those who stood near I cannot tell, but he folded his arms on his chest and stood looking straight before him, anything but fraternal or communicative. Near him stood the machiavellian and resolute Tui Thakau, bothered, as much as a braver man could be, with the unpromising aspect of affairs. By a sudden impulse, the King rose with great dignity from his chair, and descended to the quarter-deck, where Ma`afu (with a grave and cold politeness) at once advanced to meet his feudal superior. Then the two chiefs met (like a King of France and an ancient Duke of Burgundy), his Majesty, with an easy grace, held out his hand, which was taken by Ma`afu. A few words of formal civility were exchanged by the two, and then Tui Lau resumed his stage-like attitude, while Thakombau turned to Tui Thakau and overwhelmed him by the cordial warmth of his reception.³⁸

After David Wilkinson read the Deed in Fijian, both chiefs indicated they understood the document and concurred with its contents. Ma`afu, observed by Goodenough to be "grave and dignified",³⁹ "fixed his own seal and wrote his own name. Tui Cakau held the pen while his name was written".⁴⁰ The Commodore took the opportunity to remark to Robinson, "Ma`afu has always been perfectly truthful and straightforward to me since the first day of our acquaintance".⁴¹ There followed a private meeting between Ma`afu, Cakobau and Tui Cakau in the ship's cabin. What was discussed was not revealed, but "after the lapse of half an hour or so, Ma`afu came out again with a wounded air, and went ashore at once". Since, as Cakobau observed, it was no longer necessary to proceed to Taveuni, Tui Cakau having signed the Deed on board, the Governor announced that the *Pearl* and *Dido* would sail for Macuata the following day. There, Ritova, the one remaining great chief of Fiji whose assent was necessary, could add his signature to those already gracing the Deed. In the meantime, Ma`afu and Tui Cakau were enjoined to come down to Levuka within ten days for the formal annexation of Fiji.⁴² According to one newspaper report, Robinson, knowing well Ma`afu's likely state of mind, had "with great tact" refrained from signing the Deed himself "until Ma`afu had given his adhesion ... to the document".⁴³ Although Goodenough somewhat tersely recorded that Ma`afu was "pleased" with the signing,⁴⁴ franker observers had noted a very different demeanour.

38 *TA*, 30 Oct 1874.

39 Goodenough, *Journal*, 1 Oct 1874.

40 *TA*, 30 Oct 1874. See also *FT*, 10 Oct 1874.

41 Goodenough, *Journal*, 1 Oct 1874.

42 The account is based on *TA*, 30 Oct 1874.

43 *The Southern Argus*, 3 Nov 1874.

44 Goodenough, *Journal*, 2 Oct 1874.

Early the next morning, before the official party left Lomaloma, the *Herald* reporter visited Ma`afu's home. "The house is certainly a great improvement upon the present houses built in Fiji", he recorded, "but what it has gained in comfort it has lost in the picturesque. It had a vulgar public-house sort of air about it that I did not like". Accompanied by a sub-lieutenant from one of the ships, who knew Ma`afu, the reporter entered the house, noting, as others before him, the furniture, ornaments and lithographic prints. Then they came face to face with their host:

By direction of my friend, I sat down on one of the wooden sofas ... and we rose and bowed respectfully to Ma`afu as he came into the room. The big man only acknowledged our presence by a contemptuous half-nod, and supercilious elevation of his eyebrows ... I was not impressed by Ma`afu's manner, which (as compared with that of the King), was not only undignified and needlessly uncivil, but even vulgar.⁴⁵

As on the previous day, on board ship, Ma`afu was out of temper and clearly unconcerned with the impression he left with his visitors. The reason is not difficult to guess: when he executed the Instrument of Cession, he signed away all hope he might have retained to achieve his long-held ambition to become, in his words to Consul Pritchard 12 years before, "chief at Bau".

The ship's call at Macuata was not without incident, since Cakobau took the opportunity publicly to berate Ritova, Tui Macuata, for the chaotic and dangerous state of his *matanitu*, the most backward in Fiji, where internecine warfare still raged between his supporters and those of his kinsman Katonivere.⁴⁶ Ritova duly made his mark on the Deed, however, much to Robinson's relief and Cakobau's pleasure and, along with Katonivere, was taken on board in order to be present at the annexation ceremony. On the return voyage to Levuka, a brief stop was made at Nadi in Bua, so that Tui Bua could join the party on shipboard. However, as Robinson reported to the Colonial Office, even before his arrival in Macuata, "practically ... with Cakobau's, Ma`afu's and Tui Cakau's unconditional tender of cession, the question may be considered as disposed of".⁴⁷

When he, Cakobau and Ma`afu were all back in Levuka on 9 October, ready for the Cession ceremonies, Robinson might well have felt even more confident that the matter had been "disposed of".⁴⁸ With Cession almost a *fait accompli*, the question raised in the House of Lords concerning how long Ma`afu would

45 *SMH*, Oct 1874. See also Robinson to Carnarvon, 3 Oct 1874, enc. 4; telegram, Robinson to Carnarvon, 3 Oct 1874, FO58/145; J.H. de Ricci, *Fiji: our New Province in the South Seas*, London 1875, 123–124; *The Empire*, 27 Oct 1874; *The Sydney Mail*, 31 Oct 1874, supplement.

46 For a full account of the visit to Macuata, see *TA*, 30 Oct 1874, 6.

47 Robinson to Carnarvon, 3 Oct 1874, Despatches from the Governor of Fiji to the CO, FCSO.

48 The *Dido* and *Pearl* reached Levuka on 7 October, while the *Xarifa*, "with Ma`afu and suite", arrived on 9 October. *FT*, 10 Oct 1874, Shipping Intelligence.

consider himself bound by his oath no longer appeared relevant. Yet concerns remained, and indeed the *Herald* sounded a warning: “no-one who has anything like a thorough knowledge of people such as the Fijians will suppose that they will consider this act [of Cession] to be binding upon them any longer, or any further, than their convenience might dictate”.⁴⁹ For the moment, at least to many in Fiji, such a cautionary note appeared unnecessary. The formal annexation ceremony took place at Nasova at 2:30 p.m. on 10 October, when the British flag was raised in the presence of all Fiji’s principal chiefs, except Tui Cakau, as well as Robinson, Commodore Goodenough, Consul Layard and various government officials, with marines from the *Pearl* and *Dido*, in full dress uniform, participating. Cakobau made a formal presentation of his war club to Robinson, as a gift for Queen Victoria, and all the chiefs, including Ma`afu, signed a duplicate of the Instrument of Cession.⁵⁰ Fiji, in the words of its first Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, was “from this time forth a possession and dependency of the British Crown”.⁵¹ Following cheers for Queen Victoria and for the “King of Fiji”, the Governor’s words were translated for Cakobau, who responded in kind:

‘Then we have really joined together, and have become one community.’ Then, turning to Ma`afu, he remarked, ‘Well, Ma`afu, it is all over now, and the end is come. We are now one for ever, and we shall have no more contentions with the whites.’ Ma`afu remarked that everything now was firm. Cakobau rejoined: ‘Yes, the vessel is anchored. Her anchor is in good holding ground, and our future will be one of peace and rest’.⁵²

The English rendering of these chiefly utterances does not convey the drama of the moment. The actual Fijian words used by Cakobau, terse and doubtless with a hint of triumph, were “Sa oti, Ma`afu”: “It is finished, Ma`afu”. Cakobau’s tenure as *soi-disant* King of Fiji, fraught with uncertainty and indignity, was indeed finished. Also finished was Ma`afu’s chance to become “chief at Bau”: he did not need his old rival to remind him.⁵³

One correspondent believed that the ceremony at Nasova had been “effected with a most undiplomatic ingenuousness of language and absence of fuss and formality”.⁵⁴ All proprieties were nevertheless observed and the Governor’s mission well accomplished. Annexation was the pragmatic solution for Fiji’s woes because it was the only means to ensure an end to the many abuses occasioned by the labour trade, abuses involving men who, unable to pay their

49 Hardy Lee, “The Dominion of Fiji”, *SMH*, 26 Oct 1874.

50 For the Instrument of Cession, see Robinson to Carnarvon, 16 Oct 1874, in G.C. Henderson, *The Evolution of Government in Fiji*, Sydney 1935.

51 *TA*, 30 Oct 1874.

52 *ibid.*

53 For detailed descriptions of the ceremony, see *ibid.* and *SMH*, 26 Oct 1874.

54 *TA*, 4 Nov 1874, 5.

taxes, were hired out as labourers with a fixed term of service, sometimes far from their homes. Often, when their terms had expired, employers were unable and indeed unwilling to send them home. Altogether, the short period of European domination of Fiji had witnessed a breakdown of governance in the islands which, Whitehall now realised, had to be remedied. The British government, anxious to bring order to a wayward expatriate community consisting largely of British subjects, also felt a moral obligation to protect the indigenous population whose rights and prospects had long been jeopardised by the strangers in their midst. Clause Four of the Instrument of Cession provided that all land in Fiji not in occupation by a *mataqali*, or necessary for its support, or which had not been lawfully alienated to Europeans, would become Crown land, while title disputes would be duly investigated and resolved.⁵⁵ For Cakobau, his remarks on the likely future of Fiji if Cession did not proceed, to say nothing of his relief that the menace of Ma`afu was finally curtailed, are evidence enough that he favoured the change. He was to retain the title of Tui Viti, the shadow without the substance of power, with an annual pension of £1,500 as well as a yacht named the *Victoria*, presented to him on the express recommendation of Robinson.⁵⁶ This largesse was given in return for Cakobau's surrender of the sovereign rights which, according to the constitutional fiction enunciated by the previous two governments, were his. Cakobau's gift of his war club to Queen Victoria symbolised the passing of an age.

The new Provisional Government, to administer Fiji until the Colonial Office could establish a permanent structure, was headed by a five-man Executive Council, consisting of Layard as Administrator, Thurston as Colonial Secretary, Thomas Horton, the manager of the Fiji Bank, as Treasurer, Robert Swanston as Minister for Native Affairs and George Innes, Attorney-General of New South Wales, as legal advisor.⁵⁷ The new Colony's administrative structure, designed to reflect the traditional polity of Fiji, involved the division of the islands into 12 provinces, each presided over by a *roko tui*, with a Fijian appointed as Stipendiary Magistrate, while there were to be 82 sub-divisions, *tikina* in Fijian, each administered by a *buli*. They were to deal with local matters of welfare and good order. There were also to be four European Stipendiary Magistrates "for the trial of European and mixed cases throughout the whole group".⁵⁸ The provinces approximated the areas of existing *matanitu*, while the rokos were, as far as possible, chiefs with an existing customary authority. Formally installed and presented with a staff of office, the roko tuis, effectively deputies to the Governor of Fiji, were to be paid a salary, as were the bulis. The roko tuis were

55 For Robinson's views of Clause Four, see Robinson to Carnarvon, 3 Oct 1874.

56 Robinson to Carnarvon, 20 Oct 1874, Despatches from the Governor of Fiji to the SSC, 3 Oct 1873 – 4 Jan 1877.

57 For the complete list of government officials, see *Fiji Royal Gazette*, 1874, No. 1; *FT*, 14 Oct 1874; *FGG*, 14 Oct 1874; *TA*, 27 Oct 1874; *CAFI*.

58 Robinson to Carnarvon, 16 Oct 1874, *CAFI*.

appointed by the Governor, theoretically in the Queen's name, while in practice they were obeyed in their provinces on the basis of their hereditary rank. Provision was made for an annual *Bosevakaturaga* (Council of Chiefs), where the rokos and other chiefs would confer on many matters in order to advise the colonial administration. With ancient customs, traditions and even boundaries to be respected, the new Crown Colony of Fiji was to remain wedded to the old, pre-European Fiji.⁵⁹

Ma`afu, who did not welcome the new regime with the same equanimity as did Cakobau, was among the Governor's appointments. On 17 October he was formally gazetted as Roko Tui Lau at an annual salary of £600.⁶⁰ This amount was less than his earlier remunerations: he had received £800 under the 1871 Constitution and £640 under the financially streamlined Ad-Interim Government, although the latter salary was withheld following his dismissal from office as Governor of Lau.⁶¹ Among the Native Stipendiary Magistrates appointed for Lau were Ma`afu's long-serving *matapule*, Sione Mafi, and Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba in Lakeba, who was also made *buli* of that district.⁶² Lau was divided into the first class district of Lakeba, the second-class districts of Lomaloma and Moala and the third class districts of Ono and Mualevu. Throughout Fiji, the core of the new structure, as Thurston noted, was that "The chief of every qali [was] to be acknowledged and recognised as owner, absolute, of the lands of the qali and guardian of the interests and rights of the people".⁶³ Ma`afu survived the transition to remain supreme in Lau, with his existing hierarchy intact and the loyalty of his people seemingly assured. The difference was that although he remained Tui Lau, he became, in his new dignity of Roko Tui Lau, an officer of the British colonial administration and a *de facto* British subject. The days when he could menace the prestige and authority of Bau, as a means to becoming master of Fiji, were over. The locus of power had shifted to a distant shore; while the chief had once boasted that Cakobau would cook for him, there was no prospect that Queen Victoria would ever preside in Ma`afu's kitchen.

Ma`afu, like Fiji itself, was passing into a new era, a change remarked by many. It was probably more than coincidence that on the very day of Cession, the *Fiji Times* published a reference to "a flagrant piece of barbarity on the part of Ma`afu". The editor was referring to the 240 Beqa men whom Ma`afu had supposedly taken by force from their island and sold to Lauan planters for £3 a head.⁶⁴ The matter of the Beqa labourers, which had long attracted adverse

59 For a discussion of the role of roko tuis at the time of Cession, see Deryck Scarr, "A Roko Tui for Lomaiviti: The Question of Legitimacy in the Fijian administration 1874–1900", *JPH*, Vol. 5, 1970, 3–31.

60 *FT*, 17 Oct 1874.

61 *Fiji Royal Gazette*, 15 Oct 1874.

62 CAFI.

63 John Thurston, Diary and note book re Cession of Fiji 1874, Thurston Papers.

64 "A Looker On" to Editor, *FT*, 10 Oct 1874. See also Chs 9 and 11.

comment in Fiji, was rightly considered to reflect shame on Ma`afu. The men were finally repatriated in February 1875, some four and a half years after they had been taken from their home.⁶⁵ In reporting their departure, the *Fiji Argus* saw fit to add that Ma`afu "intends giving up his peculiar ways now, and notwithstanding his trade in guns and lead, won't make a fight of it",⁶⁶ an illusion to Ma`afu's contract with Messrs Hedemann. In September, Hedemann advised him that the rifles were in Samoa, while balls and cartridges could be ordered from Sydney if Ma`afu so wished.⁶⁷ A month later, with Cession a *fait accompli*, Ma`afu called at Hedemann's store and advised Frederick Hedemann "that the Governor has prohibited him from taking the guns ... Ma`afu has made the contract with us and certainly he cannot expect us to be the loser".⁶⁸ The matter remained unresolved.

Despite these difficulties with a contract he wished he had never made, Ma`afu took his place at a meeting with Robinson, Cakobau and many leading chiefs at Draiba on 15 October, when the Governor asked the chiefs to return to their *matanitu* and explain to the people what had transpired during the previous weeks. In particular, the Governor wished the people to understand that the new provincial governments were designed to accord as far as possible with Fijian custom and practice, the *vaka vanua* in which the chiefs and people had been nurtured. Following his address, Robinson gave way to the chiefs. Cakobau, after signing in vain to Ma`afu to speak first, rose to acknowledge that he and all the other chiefs of Fiji were now subordinate to the British Crown. He continued:

Any chief attempting to pursue a course of disloyalty must expect to be dealt with on his own merits, and not to escape by any subterfuge, or by relying on any Fijian customs or upon his high family connections.⁶⁹

These words, music no doubt to the ears of Robinson, would have sounded a discordant note to those of Ma`afu. He responded with *sang-froid*, pragmatism and even a hint of grace:

What more can any of us say? The unity of today has been our desire for years. I have now been twenty years in Fiji, and I have never before seen such a sight as I see today – Fiji actually and truly united. We tried a Government ourselves; we did not succeed. That has passed away. Another, and a better and more permanent state of things has been brought into existence. I believe I speak the mind of all present when I

65 See Ch. 9, n. 136.

66 *FA*, 12 Mar 1875.

67 F.C. Hedemann and Co to Bayley, 22 Sep 1874, Hedemann vs Ma`afu papers.

68 Hedemann to Bayley, 22 Oct 1874, Hedemann vs Ma`afu papers.

69 Robinson to Carnarvon, 17 Oct 1874, CO 83/5. See also *SMH*, 29 Oct 1874, 5.

say that we are really and truly united in heart and will, and we are all gratified with what we have heard. We are true men, and will return to our homes knowing that the unity of Fiji is a fact, and that peace and prosperity will follow.⁷⁰

This was the chief who, 15 months earlier, had walked into Hedemann's store in Levuka and ordered 200 rifles on account. Now, a different account was being settled, one which impeded, rather than eased, Ma`afu's path to power in Fiji.

With Ma`afu's thwarted plans not yet widely known among his new colonial masters, Lord Carnarvon was able to reassure Queen Victoria that "Sir Hercules Robinson anticipates the concurrence of Ma`afu, who is the only considerable chief and power after King Cakobau". The Queen duly expressed her "satisfaction" with the turn of events.⁷¹ Satisfaction seemed the order of the day in Fiji as well, with Robinson asserting that the Provisional Government was "capable of working efficiently for a year or more" while "prospects of revenue" were ascertained.⁷² As for Ma`afu, who knew that his new role as Roko Tui Lau marked the apogee of his long career in Fiji, whatever satisfaction he might have felt was never made known.

Whether or not because Ma`afu's days as a menace to the peace and good order of Fiji were thought to be over, his reputation appeared enhanced by the events at Nasova. *The Sydney Morning Herald* declared, "Ma`afu is a voluntary and perfectly conscious party to the cession and not only so but is a chief employed as a subordinate administrator".⁷³ It is unlikely that Leo Layard, appointed Administrator of the Colony after Robinson's return to Sydney, felt a similar degree of composure when he considered Ma`afu's new "subordinate" role. He advised the Foreign Office that only annexation could have saved Fiji from a "furious war":

I have for some time had the clues in my hands to a widespread plot between Ma`afu and the Windward chiefs against Bau (the King's party and the white man's government) and during a late visit to Lomaloma I acquired much fuller information. Rifles and ammunition had been largely supplied and promised by European merchants here, and at least 1,000 Tongans were ready to come to the help of their brethren of the Windward Islands. All this is now over...⁷⁴

Later, he informed the Foreign Secretary that he had been "cognizant of a plot in which Ma`afu and Tui Cakau were chief movers, which would have involved

70 *ibid.* Ma`afu had in fact lived in Fiji for 27 years.

71 Carnarvon to Queen Victoria, 17 Oct 1874; Lord Cairns to Carnarvon, 19 Oct 1874, Carnarvon Papers.

72 Telegram, Robinson to Carnarvon, Oct 1874, FO 58/145.

73 *SMH*, 31 Oct 1874.

74 Layard to FO, 19 Nov 1874, FO 58/142.

these islands in a savage war, had they not been annexed by Great Britain".⁷⁵ Although he was one of the Commissioners sent to Fiji to consult the chiefs about annexation, Layard, in retrospect, fades into the background somewhat in the face of his colleague Commodore Goodenough's more forceful personality and greater output of despatches and correspondence. It can come as a surprise to students of nineteenth-century Fiji to discover that Layard had long been aware, not only of Ma`afu's plans, but also of the sorry outlook for Fiji had the chiefs' initial decision against Cession been confirmed.

Almost nothing was heard of the Roko Tui Lau during these days. He appeared to be asserting himself in his new "subordinate" role, advising William Hennings to "let the people know I am Ma`afu" and appointing Hennings as magistrate for Lau.⁷⁶ Yet he was overruled, being advised by Robert Swanston, Secretary for Native Affairs, that Lauan planter Horace Emberson had been chosen. Instructed to select a site for the new magistrate's house, Ma`afu chose Navavua, in Lomaloma, formerly Swanston's residence when he was Ma`afu's secretary.⁷⁷ As Roko Tui Lau, Ma`afu received detailed and precise instructions on the duties of both European and Fijian Stipendiary Magistrates.⁷⁸ His duties did not end there, since Commissioner Drury was in consultation with Layard concerning some 300 to 400 men and women "held in servitude by chiefs, magistrates and officers" in Lau, having been convicted in the old *Tovata* courts. Although Ma`afu had promised several months earlier to free the prisoners, he had not yet done so. Drury saw this problem as an example of the need for "the new laws of the land" to become effective in Lau, so that the most objectionable of the old laws, such as those under which many of the prisoners had been convicted, "will be among the things of the past".⁷⁹ Responsibility for the diffusion of the new laws in Lau, and with them the authority of the colonial administration, lay firmly with the Roko Tui Lau.

Ma`afu, who left Levuka for home on 22 October, faced a dilemma: as the laws of the Crown Colony of Fiji came into effect in Lau, there would be a concomitant circumscription of his own power as Tui Lau, exercised now for more than 15 years. Despite the policy of the British government that the new administrative structure should conform to Fiji's traditional polity, the islands' principal chiefs, newly dignified as they were as rokos and bulis, had themselves to conform to the new rule of law. Swanston neatly defined the balance between the rokos' chiefly powers and their legal responsibilities when, in accordance

75 Layard to FO, 14 Dec 1874, BC Papers.

76 Ma`afu to William Hennings, 24 Oct 1874, HP, IC general, 1864–1878.

77 Swanston to Ma`afu RTL, 27 Oct 1874, MNA OC; Victor Williamson to Thurston, 26 Nov 1880, LCC R950, Navavua, Lomaloma.

78 General Instructions to European Stipendiary Magistrates, enc. in Secretary, MNA to Ma`afu, 29 Oct 1874, MNA OC.

79 Drury to Layard, Acting Governor of Fiji, 24 Oct 1874, FCSO.

with Layard's instructions, he reminded magistrate Emberson that "the only person who can pardon prisoners duly sentenced is the officer administering the Government", that is the Roko Tui Lau. However, it would henceforth be necessary for "a statement of the reasons why certain prisoners should be released [to] be forwarded with the names by the Roko Tui Lau for the action of His Honor [sic] the Administrator in the matter".⁸⁰ Tui Lau could once have freed prisoners according to his whim. The Roko Tui Lau, invested with his staff of office and dignified as the representative in his province of a distant Queen, was now obliged to state his reasons and await official sanction before he could exercise his authority as paramount chief. Ma`afu can scarcely have known a greater chagrin.

The Roko Tui Lau seems to have ruefully accepted his new role. Aside from the question of the prisoners, he was instructed to carry out a population census in Lau, noting how many people were taxable and recording the seasons of planting, working and "visiting". Swanston who, as Secretary for Native Affairs, issued this instruction, even used a little incentive to goad his erstwhile master into action: "I look forward to seeing your progress at the end as compared to the Rokos of other Provinces".⁸¹ It was to be six months before this Roko could oblige.⁸² Swanston continued to apply bureaucratic strictures to Ma`afu, reminding him that the government could not recognise any secretary of European descent whom he might employ without prior departmental approval. Ma`afu was permitted to retain Vanuabalavu as his private property, doubtless because the colonial government was committed to respecting traditional land tenure in Fiji. The Roko was, nevertheless, reminded that rents from all leased Lauan lands beyond Vanuabalavu were public revenue: "I desire that you will notify this fact to Ma`afu", Emberson was instructed.⁸³ Ma`afu himself, anxious perhaps to conform to the bureaucratic straitjacket being inexorably imposed on his chiefly powers, sought guidance concerning the disposal of fines imposed by the Native Courts. "All fines, fees etc are Government Revenue and must be paid into the Treasury" was the stern response.⁸⁴ He was even reminded that "monies from the Foreign Office are not to be spent without permission".⁸⁵ Seeming to take all these strictures on the chin, Ma`afu at last arranged for the repatriation of "a number of Beqa men", although with their taxes still unpaid. Doubtless wishing to end this long-standing scandal at any cost, Emberson let Ma`afu off the hook to the extent of recommending to Swanston that the Roko of the men's home district should account for the taxes.⁸⁶ Ma`afu was to end the

80 Swanston to Horace Emberson, 4 Dec 1874, MNA OC.

81 Swanston to Ma`afu, 18 Nov 1874, MNA OC.

82 Emberson to Col. Sec., 25 May 1875, CG Set 10.

83 Swanston to Emberson, 23 Oct 1874, MNA OC.

84 Robert Robertson to Emberson, SM Lau, 30 Nov 1874, MNA OC.

85 Sec. NA to RTL, 29 Oct 1874, MNA OC.

86 Emberson to Sec. NA, 2 Jan 1875, CG Temp. 18.

most momentous year of Fiji's history, and indeed of his own life, on a positive note when he presented a building and its enclosed grounds at Lomaloma to the government, with the request that it be used as a courthouse and gaol. He even requested a "deed of transfer" to sign, but John Thurston, churlish as ever in matters concerning his *bête noire*, asserted that no deed was necessary as Ma`afu's ownership was unclear: "Let His Excellency take and occupy the buildings. It will be gazetted".⁸⁷

For Ma`afu, settling into what was to be the final stage of his long career in Fiji, there remained two questions, one public and one personal, to engage his immediate attention. The first was the matter of taxes, defined for the information of rokos in their formal Instructions:

All males from 16 to 60 must pay the capitation tax of which there are three rates: first on the Districts where money is easily obtainable the rate is ten shillings each man, the second rate is seven shillings and sixpence and the third rate is in Districts where money is difficult to procure, in inland and mountain tribes, and is five shillings yearly ... Any roko failing to collect the taxes for his district will be called to account for the same.⁸⁸

For the moment, by way of contrast with his years as Viceroy and as Governor of Lau, there appeared to be no taxation clouds darkening Ma`afu's horizon. Of greater importance for him at the beginning of 1875 was the personal matter, that concerning the *coup d'état* he had been planning, with his order for rifles from Hedemann's store and the "army" awaiting his summons in Tonga.⁸⁹ The moment had passed now, but in the case of the rifles, Ma`afu was still faced with his legal contract for their supply. Having failed to convince the trader that he was "afraid" of the government, he caused his unofficial secretary, George Bayley, to write four times to Frederick Hedemann during November 1874, arguing that the contract was now void. Hedemann would have none of it, asserting that if "Ma`afu thinks he can back out of his contract, we are convinced ... that other influence is brought upon him ... Ma`afu ought to be aware that nobody can relieve him of the contract he has entered into". The trader, threatening legal action, was planning to visit Lomaloma to arrange "a final settlement".⁹⁰ Still seeking to avoid that outcome, Ma`afu told Hedemann in January 1875 that he had sold 100 tons of copra to a visiting ship and "that this copra was intended for us to pay against his account ... for the payment of

87 HE to Sec NA, 28 Dec 1874, minute by Thurston, CG Set 10.

88 Instructions to Rokos, enc. in Layard, Despatch, Dec. 1874, Government House Papers, Bundle 4.

89 See Ch. 11.

90 F.C. Hedemann and Co. to George Bayley, 4 Dec 1874, Hedemann vs Ma`afu Papers, CG Set 31. Bayley's letters to Hedemann are lost.

the Snider carbines". Bayley was urged to advise Hedemann as soon as 40 or 50 tons of copra had been made at Lomaloma, so the trader could send a vessel to collect it.⁹¹ Bayley, of course, could do nothing without Ma`afu's approval.

Whatever the precise nature of the "influence" on Ma`afu from other quarters was, the matter quickly engaged the attention of Emberson, who wrote to Layard:

Ma`afu is again applied to by Messrs Hedemann ... for some £2,000 as payment for Snider rifles ordered by Ma`afu some time back by written agreement. *Delivery to be taken in Samoa*. Ma`afu says he was told by ... Sir Hercules Robinson, by yourself also with the Commodore that he *should* not and *need* not pay for these rifles. Did you know ... that it was agreed that delivery was to be taken at Samoa. Ma`afu says [Hedemann] suggested this in order to save him the duty. I imagine they ... had other reasons and more foresight. Ma`afu is very anxious on this matter and wants me especially to request your advice and opinion. Will he have to pay and how do you advise him to set about collecting such a large amount.⁹²

Layard sought immediate advice from Robinson in Sydney, expressing some scepticism: "I am not aware that either Your Excellency or Commodore Goodenough gave Ma`afu any advice upon the subject of his contract for Snider rifles – I certainly never said anything of the kind to Ma`afu". Layard believed that Messrs Hedemann sought merely to frighten Ma`afu into paying his debt.⁹³ Robinson was clear in his response:

Ma`afu is mistaken in stating that I told him that he should not and need not pay for the rifles ... I told him that as a subordinate British official, he had no need of a large supply of rifles and should not possess them. I accordingly advised him to come to some arrangement with Messrs Hedemann for disposing of the arms which he had ordered.⁹⁴

All this seems clear enough, but Ma`afu had, as Hedemann apparently knew, received contrary advice. Swanston, who could hardly have been ignorant of the views of both Administrator and Governor, flatly contradicted both men when he advised Emberson: "In reference to the Snider rifles said to have been purchased from Hedemann and Ma`afu's statement that the Governor had said that he need not pay for them is quite true. Tell Ma`afu to ignore the whole matter".⁹⁵ As a veteran of Fiji, and Ma`afu's former secretary, Swanston might be supposed to have retained some sympathy for the Roko Tui Lau, although

91 F.C. Hedemann and Co to Bayley, 28 Jan 1875, Hedemann vs Ma`afu papers.

92 Emberson SM to Administrator of Govt, 16 Dec 1874, CG Set 10 (italics in original).

93 Layard to Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor of NSW and Fiji, 30 Dec 1874, CG Set 22.

94 Despatch Fiji No. 6, Robinson to Layard, 16 Jan 1875 as to Ma`afu's entanglements with the Messrs Hedemann, Fiji Correspondence of Sir Hercules Robinson.

95 Sec. NA to Emberson, SM Lau, 9 Jan 1875, MNA OC.

he could address him in peremptory fashion when it suited his purpose. The Secretary for Native Affairs had, though, attracted official displeasure for his "swash-buckler manner",⁹⁶ and was in fact suspended from office only two days after his astonishing advice to Emberson. His suspension and its subsequent confirmation were the consequences of his action in freeing prisoners under sentence of the Supreme Court.⁹⁷ Under the circumstances, Emberson might have refrained from passing on the advice to Ma`afu. Not that it mattered, since Hedemann remained adamant that only payment according to the contract would satisfy him. Failing that, the Levuka trader would see the Roko in court.

The Hedemann contract was not unconnected with the perennial problem of Ma`afu's personal debt. In January 1875 the Colonial Office, at Layard's behest, approved a "Confidential advance to Ma`afu to enable him to clear himself from debt". Layard wrote:

Ma`afu is a very intelligent man, and one of the most enlightened of the chiefs. He will, under proper guidance, be a valuable subordinate administrator under British rule, and it is desirable therefore that he should not be exposed to other than legitimate official influences. Heretofore, Ma`afu has been, in money matters, very much in the hands of Mr Hennings ... I had reason to think, from circumstances which came to my knowledge, that it would be well if Ma`afu were free from any such financial entanglements.

Ma`afu, unsurprisingly, "quite shared the same view". He believed his debt to Hennings to be about £200 although, with feigned ingenuousness, "he never could understand how white men made out their accounts, for whatever amount of produce he sent to them, they nevertheless always brought him a little in their debt". After Layard authorised Thomas Horton, the Treasurer, to examine Ma`afu's account with Hennings, Horton was instructed to advance £200 to Hennings and to deduct £25 per month from Ma`afu's salary until the Treasury was reimbursed. "Ma`afu was very grateful for this assistance", Layard was careful to note, "and I feel assured the kindly act will attach him firmly to British rule and will render him ... an efficient instrument ... for the good government of the country".⁹⁸

So the reins restraining Ma`afu were slackened, the better to ensure he remained firmly in harness. The debt to Hennings was one thing, of course, and that to Messrs Hedemann quite another. Word reached the seemingly omniscient Department of Native Affairs that Ma`afu, while visiting Lakeba, had sent instructions to Lomaloma "that all natives [were] to prepare copra to enable them

⁹⁶ Goodenough to Carnarvon, confidential, 17 Apr 1874, CO 83/5.

⁹⁷ Swanston to Robinson, 31 Dec 1874, CG Set 43; Thurston to Swanston, 11 Jan 1875 and 1 Mar 1875, CG Set 13.

⁹⁸ Layard to Carnarvon, 15 Jan 1875, CO 515/1.

to pay for the muskets he purchased from Hedemann". The Department was not amused. "I am to inform you", its chief clerk wrote to Emberson, "that the natives are *free from lala* of this kind – you will please notify Ma`afu from this Department to this effect ... a letter will be written to Ma`afu on this subject".⁹⁹

As so often in Ma`afu's life, we have no word from the man himself, during these early days of the Crown Colony of Fiji, to inform us how he felt in the still new role of "subordinate administrator" in a white man's bureaucracy. He was also receiving directions from a more customary source: Tonga, in the person of his cousin King Tupou. In February, after the departure from Fiji of "the remainder of the Tongans who so distinguished themselves at Nasova", the King sent a ship "to fetch every Tongan back that wishes to leave Fiji", with Ma`afu given "strict orders not to hinder anyone that wishes to leave". Tupou clearly felt that with Fiji now under British rule, it was time for the Tongan diaspora, or at least those without permanent roots in Fiji, to return home. Ma`afu, seeking perhaps a taste of the freedom he had once enjoyed, left "for Somosomo and a cruise down the Vanua Levu Coast to Bua, in the *Xarifa*, but does not intend visiting Levuka".¹⁰⁰

The Roko Tui Lau had in fact adapted to his new circumstances. An unnecessary note of caution was sounded in February, deep in the Levuka bureaucracy, when someone thought it useful to note, "If anything could tempt Ma`afu to resume his designs of making himself Sovereign of ... Fiji ..., it would be a manifestation of weakness and unpreparedness on the part of the Imperial Government".¹⁰¹ The efficient and indeed relentless working of the Colony's administrative machinery reveal that such a "manifestation" was most unlikely. Ma`afu was in fact soon to demonstrate qualities of initiative and leadership during a period of national trauma unique in Fiji's history. Cakobau and two of his sons had left Fiji in November 1874 for a visit to Sydney, whence they returned two months later, bringing with them an unwelcome and sinister travelling companion: the measles virus. Because the Fijian population lacked immunity, measles spread rapidly throughout the islands, leaving in its wake a death toll of more than 40,000. The population of indigenous Fijians would not reach its pre-measles level until after the Second World War. No part of Fiji was spared: among the casualties were a son, daughter and brother of Cakobau, as well as "his faithful Tongan", teacher Pita Vi, who all succumbed. Cakobau and his wife, Adi Samanunu, both became ill but recovered.¹⁰² From Vanuabalavu, Emberson advised the Secretary for Native Affairs in April that "death, desolation and woe" prevailed at Lomaloma: "whole families carried off

99 Robert Robertson, clerk to Emberson, SM Lau, 19 Jan 1875, MNA OC (italics in original).

100 *FT*, 3 Feb 1875.

101 Memo by K. Featherston, 12 Feb 1875, CG Temp. 18.

102 Rev. Joseph Waterhouse, Navuloa, to Rev. Benjamin Chapman, Sydney, 8 Mar 1875, MOM 100.

– starvation rampant".¹⁰³ Altogether, about 334 died in Vanuabalavu, some one-quarter of the population, including 75 in Lomaloma.¹⁰⁴ On Lakeba, there were about 130 deaths, including 104 in Tubou. By June, the epidemic had "nearly run its course", albeit with drastic consequences, and we read that, by the end of May, "measles have disappeared from Lomaloma".¹⁰⁵ Ma`afu did not escape: in April, he was in Lakeba "to recruit his health" after measles. The *Fiji Times* gives us the details:

Ma`afu when attacked with the measles lost heart like all natives, he had, however, some good friends round who insisted on his obeying their instructions, and although he has recovered from all effects of the illness, it has aged him considerably; his hair has turned almost white. He caught the disease when he last visited Levuka, and even at that time he expressed fears of the consequences if he became infected.¹⁰⁶

We can surmise that only illness permitted Ma`afu to tolerate his friends "insisting on his obeying their instructions". According to an oral tradition, he was left "drained" by the measles, with "an elderly, grizzled appearance".¹⁰⁷ By the time of the Queen's birthday on 24 May, he was back in Lomaloma, where he attended a quiet celebration dinner chaired by William Hennings, with "Ma`afu just looking in for ten minutes and making an appropriate little speech".¹⁰⁸

The Roko Tui Lau had little time to bask in the sun following his recovery. Thurston, the Colonial Secretary, reminded him in April that with tax collectors now in training, it was the duty of all rokos to collect their taxes and send them to Levuka. "If your Province fails to collect these taxes", Thurston warned, "only you will be blamed for it".¹⁰⁹ Advised of these responsibilities five months earlier,¹¹⁰ but delayed by his illness, Ma`afu told Thurston that as soon as repairs to the *Xarifa* were completed, he would undertake both the tax collection and the census. Emberson, certainly at the Roko's behest, wrote to Thurston: "Ma`afu wishes to enquire if any allowance will be made him for the use of his vessels or not". Swanston, now a clerk in the Colonial Secretary's Department, minuted that the salary of a Roko Tui "is in consideration of his performing his duty" and that no extra allowance was warranted.¹¹¹ If Ma`afu saw this rebuff as another humiliation, he was still able to reach Lakeba a fortnight

103 Emberson, SM Lau to Sec. NA, 6 Apr 1875, Further correspondence respecting the Colony of Fiji, Feb. 1876, PP C.1404.

104 Rooney to GS, WMMS (A), 3 May 1875, *WMN(A)*, Vol. III, No. VI, Jul 1875; Lomaloma Circuit Report, 1875, MOM 14; *FT*, 5 and 9 Jun 1875.

105 *FT*, 5 Jun 1875.

106 *ibid.*, 17 Apr 1875.

107 A.C. Reid, Ma`afu and the new Lau state, unpublished TS, 31.

108 *ibid.*, 9 Jun 1875.

109 Thurston to RTL, 19 Apr 1875, MNA OC.

110 See above, ns 80 and 81.

111 Emberson to Col. Sec., 25 May 1875, minute by Swanston, CG Set 10.

later, "collecting the census and receiving the taxes. He is very zealous in his work, and ... makes a good and popular officer; he will not visit Levuka until the arrival of Vice-Royalty, when he will probably put in an appearance, accompanied by a numerous retinue in the several vessels he is the owner of".¹¹² In spite of his zeal, or more likely because of it, Ma`afu was expressly forbidden from demanding overdue taxes from the period before Cession.¹¹³

The new regime in Levuka likewise displayed zeal and indeed efficiency in its system of taxation collection, certainly when compared to the earlier administrations that purported to govern Fiji. Yet the zeal lay in the government's determination that taxation revenue would reach its coffers, while collection methods on the ground remained a means of oppression for the Fijian people. In Lau, the process looked well in theory: Lauans were required to pay up to ten shillings per year, with the option, should they possess insufficient coin, of paying in copra. With the province only beginning to participate in the money economy, almost all landholders did pay in copra, a practice both encouraged and often required by their chiefs. The chiefs would then sell the copra to white residents or traders, with the proceeds submitted to the Roko Tui Lau, who passed them on to the Stipendiary Magistrate. However, with the local chiefs permitted to retain surplus cash or copra, once taxation liabilities had been satisfied, the system was often abused by chiefs who placed unjust burdens on the people, requiring them to produce much more copra than they needed for their tax obligations. The fact that the collection agents, appointed by the Roko, operated away from his supervision, often resulted in further exploitation, with some agents retaining for themselves more than half the proceeds collected. In August 1875, Emberson reported that with accurate census figures still unavailable, it was "impossible for anyone to know whether the Lau District Native taxes have been paid or not".¹¹⁴ With a taxation system so open to abuse, no benefits that might have been expected from the new regime were likely to accrue to the Lauan people. Recognising the system's shortcomings, the *Fiji Times* urged relief for "the native population ... from petty tyranny and unlawful exactions, [so as to] increase their sense of freedom and self-respect, and, by securing to every man an indefeasible property in all he earns, foster industry and the pursuit of wealth".¹¹⁵

For Lau, part of the problem lay in the nature of its land tenure. Once available land had been apportioned to the taxpayers, the residue was at the sole disposal of the chiefs. Each tax-paying man, having been allocated a plot large enough to support his family, was expected to pay a certain specified portion of the produce

112 *FT*, 5 Jun 1875.

113 M.H. Fraser, clerk, MNA to Emberson, 8 Mar 1875, MNA OC.

114 Emberson, 'Native Taxation Lau District', enc. in Emberson to Sir Arthur Gordon, 20 Aug 1875.

115 *FT*, 19 Jun 1875.

as a tax, in support of the authority of the chiefdom. In return, the proprietor was free from *lala*, the bane of so many lives elsewhere in Fiji. *Lala*, meant to regulate the employment of communal labour for communal purposes, almost always applied to labour alone, rather than to property. In practice though, a chief could order work to be done for himself, often for house building, sometimes requisitioning large numbers of people who were in consequence denied time to cultivate their gardens and so ensure their food supply.¹¹⁶ The absence of *lala* would have promoted "freedom from petty tyranny and unlawful exactions" had not the colonial administration, an alien bureaucracy, imposed a taxation regime that opened the door for other forms of chiefly oppression. For the Lauan people, life in the early days of the Colony of Fiji was a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

In 1875, Ma`afu was continuing the practice, begun before he was formally created Tui Lau in 1869, of ensuring that all available land was under cultivation and that all proprietors were given enough land to meet their needs. As we saw in Chapter Nine, Ma`afu sought to ensure that land was put to its optimum use, with everyone planting whatever land they had been allotted. Unfortunately, his idea of optimum use included leasing productive lands to European settlers, a practice which boosted his income through the rents the settlers paid, while denying to the *mataqali* access to some of their lands and to a rental income from them. Although the Lauan system ensured that most proprietors were able to meet their taxation requirements, as long as they were not inflated by unscrupulous chiefs or agents, the geography of the province with its widely scattered islands militated against efficient supervision of those to whom collection of the taxes was entrusted.

The Lauan state, enlarged during the previous two decades by Ma`afu and now known as the Province of Lau, continued its evolution under British rule. The Roko likewise continued to play his vital part in that process. By June, the long saga of repatriating the visiting Tongans, begun at the behest of Tupou, was largely complete. As the *Fiji Times* announced, with more than a hint of glee, "the *Marie Louise* is daily expected [at Lomaloma] to convey to their homes the remnant of this predatory picnic who came down in February 1873".¹¹⁷ While their departure would not be a loss to Fiji, the retirement of many Tongan teachers, some of whom had been working in Fiji for upwards of 20 years, would be felt. Missionary James Waterhouse at Navuloa advised his Society's secretary in Sydney, Benjamin Chapman, that many of the teachers who wished to return home should be conveyed without cost on the Wesleyan mission ship *John Wesley*. If that could not be arranged, then the Society should

116 For a contemporary discussion of land tenure in Lau, compared to that elsewhere in Fiji, see *FT*, 7 Aug 1875. See also *Constitution and Laws of the Chiefdom of Lau, Fiji*, Sydney 1871, Clause XIV: Government Lands.

117 *FT*, 9 Jun 1875.

pay for their passage. Several of the teachers, some of whom were aged, had addressed Waterhouse on the subject. While there is no record of how their repatriation was finally organised, Waterhouse duly informed Chapman “that Ma`afu has expressed his great satisfaction with the arrangement made for the return passage of Tongans to their country and intimates that King George also will be pleased”.¹¹⁸

If the repatriation of the teachers owed something to Ma`afu’s benevolence, that quality might also have been evident in Ma`afu’s gift to the people of Lomaloma of “a large and picturesque piece of ground to be converted into a People’s Park ... Mr Emberson has been mainly instrumental in obtaining this grant ... shrubs and fruit trees have been judiciously planted, and seeds sown ... a short time will allow of Lomaloma possessing really beautiful recreation grounds”.¹¹⁹ Altogether, 33 varieties of ornamental shrubs and trees, as well as fruit trees, sugar cane and tea plants were ordered from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney.¹²⁰ Although Ma`afu was accused of “studying his own interest” in enhancing the value of his property with the gardens,¹²¹ that view was a peculiarly European one. The *Fiji Times* could nevertheless not resist a customary gibe at Ma`afu when it noted that while the idea for the gardens had come from Emberson and Herbert Levick, a long-term settler, all the work “has been done by the Tonguese, and Ma`afu seems to delight as much in beautifying Lomaloma as King George does in improving his sovereignty at Tonga”.¹²²

While Ma`afu had little to do in the garden’s creation beyond organising the labour, he did take an active role in arranging relief for Ono-i-Lau, in the far south of the province, where people were reported to be starving following many deaths in the measles epidemic. He despatched the *Xarifa* and the *Caroline* with food supplies for the Ono people, said to be living on *yaqona* roots and old coconuts. The supplies were well received, although there was later much dissatisfaction when the island’s chief “appropriated to himself a cargo of yams” which Ma`afu had sent as relief.¹²³ Ma`afu also tried, without success, to persuade the islanders to abandon Ono, an island he described as “barren, unfruitful and [too] small to support the people”.¹²⁴ Probably to the Roko’s chagrin, a medical practitioner who visited Ono did not think the people’s removal justified, since the islanders seemed “attached to their homes and very

118 Joseph Waterhouse to Benjamin Chapman, 23 Jun and 4 Sep 1875; Aaron Fotafili, David Nauhaamea, Joeli Nau, Joeli Bulu, James Havea and Mele Fiji to Waterhouse, 12 Jun 1875, MOM 100.

119 *FT*, 5 Jun 1875.

120 For the full list of plants, see Royal Botanic Gardens, Plants received and despatched 1870–1879. 136. The plants were sent on 11 Jun 1875 to “Mr H. Emberson, Lomaloma, Fiji”.

121 *FT*, 9 Jun 1875.

122 *FT*, 11 Aug 1875.

123 Lorimer Fison to Chapman, 29 Dec 1875, *WMN(A)*, Vol. 4, No. 12, Jul 1876.

124 Emberson to Sec., MNA, 7 May 1875, Further correspondence respecting the Colony of Fiji, Feb 1876, PP [C.1404]; Lau Islands: Visit of HMS Barracouta, 2–18 Jul 1875, CG Temp. 18.

comfortably situated". Thurston, acting Colonial Secretary, reminded Ma`afu that should "it appear desirable to remove or otherwise materially affect the existing state and condition of the people" he should submit the matter to the Governor, whose "instructions must be awaited".¹²⁵ Once again, Ma`afu was reminded that his role as Roko Tui Lau was to carry out instructions and not, as he had used to do, formulate them as well.

It was as well for Ma`afu, a "subordinate administrator", to be again reminded of the limitations of his powers. On 26 June, Sir Arthur Gordon, Fiji's first resident Governor, arrived in the Colony. In the weeks before his formal installation on 1 September, Gordon familiarised himself with his new responsibility and consulted many people, including Ma`afu. During this period, Ma`afu had to be content with the minutiae of administration in Fiji's most remote province. In July Malakai Vakameitagake, a Tongan appointed by Ma`afu as chief of the Yasayasa Moala, was deposed, although his reinstatement seemed likely, while from Lakeba came complaints from settlers against the Fijian Stipendiary Magistrate, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba. The Roko was also reminded to keep a close eye on the bulis and to ensure that they reported to him weekly on their work in the villages.¹²⁶ These were mundane administrative matters, but all the while Ma`afu's mind must have continually returned to a matter now of two years' standing: the contract with Messrs Hedemann for the rifles. In March, despite the crazy advice he had earlier received from Swanston, Ma`afu again advised Hedemann that he still considered himself bound by the contract and was willing to pay for the rifles but was "afraid of the Government", which had forbidden him to take the rifles and "if he did he was only a black man and might be hanged".¹²⁷ Hedemann, unsurprisingly, declined to accept this excuse and wrote to Bayley that, if the Roko "cannot come to terms by return of mail, we shall ... proceed at law against him".¹²⁸ Apart from the contract for the rifles, Ma`afu's account with Hedemann's was, on 13 May, in debit for a further £72, representing "needle guns, ammunition and sundries".¹²⁹ With the trader's patience finally at an end, "Enele Ma`afu, gentleman" was served with a summons on 21 July 1875 at his home in Lomaloma. He was held liable for damages of £300 as well as costs of £4-6-0.

When the matter was heard in Levuka over three days in August, with Mr Justice Garrick presiding, Ma`afu was represented by the Levuka legal firm of Forwood, Truscott and Sullivan. Much of the time was taken up with evidence from Hedemann, who outlined details of the contract and stated that the rifles had been delivered to Apia, Samoa as arranged. He also informed the court that

125 Thurston, Acting Col. Sec. to RTL, 20 Jul 1875, FCSO OC.

126 Fraser to Ma`afu, RTL, 4 Aug 1875, MNA OC.

127 Evidence of Frederick Hedemann, Hedemann vs Ma`afu papers.

128 Hedemann to Bayley, 30 Mar 1875, *ibid.*

129 Ma`afu's account, 13 May 1875, debit to Ma`afu, July 1873, *ibid.*

during the two years since the first contract was signed, Ma`afu had several times promised to pay. The transcript of evidence suggests some adroit cross-examination by Ma`afu's counsel. Some of Hedemann's claims were hardly credible: he stated, for example, that when the second agreement was made in July 1873, he did not know that it was illegal to deliver guns to Ma`afu in Fiji. He also claimed not to know that Ma`afu and Cakobau were mutually antagonistic, nor did he consider why Ma`afu purchased the rifles. "I did not know at the time these rifles were ordered that they were for the purpose of waging war against Cakobau's government". Unbelievably, he also said that at the time of the second agreement, he was unaware that the offer of Cession had been made by Fiji's chiefs. "I am aware that Ma`afu has communicated with the late Fiji Government or the Ad-Interim Government about these rifles. Mr Emberson told me this ... I was afraid of no consequences to me had I landed [the rifles] at Lomaloma".¹³⁰

There is no record that Ma`afu gave evidence. Finally, Mr Justice Garrick "allowed the Plaintiff, on his own election, to become non-suited with costs". Ma`afu's counsel requested that the non-suit judgment be reserved for further argument, "which application was conceded".¹³¹ The final decision, handed down on 12 August, was that the Plaintiff's election to become unsuited had come too late. The Court ruled in favour of the Defendant, with the Plaintiff ordered to pay costs. In the words of the ruling, "The contract was between aliens, one being a Sovereign Prince". The Court had no jurisdiction.¹³² Hedemann was left with the rifles but without his money, while the "Sovereign Prince", although doubtless pleased with the outcome, was left with the rueful contemplation of a "principality" now forever beyond his grasp.

Ma`afu's probably unexpected victory over Hedemann came during a period which might be called the end of the beginning of his years as Roko Tui Lau. The court settlement laid the ghost of his troubled years as Viceroy and, briefly, Governor of Lau. As far as we can judge from the voluminous official records of the time, Ma`afu appeared to be reconciled to his role as a "subordinate administrator" in the Colony of Fiji, during the months when the islands were undergoing the difficult transition from the chaos of the preceding five years to their new place within the British Empire. That reconciliation entailed for Ma`afu a degree of humiliation, of which there is only a hint among the reams of correspondence. There appeared to be an awareness during these months that Fiji was indeed entering a new era. Ritova, the one great chief of Fiji who could never put his house in order, had died suddenly on 27 February 1875.¹³³

130 Evidence of Hedemann, *ibid.*

131 *FT*, 12 Aug 1875.

132 Hedemann vs Ma`afu papers.

133 Certificate of John Cruikshank, Government Medical Officer, CG Set 10.

In Lakeba, the ancient Taliai Tupou, Tui Nayau, who was so old that very few of his people could recall a time before he assumed that rank, had also died shortly after Cession.¹³⁴ The passing of Ritova prompted an uncharacteristic reflective mood in the *Fiji Times*, as if its editor could sense the passing of an age:

Who is there in Macuata that can replace Ritova, or Ratu Kini in Nadroga, or Tui Cakau at Cakaudrove, when he is called away, or Ma`afu at Lau? These men are the resultants of causes now non-existent, and whose like Fiji will never again produce.¹³⁵

Ma`afu remained very much alive, and it is appropriate to conclude this chapter as it began, with words of praise for him from missionary Isaac Rooney at Lomaloma. Following a meeting at Mualevu, in northern Vanuabalavu, Ma`afu donated £28 out of £100 raised for the mission. "I think we might shame some of the wealthy folks in the Colonies", Rooney enthused.¹³⁶ A month later, at the Lomaloma meeting, £172 was subscribed; "Unfortunately Ma`afu was away at Levuka – had he been present yesterday we should have done better still".¹³⁷ While Ma`afu might have been judicious in arranging his absence, his identification with the mission, indisputably not one of the "causes now non-existent", was a link with his past that he fully intended to retain.

134 Taliai Tupou had been Tui Nayau since 1833, when he succeeded his half-brother Malani.

135 *FT*, 19 June 1875.

136 Rooney to Chapman, 28 Jul 1875, MOM 165.

137 Rooney to Chapman, 12 Aug 1875, MOM 165. "The Colonies" refers to the then six British colonies in Australia.

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