

13. “He is regarded with much bitterness and ill-will”

When Sir Arthur Gordon, first resident Governor of Fiji, arrived in Levuka on 26 June 1875, he brought with him a comprehensive set of instructions from the Colonial Office concerning the policy he was to pursue in office. While it is beyond the scope of this work to consider that policy in detail, his Native Affairs Ordinance is worthy of notice, since it incorporated “the great body of custom that ... had been understood for generations”.¹ Mention should be taken of those aspects of custom that were of greatest relevance to the Province of Lau: land titles and *lala*.²

Elsewhere in Fiji, Europeans claiming to have acquired land by purchase prior to Cession were to provide satisfactory evidence of the transactions with Fijians on which they relied in establishing their title. If, after enquiry, it was found that the land had been acquired at a fair price and to the satisfaction of the original owners, a Crown grant in fee simple would be made. In Lau, where Ma`afu had forbidden alienation of land and permitted only leasehold, a different approach, to be considered below, was required. In the case of unalienated and unleased lands in Lau and elsewhere in Fiji, “native titles” were to be simplified and the lands left in the occupation of those already in possession. Under an Ordinance enacted in September 1875, it became illegal for “Natives” to engage in land transactions with “any persons not being Natives”.³ Finally, with respect to *lala*, the Colonial Office recognised that a much closer acquaintance with this customary practice was necessary before any definitive policy, perhaps involving “improving [or] developing tribal organisation”, could evolve.⁴

Implementation of this policy would require several years. Gordon commenced a process of consultation with members of the two previous administrations, leading chiefs and others, in preparation for his formal assumption of office in September and a subsequent *Bosevakaturaga*, or meeting of the Great Council of Chiefs. Along with the other roko tuis, Ma`afu was instructed to be in Levuka by 1 September, in readiness for Gordon’s installation at Bau six days later. He was to bring with him four “lesser chiefs”, including Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba and Sione Mafi.⁵ The new Governor’s consultations included at least one

1 G.K. Roth, *Native administration in Fiji during the past 75 years*, London 1951, 2.

2 For the full instructions, see Lord Carnarvon to Sir Arthur Gordon, 4 Mar 1875, G.C. Henderson, ed., *Fijian Documents Political and Constitutional 1858–1875*, Sydney 1938, 162–167; Carnarvon to Gordon, 22 Mar 1875, G.C. Henderson, *The Evolution of Government in Fiji*, Sydney 1935, 101–110.

3 An Ordinance to prohibit the Alienation of Land by Natives in the Colony of Fiji [16 Sep 1875], *Ordinances of the Colony of Fiji...*, 12.

4 Carnarvon to Gordon, 4 Mar 1875.

5 M.H. Fraser, Acting Sec., MNA to Ma`afu, 15 and 20 Jul 1875, MNA OC.

meeting with Ma`afu, whom Gordon “lectured ... as to the iniquity of dynamite fishing and delayed reports”.⁶ Ma`afu was again reminded of his requirement to function within the new bureaucracy and to defer to his superior, the Governor, in all things. Much is revealed of Gordon’s conscientious approach and acuity of mind by his comments on social organisation and the taxation system prevailing under the *ancien régime*. As a general principle, Gordon recognised the wisdom of preserving the “the existing native organisation of village communities [and] to uphold the authority of the chiefs and local councils”. Respecting taxation, Gordon found it “impossible to suppose that revenue had been the object contemplated in the imposition of [the] tax” of one pound per man and four shillings per woman per annum. The “main design ... was that of furnishing ... a large supply of labour to the plantations of the white settlers”. He noted “a species of absurdity in the imposition of pecuniary taxation on a population, nine tenths of whom possess no money”.⁷ Under the Cakobau Government, Robert Swanston and John Thurston had been concerned both with raising revenue and the welfare of the Fijians, rather than simply with the provision of labourers to planters. However, Gordon’s observations were correct to the extent that the absence of money in coin had forced people to offer their labour as the only feasible means to meet their obligations.

Gordon’s efforts to familiarise himself with Fiji and its people necessarily involved much entertaining at Government House, Nasova. In August, he had a house guest: Baron Anatole von Hügel, future Curator of the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. One afternoon during his visit, von Hügel unexpectedly encountered Ma`afu, “the great chief of the Windward Isles”. The baron, as so many before and after, was moved to record his impressions:

Ma`afu is a splendid specimen of humanity of Herculean make without being coarse, he carries a head that would be looked upon as beautiful even among `high caste’ Europeans. Such earnestness and depth of thought speak out of every feature, and as to intellect – those deep hazel eyes speak for themselves, even were they not shaded by a brow and forehead of quite unusual beauty. The stately grace of his bearing and model politeness are quite in keeping with his character, which though perhaps not one of the best, is turned now to good account in ruling his people and administering justice. The Governor was delighted with him. His submission was most characteristic. He presented ... a large fishhook made of tortoiseshell, pearl and sinnet. `You have got the land,

6 Gordon to Lady Gordon, 3 Aug 1875; Arthur H. Gordon, *Fiji: Records of Private and Public Life 1875–1880*, Vol. 1, Edinburgh 1897, 152.

7 *ibid.*, 199–200 and 203.

I bring you the water, as a land without water is useless. Here it is with all the fish and living creatures in it'. It was a most characteristic offering, for the Tongans are great sailors and fishermen.⁸

Ma`afu's new role as "a subordinate administrator" had not robbed him of his grace. He was in Levuka en route for Bau, one among "a large arrival of native potentates" expected for the installation of the Governor and subsequent *Bosevakaturaga*.⁹ While the press noted that his "warlike attitude to Bau" had rendered annexation "inevitable",¹⁰ Ma`afu could now arrive at Bau with benign intent. First, though, came the ceremony at Nasova, when Gordon took the oath of office as Governor. As if to symbolise a joint patronage of their new master, both Ma`afu and Cakobau had caused their yachts to be "nicely placed on either side of the landing stage to Government House". In a brief ceremony watched by many of Fiji's great chiefs, including Ma`afu, the oath of office was administered to Gordon, who formally assumed control of the government.¹¹ In the new Colony, the administration would be shared with an Executive Council, with laws prepared by a Legislative Council chaired by the Governor. Executive Councillors were also members of the Legislative Council, as were the Chief Justice and certain unofficial members chosen by the Governor. The link between the executive arm and government departments on the one hand, and the Fijian people on the other, was provided by the Rokos, of whom Ma`afu was one, at once officers of the colonial government and members of the traditional polity of Fiji.

The new government's task would not be easy. The planter oligarchy which had purported to govern Fiji before Cession had sought to mould the Fijians and their lands to suit the needs of a plantation economy. Now, under the colonial government and to the dismay of many settlers, the Fijians were to be confirmed in possession of their hereditary lands, with the right to manage their affairs under the authority of their chiefs. Gordon's philosophy in these respects was shared by Thurston, who had been in effective control of Fiji since the middle years of the Cakobau Government. When Cession had finally been arranged to the chiefs' satisfaction, Thurston recorded that he had won a victory for the Fijian people. Gordon was now determined that the Fijians' victory would be confirmed.

With the first formalities over and the "native potentates" preparing for the *Bosevakaturaga*, Gordon could further his acquaintance with the chiefs who were, as Rokos, effectively the Governor's deputies. On 7 September, he entertained Ma`afu, Tui Bua, von Hügel and the Native Commissioner, David Wilkinson, at dinner. The two chiefs, Gordon did not fail to record, "behaved

8 Anatole von Hügel, *The Fiji Journals of Baron Anatole von Hügel 1875–77*, ed. by Jane Roth and Steven Hooper, Suva 1990, 120.

9 *FT*, 1 Sep 1875.

10 *ibid.*, 4 Aug 1875.

11 *ibid.*

perfectly, with ease and good breeding, and conversed freely enough". They discussed environmental matters: "balolo – sandal wood – horses – volcanoes – earthquakes – sequence of trees on burnt lands".¹² We have already noted, in Chapter Three, details of Ma`afu's brief incursion into his past, when he expressed much interest in a *civitabua* collected by von Hügel in the mountains of Viti Levu.¹³ For Ma`afu, this discussion was a rare departure from his usual guarded reticence. Gordon, in describing the dinner with the two chiefs, noted that "Tui Bua ... is the more interesting of the two men".¹⁴

Two days later, Ma`afu was present at Bau when Gordon was formally received by Cakobau and invited to participate in a ceremony on the *rara*. With a chair for the Governor placed at the foot of a mound where a heathen temple had once stood, Cakobau and nine of the ten Rokos, including Ma`afu and Tui Cakau, gave a *tama*, a shout of respect to a chief, and so swore allegiance to Gordon as the Queen's representative. There followed a *kava* ceremony, where each chief, "in proper succession", drank to the Governor. Finally, Gordon presented each Roko with his official staff as a symbol of office.¹⁵ The Governor also took the opportunity to put to the chiefs a number of questions for consideration at the *Bosevakaturaga*, to be held at Draiba, Ovalau a few days later.

The Fijian chiefs accepted Cession because their rank and privileges would be preserved under British rule and they would continue to be recognised as sources of authority. The *Bosevakaturaga*, meant to act as an advisory body to the Governor in Council, was to become an annual gathering under British rule, in part "a product of the interdependence of the British and Fijian governing hierarchy in a colony understaffed, weak in financial resources and reliant on much of the indigenous social and political structure inherited from pre-Cession government". The Council was a manifestation of the "continuity of Fijian aristocracy and its governance within a British dispensation". With the chiefs' loyalty dependent on their perceived advantage, the *Bosevakaturaga* would acknowledge their status and make effective use of their obligations to the people.¹⁶ On the first day of the Draiba meeting, attended by all ten Rokos as well as many bulis, magistrates and chiefs of lesser importance, consideration was given to the question, "What is true *lala*, and who are the Chiefs who have the right to its exercise and privileges?" Ma`afu, in speaking against the abrogation of this time-honoured custom, seized the opportunity to enlarge on a theme close to his heart, the diminution of chiefly power since Cession:

12 Gordon, Diary, 7 Sep 1875.

13 See Ch. 3, ns 111–115.

14 *ibid.*

15 Gordon to Carnarvon, 20 Sep 1875, PP 1876 [C.1624], 8–9; *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 209–216; Gordon, "Native Councils in Fiji, 1875–1900", *Contemporary Review*, Jul 1883, 711–731; *FT*, 15 Sep 1875.

16 Colin Newbury, "Bose Vakaturaga: Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs 1875–2000", *Pacific Studies*, Vol. 29, Nos 1/2, 2006, 83.

the last twelve months have changed the whole face of the land: its evils are great, and through the doings of the disobedient the land stinks. When I have been stirred to rise and put it down, I have been met and hindered by the culprits saying, Oh, it is `Vakapiritania', and `Vakapiritania' is thus the shield of evil-doers. ... should it become law that all men are to be free to follow their own minds, then chieftains' authority and position come to an end and `Vakapiritania' commences. But our people will still be Fijians; in name only will they for a long time to come be British subjects. I fear much the good of the past was greater than the future good in store for us. When we and all Fijians of mature age now living are dead, and children of this age and those yet to be born occupy the land, then they may become anglicised in nature, but it is not with them we have to do; we have to do with ourselves and our dark-minded half-wakened people. Let us solicit the Governor to hear us ... Let the *lala* be retained ... also implicit obedience to Chiefs...

Ma`afu was supported by two of his closest allies. Tui Bua addressed the assembled chiefs:

If we cease to exercise the *lala* over our people their day of destruction is near. We all know our people have no desire to work, or to do anything for their own real good, and if we, their Chiefs, leave them to their own ways, their improvidence and laziness will eat them up.

Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba also took his stand against the abolition of the old custom:

Do away with the *lala* and the appearance of the whole land will be changed. Who of himself can build a good house? ... Whoever heard of a man who plants a garden by himself, and whose family always have plenty to eat? ... How could one man build his house, and plant his garden, and build his canoe and sail it all alone? To do this we must cease to be Fijians.¹⁷

While some Europeans saw *lala* as a means whereby the chiefs exploited the people, many planters urged its abolition because they realised that the custom prevented them taking full advantage of the people's labour. Fijians could not become fully integrated into a planter economy if they were obliged to continue their subservience to chiefly power. The chiefs, however, were determined to muster the resources of the land and the people, so that the land and the people might continue to be. To abolish *lala* would be to destroy the soul of Fijian society.

¹⁷ Notes and Proceedings of a Native Council held at Draiba, on the Island of Ovalau in the month of September 1875, translated by David Wilkinson, enc. Gordon to Carnarvon, 16 Feb 1876, CO 83/9.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

The next question put to the Council concerned punishment for disobedience to chiefs. Ma`afu pursued his theme:

seeing daily before me the evil effects amongst the people I have had to restrain myself from putting it down with a strong hand, waiting the assembly of this council that we might lay the whole matter before the Governor and hear his decision. From what I have already heard my mind is peace regarding the future...

In subsequent debate, Ma`afu addressed the matter of "evil-speaking and spreading false and malicious reports ... There is no cause of evil in Fiji greater than this". When the chiefs also considered Macuata, where conditions remained unsettled, Ma`afu blamed the deceased Ritova and Consul Pritchard for having set Ritova at liberty some sixteen years earlier. It was resolved to recommend the creation of Katonivere as Tui Macuata.¹⁸ Ma`afu revealed his statecraft in urging caution on his fellow chiefs:

[The Governor] desires to consult us, and expects us to help him. If it be his duty, a stranger among us, to show such concern and seek the welfare of the people, what [should] be expected of us? For it is our proper work, although as a chief he shares it with us. How inconsiderate of us if we reap only weariness and fatigue. ... We may live to see Fiji's peace firmly established, Christianity and civilisation firmly advancing ... This is the day I have sought and desired to see.¹⁹

Gordon shared Ma`afu's sentiments concerning chiefly authority. The Roko Tui Lau, in Fiji now for 28 years, knew that the chiefs' authority would inevitably diminish under colonial rule, with the magistrates and the law they enforced emerging as alternative sources of authority. Ma`afu, along with the other rokos, great chiefs all of them, now formed part of "a co-opted indigenous hierarchy".²⁰ His experiences with the new bureaucracy emphasised the change of which he was already well aware: there could be no return to the days when chiefs were the ultimate source of authority in the islands of Fiji.

Ma`afu had made his presence felt at the *Bosevakaturaga*, as Gordon was to note:

There, somewhat ill at ease, in a place where, though treated with much outward politeness, he is regarded with much bitterness and ill-will, was Ma`afu the Tongan, the bold and ambitious foreigner who has secured a master's hold upon the half of Fiji...²¹

18 Ritova's four sons were for various reasons excluded from succeeding as Tui Macuata. Katonivere was a son of Bete, Ritova's classificatory brother and rival. See Gordon to Carnarvon, 12 Nov 1875, *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 311.

19 Notes and Proceedings...

20 Newbury, 84.

21 Gordon to Carnarvon, 20 Sep 1875, quoted in *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 215.

While the Fijian chiefs indeed harboured bitterness in their hearts towards Ma`afu, that sentiment was not shared by Lady Gordon when the Roko Tui Lau dined at Government House in September, buoyed perhaps by his successes at the *Bosevakaturaga*. Lady Gordon appeared almost as captivated by the memorable Tongan as von Hügel had been: "[Ma`afu] is an extremely clever man, and the handsomest of them all. If it were not for his brown colour he would be like a very high-bred, rather large Frenchman!"²² Despite his various anxieties articulated at Draiba, Ma`afu must have looked with satisfaction on his role in the first month of the new Governor's administration.

Any such satisfaction probably extended to his £600 remuneration as Roko Tui Lau, the highest salary paid to any *roko* or *buli*. Although their total salaries of £3,219 were "a very heavy item" in the government's budget,²³ no reduction in the chiefs' stipends could be contemplated, since their willing participation in the colonial administration remained essential. Gordon who, with his wife, visited Lau in November 1875, might have been tempted to consider Ma`afu's salary as money well spent:

[I was] much struck by the neatness of ... Lomaloma ... laid out with rectangular streets and squares, each house standing by itself within its own trim hedge or fence of reeds, in the midst of flowering shrubs and fruit trees. I visited the schools both Tongan and Fijian, and was much struck with the latter, in which not only the writing of the scholars was ... remarkably good, but their knowledge of arithmetic and geography appeared to be ... advanced ... There is a good road in Vanuabalavu, and the use of horses by natives of wealth as well as by Europeans is not ... uncommon.²⁴

Lady Gordon was similarly impressed by "the home-like English look of comfort" at Lomaloma, with "the fences of all the houses vaka Tonga". Like her husband, she especially remarked the 14-mile long road, as well as the school with its "picturesque" children and stained glass windows. Visiting Ma`afu's home, the vice-regal couple were received by Sione Mafi, who "did the honours in Ma`afu's absence", offering *yaqona* to his guests "Tonga fashion, each name called out separately".²⁵

If the Gordons were aware that, despite appearances, all was not well in Lau, that was not evident in their journals or correspondence. The cotton industry, which had brought prosperity to Lauan planters during the late 1860s, was

22 Lady Gordon to Mrs [Jane] Ryan, 30 Sep 1875, *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 272.

23 *FT*, 27 Nov 1875, leader.

24 Gordon to CO, 24 Dec 1875, CO 83/7.

25 Lady Gordon, Journal, quoted in *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 328. Magistrate Horace Emberson and missionary Isaac Rooney were, like Ma`afu, absent when the Gordons visited.

now defunct, with no other crop having been found to encourage planters to retain large areas under cultivation. Commercial activity was centred on copra which, as well as constituting the bulk of the mission collections, ensured the employment of many Lauans in its preparation and of Europeans who worked the vessels transporting it throughout Lau. Yet the trade had received a check: with the people required to pay, in copra, an annual tax of ten shillings, the chiefs needed to reserve the entire annual copra production, worth between £10,000 and £12,000, for taxation requirements. This was seen as a return to the “old arbitrary despotism”, with taxpayers subject to *lala* as previously, while the chiefs ignored directions from the European magistrate concerning the proper administration of the tax laws. The situation was described in the press as “robbery” and conducive of “a most prejudicial and demoralising effect on the native population”. The chiefs judged responsible were described as “unfit and unable to impartially administer our civilised laws”. Ma`afu was condemned in the press for “carrying out the new regulations ... in a rather high handed manner”, sentencing people to terms of imprisonment without a court hearing, “divorcing people, issuing marriage licences ... and all sorts of little games”. Both chiefs and people were confused, a situation many of the former were willing to exploit. The Lauans, seemingly, had no incentive to better themselves, since a man was “liable at a moment’s notice to be despoiled of the labour of months”. *Lala*, undesirable in principle, was proving impossible to limit in practice. In the face of chiefly exploitation, the Lauans had come to regard the new regulations as a “myth”. Lorimer Fison, Superintendent of the Wesleyan Lakeba Circuit, noted examples of profiteering in the copra trade by agents of Hennings Brothers, while a detailed press report outlined the widespread abuses prevalent in Lau.²⁶ This report, which contrasts markedly with the superficial impressions recorded by the Gordons, suggests that despite the progress made during Ma`afu’s rule in the province, something was now rotten in the state of Lau.

As usual, we have no window into Ma`afu’s mind. His circumstances, and more especially his prospects, were during these months the subject of much discussion in both Fiji and Tonga. Reference was made in Chapter Six of Tupou’s statement to Parliament outlining his reasons why Ma`afu had not been named as his heir in the newly promulgated Constitution of Tonga. The King explained that while it had been in his mind that Ma`afu would succeed him, in accordance with “our ... Tongan ideas”, he had determined that the succession was to be “from father to children”, that is in lineal descent from the reigning monarch.²⁷ The new Constitution provided that the throne should pass to Tupou’s son Tevita

26 Lorimer Fison to Benjamin Chapman, 27 Nov 1875, MOM 104; *FT*, 1 Dec 1875.

27 See Ch. 6, n. 2.

`Unga and thence to `Unga's son, Wellington Ngū. Should that line become extinct, the Constitution stipulated that Ma`afu should succeed, and thereafter his legitimate descendants.²⁸

Leo Layard, now British Consul to Tonga, forwarded to the Foreign Office a lengthy despatch whose errors of fact and interpretation provoked much comment in Tonga and Fiji. Layard incorrectly referred to Ma`afu as the son of Tupou's elder brother and "his legitimate successor". The Consul was wrong in both respects: Ma`afu's father Aleamotu`a was a younger half-brother of Tuku`aho, the King's paternal grandfather, and thus, in Tongan custom, a classificatory brother of Tupouto`a, Tupou's father.

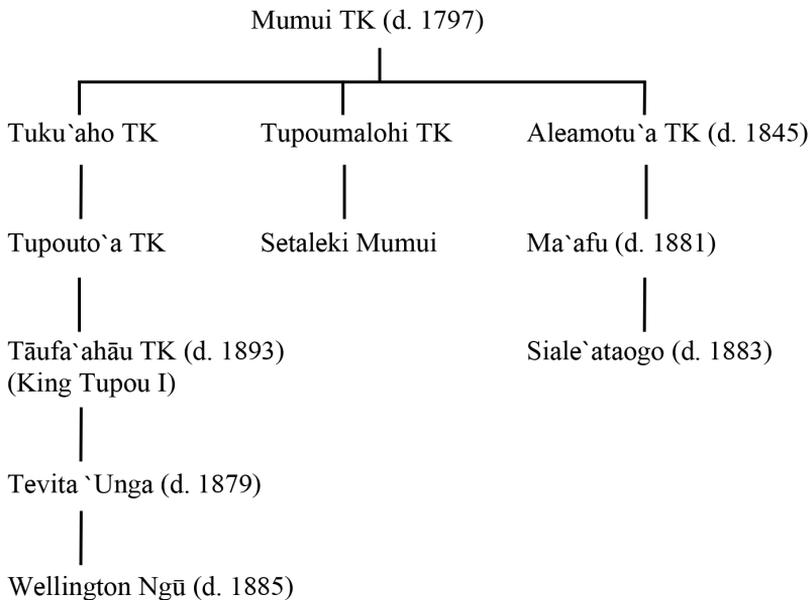


Chart 5: Descent of Ma`afu and Tāufa`ahāu from Mumui.

Source: Author's depiction

Tupou's words to Parliament in 1875 had been: "I said in my mind that Ma`afu should succeed me. By our Tongan ideas it was his turn". Ma`afu belonged to a line of kings: many of his paternal bloodline had been Tu`i Kānokupolu. Layard was not entirely wrong in his observations, however: he saw, in the replacement of an elective monarchy by descent through primogeniture, the influence of the Wesleyan missionaries in Tonga. Apart from whatever influence

²⁸ See Appendix H. For the full text of the 1875 Constitution, see Sione Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, Honolulu 1974, 252–284.

they might believe themselves to hold over Tevita `Unga, the missionaries had been nurtured in belief in a monarchy governed by strict laws of descent through the male line.

Layard went on to refer to Tupou's view, again probably missionary-inspired, that Ma`afu's position as Roko Tui Lau in the Crown Colony of Fiji effectively made him a British subject. Layard demurred, advising the Colonial Office that contrary to the King's belief, Ma`afu had not taken an oath of allegiance. The Consul was mistaken, since Ma`afu had sworn an oath of allegiance to Queen Victoria, administered by Sir Arthur Gordon, at Bau on 11 September 1875. Layard also considered Ma`afu's likely prospects if he pursued a claim to the Tongan throne, asserting that he would enjoy "a much larger following" in all the islands except Ha`apai, with Vava`u as the source of his greatest support. Layard appeared to assume that in the event of the King's death, Ma`afu would seek the throne. The Consul wrote that Ma`afu "owes the present Dynasty a grudge for having detained him a prisoner for some years on Tonga Tabu, and putting David Unga in his stead as Governor [of Vava`u]". With `Unga supposedly disliked by the Europeans in Tonga, Layard foresaw chaos there after the King's death.²⁹

Ma`afu had of course never been "detained" as "a prisoner" by Tupou. Layard's despatch inevitably attracted much critical comment, some of it concerned with Ma`afu's succession rights. The Consul's most serious error was his description of Ma`afu as Tupou's "legitimate successor". As Lorimer Fison would point out, Ma`afu, under Tongan custom, was but one of several legitimate successors. Before promulgation of the 1875 Constitution, Tupou could have chosen his successor from among his sons, his brothers and his father's brothers. Ma`afu, half first cousin to Tupou's father Tupouto`a, was considered Tupouto`a's brother in Tongan custom. Fison believed that Tupou's effective choice lay between four family members: Ma`afu, Siale`ataongo, `Unga and Ngū. As the King himself stated, his choice would have been Ma`afu.³⁰

Fison's views were echoed by Gordon, who reiterated that Ma`afu was not Tupou's legitimate successor, "although he is one of those from among whom his legitimate successor might be chosen". Gordon also observed that Layard had been mistaken in describing `Unga as Tupou's illegitimate son. Certainly Tupou had never married `Unga's mother in a Christian ceremony, but `Unga's birth had occurred about a decade before the first resident Christian missionaries arrived in Tonga. Moreover, `Unga was universally recognised in Tonga as Tupou's son and a contender for the succession. Gordon added that if `Unga were considered illegitimate, the same might be said for Ma`afu. The Governor

29 E.L. Layard to FO, 8 Mar 1876, FO 58/150.

30 Fison to Frederick Langham, 16 Aug 1876, Fison Letterbooks.

was probably unaware that Ma`afu's parents, Aleamotu`a and Mary Moala, had been married in a Wesleyan ceremony in Nuku`alofa in 1830, when Ma`afu was aged about five.³¹ What counted in Tongan custom some 45 years later was that Ma`afu clearly belonged to the race of Tu`i Kānokupolu, had proven himself as a great and charismatic chief, and enjoyed the favour and confidence of the King.

In 1877, following an official visit to Tonga as High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, during which he had lengthy consultations with Tupou, `Unga and Ma`afu, Gordon wrote of `Unga's prospects to succeed his father:

Uga is a dignified and silent person, nervously cautious, as one who knows that, though `heir apparent' according to missionary ideas, it is quite within his father's power to nominate any other member of the royal house as his successor, and that such nomination would be unanimously accepted by the people, whatever might be said to the contrary.³²

Alone among those who considered Ma`afu's succession rights in Tonga, Gordon recalled that Ma`afu, "along with all the other Rokos of Fiji", had taken the oath of allegiance at Bau, administered by Gordon himself. While it is unlikely that the oath legally made him a British subject, it constituted no impediment to his assumption of the throne in Tonga. Had he succeeded as King, whether in accordance with Tongan custom or under the terms of the 1875 Constitution, Ma`afu could simply have resigned as Roko Tui Lau and proceeded to Tonga. That was not to be, of course; in the meantime, there was, according to Gordon, no rivalry between Ma`afu and `Unga, as Layard had claimed. Rather, Ma`afu, avowedly not wishing the throne for himself, supported `Unga as successor. Gordon quoted Ma`afu's supposed views: "If Uga be accepted, it is good. If another is appointed, we (i.e. `Unga and himself) will turn Tonga upside down". If accurate, these words indicate a lack of interest by Ma`afu in becoming King, should Tupou predecease him. The Governor was not alone in stressing Ma`afu's reluctance, although his reasoning appeared dubious. "Ma`afu's reluctance is due, I believe, partly to a real hesitation in regarding the formal renunciation of his rights when he first came to Fiji, and partly to a superstitious feeling connected with his stay in these islands".³³ If Gordon was referring to Ma`afu's forced renunciation of the Tongan lands in Fiji in 1859, that act referred only to the lands in Fiji claimed by Tonga, and not to the throne of Tonga.³⁴

Gordon's views on the matter of Ma`afu's succession were properly those of Frederick Langham, who had corresponded with the Governor. According to Langham, when Ma`afu threatened to "turn Tonga upside down" if "another"

31 See Ch. 1.

32 Gordon to Carnarvon, Apr 1878, *Fiji: Records...*, 3, 101–102.

33 Gordon to Carnarvon, 16 Oct 1876, *Fiji: Records...*, 2, 178.

34 See Ch. 6, n. 122.

were chosen, he was referring to Tungī Halatuitui`a who, although a great-uncle of the King, had long been a rival of the Tupou family. Old Tungī, as he was known, was, after the King, the highest-ranking chief in Tonga and would have held the dignity of Tu`i Ha`atalaau had that title not been abolished. Tungī had declared himself “pained” by Ma`afu’s forced renunciation of the Tongan lands in Fiji in 1859.³⁵ Langham believed that the King had written to Ma`afu

over and over again ... urging him to attend the annual gathering of chiefs in Tonga, but Ma`afu always evaded going, tho’ he knew King George wished to appoint him as his successor ... it is only recently that King George has yielded to the earnest solicitations of the high chiefs in Tonga, seeing that Ma`afu would not accept the position which George so earnestly [urged] him to have, and nominated Uga, between whom and Ma`afu there is no antagonism.³⁶

Ma`afu had attended Parliament more than once during the 1860s, before he was appointed as Tui Lau in Fiji, and if there were letters to him from the King, apparently none has survived. In any case, the two chiefs had many opportunities to meet in Tonga, following the King’s long visit to Fiji in 1855. Tupou’s address to Parliament 20 years later made it clear that Ma`afu had long been his first choice as successor.

It is curious that the debate over Ma`afu’s rights of succession continued for months after the 1875 Constitution had named `Unga, once described by missionary Jabez Watkin as “a vile man”, as Tupou’s heir.³⁷ One man closely involved in the decision to name `Unga as heir was the Reverend Shirley Baker, head of the Wesleyan mission in Tonga and future Premier. Baker had devised the Constitution, following legal and constitutional advice in Australia and New Zealand, and would certainly have urged Tupou to “regularise” the succession along the lines of European monarchies.³⁸ In a reply to Consul Layard’s error-laden despatch, Baker correctly stated that until the 1875 Constitution was introduced, the kingship had been elective, with successors chosen from among those with a close blood relationship to the King through the male line and whose mothers were of sufficiently high rank. Baker was effectively referring to the choice of new incumbents for the three great offices of state in Tonga, of which only one, that of Tu`i Kānokupolu, still existed. Tupou had been chosen as Tu`i Kānokupolu in 1845, following the death of the previous incumbent, Ma`afu’s father Aleamotu`a. The choice was made, in accordance with Tongan custom, by senior members of the *ha`a*. Baker denied that he had sought `Unga’s

35 See Ch. 7, n. 64–66.

36 Langham to Gordon, 26 Jun 1876, MOM 103.

37 Jabez Watkin to Benjamin Chapman, 24 Jun 1871, MOM 170.

38 For Baker’s role in the formulation of the Constitution, see Noel Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga*, second edition, Auckland 1996, Ch. 5.

designation as heir because of his great influence over that chief. He also asserted that Ma`afu had always been friendlier to the missionaries than `Unga, a claim that might have been accurate if Ma`afu's early years in both Tonga and Fiji were not considered.³⁹ While Baker's controversial career in Tonga suggests that his views on the succession should be treated with caution, implementation of the new Constitution rendered the question of Ma`afu's customary rights an academic question. In the event, the four principal candidates for the succession before 1875, Ma`afu, his son Siale`ataongo, `Unga and his son Ngū, all predeceased the King. Tupou, like Louis XIV of France, was succeeded by his great-grandson, who reigned as Tāufa`āhau Tupou II.⁴⁰

One reason why debate on the Tongan succession continued after the new Constitution came into force was that many people expected chaos and even civil war to ensue after the death of the aged Tupou. Alfred Maudslay, British Vice Consul in Tonga, claimed that no Tongan, including the King, actually understood the Constitution.⁴¹ Maudslay believed that the missionaries would inevitably support whichever candidate most favoured their cause and that the best solution would be a willingness on Ma`afu's part to accept the throne. The Vice Consul stated that Baker was directly responsible for Ma`afu's exclusion as heir apparent, an injustice which he believed Tupou acknowledged in his 1875 address to Parliament.⁴² Henry Symonds, a successor to Maudslay as Vice Consul, writing two months after Ma`afu's death, was in no doubt about Ma`afu's prospects during the final years of his life:

Ma`afu was the last of the elders of the Kanokobolu [sic] who could have succeeded the present king, and the family is represented now by Gu, the present Crown Prince [`Unga died in 1879]. Although by Act of Parliament Gu is appointed to succeed his grandfather, yet the people always looked on Ma`afu as the rightful heir and successor, and had he lived until the death of King George and contested the throne, the people would, to a man, have declared themselves for him.⁴³

Whether such a situation would have arisen must remain an intriguing question. What is certain is that in late 1875, whatever his attitude to the Tongan succession might have been, Ma`afu faced difficulties as Roko Tui Lau. Those difficulties, however, did not prevent his making "such a pretty sight" when he sailed the *Xarifa*, all pennants flying and escorted by eight canoes, to escort

39 Rev. S.W. Baker's reply to despatch of 8 Mar 1876, 21 Oct 1876, Baker Papers. See also Consul Layard's despatch and Baker's reply thereto, 21 Jul 1876, WPHC 21/5.

40 The present King, Tāufa`āhau Tupou VI, who succeeded in 2012, is a direct descendant of both Ma`afu and Tupou I.

41 Alfred Maudslay to Lord Salisbury, 23 Jun 1879, FO Confidential 4285, no. 44.

42 Maudslay to Gordon, 11 Dec 1876, *Fiji: Records...*, 2, 239.

43 Henry Symonds to Gordon, 10 Apr 1881, Copies of despatches from the Vice-Consul, Tonga, to the Consul, Fiji, Nov 1879 to Feb 1901, NAF.

the departing HMS *Barracouta* on 8 December. All was not well, nevertheless, with Stipendiary Magistrate George Le Hunte, stationed in Lomaloma, advising Gordon of a scarcity of food and a severe epidemic of influenza in Lau. Problems arose too from the practice of Lomaloma people preparing feasts for labourers who had completed their contracts and were returning home. Many labourers, in the course of their entertainment, were induced to exchange their “trade”, the proceeds of their years of work on Vanuabalavu, for some *masi*, which became all they had to take home. Le Hunte was concerned for the harm this would do to local planters’ prospects of recruiting labour in future. In addition, by way of embellishment to the picture of a debilitated Lau painted by Le Hunte, the *Xarifa* was stated to be one of only three vessels at Lomaloma sufficiently seaworthy for use in the copra trade.⁴⁴

Lau shared with the rest of Fiji problems associated with implementing the regulations of the *Vakapiritania*. Ma`afu’s success as Roko Tui Lau would depend on his ability to smooth the transition for his province and to counter chiefly tyranny arising from taxation anomalies. On Matuku, as elsewhere in Lau, poverty prevailed, with many people, according to a European resident, J.W. Anderson, dependent on wild roots for their daily sustenance. Le Hunte had come down to advise the Matuku people on “the various alterations to their customs” occasioned by the *Vakapiritania*, but as soon as he left the old ways of chiefly exaction returned:

By and bye Ma`afu and his host of magnates arrived at Moala ... with their heads full of their own superiority, and then came Malachi, the Tongan chief of Moala, to explain the now revised laws which seemed to be quite opposed to what were given out by the stipendiary magistrate.⁴⁵

Anderson was not alone in referring, not only to chiefly misrule, but also to the people’s bewilderment in the face of complex and contradictory instructions. For the meantime, though, Ma`afu had enough on his plate at Lomaloma. In the matter of a Tongan woman wishing to divorce her husband for adultery, Ma`afu was advised that if NSM Mafi found the case against the man proven, Ma`afu could order the couple to live apart, but neither could remarry until Ma`afu received instructions from Levuka. Le Hunte informed Ma`afu that he could pronounce judgment once Mafi had heard the case.⁴⁶ Once again, Ma`afu’s powers were circumscribed by the *Vakapiritania*.

While Ma`afu’s manner did not impress J.W. Anderson, his person certainly did:

44 George Le Hunte, SM Lau, Monthly and Quarterly Report on Lau Islands, 10 Dec 1875, FCSO; Le Hunte to Gordon, 3 Dec 1875, *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 375.

45 J.W. Anderson to Editor, *FT*, 30 Oct 1875.

46 Le Hunte to Gordon, 26 Nov 1875, *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 369–370.

[He] strikes one as being a superior man. He is of large stature, and a decidedly heavy weight, not under 15 stone, and withal a shrewd man, quiet in manner and bearing: every inch a chief. He is a wonderfully correct judge of character, and soon finds out what qualities are inherent in any one with whom he comes in contact. He knows how to manage a papalangi schooner...⁴⁷

In similar fashion, an English visitor to Lomaloma in 1875 found that Ma`afu's house reflected nothing of the *malaise* which had spread across the face of Lau:

Ma`afu's house, which stands in extensive grounds, surrounded by a six foot reed fence, and shaded by splendid trees, seems to be very comfortable. The interior is worthy of a civilized Tongan, being furnished with tables and chairs, sofas, and a French clock. Tea is made by a very pretty Tongan girl, and an acceptable breakfast is quickly served. The whole atmosphere of the settlement is quicker, and the appearance of the Tongans is more refined than is usually the case in Fiji and amongst Fijians. That well kept road which is shaded by palms and bread-fruit trees, and lined with bananas, extends for about ten miles, affording a splendid ride or drive. The hill is covered with tree-ferns, over which the blue and white convolvuli are hanging in garlands. Beyond the ground rises gently, and there are some of the cotton plantations for which Lomaloma was once celebrated.⁴⁸

An Australian newspaper reporter was less enthusiastic:

Ma`afu, Prince of Tonga ... a nephew of King George, and a better educated man than his uncle, was ... given to relapses into native habits, although he would sometimes put on a blue naval uniform and patent leather shoes when he called on Sir Arthur Gordon at Levuka. Ma`afu's lapses ... took such a form as a liking for roast dog. The catholicity of his taste in strong liquors was also astonishing in one brought up a Wesleyan. Ma`afu at Loma Loma had a chamber fitted up in European fashion. There was an elegant walnut bedstead; there was a suite to match; there was a toilet service of beautiful and costly china. But the bedstead, wardrobe and chairs were being eaten by white ants. The cheval glass was cracked; half the china ware was broken; the bed was laden with cartridges, pipes, whips and canes. Rifles and revolvers and swords were stowed in one corner. In another, illustrated books and cheap lithographs were mixed up with photographs of distinguished people. There was dust and rust over everything. Ma`afu slept in another room on a pile of mats, as his

47 J.W. Anderson, *Notes of Travel in Fiji and New Caledonia with some remarks on the South Sea Islanders and their Languages*, London 1880, 44.

48 J.W. Boddam-Whetham, *Pearls of the Pacific*, London 1876, 324.

ancestors had done, but he had a sort of delight in the possession of this old curiosity shop, and showed his bed to strangers with pride, and generally let you know he was acquainted with the uses of everything in his collection. But it was much easier to walk into the sea or into his private waterhole at the back than to bother in using a china basin for washing. The *papalangis* had queer ways of doing things, but they certainly made very excellent whips, good for chastening servants ... Ma`afu bought these whips from a store on the beach at Levuka for a high price, and kept his household in order therewith.⁴⁹

For all his modest needs in personal grooming, Ma`afu, freed from his debts by gubernatorial intervention, had resorted to old habits. He was in debt again, this time to George Bayley, while the Governor complained that the Roko Tui Lau “has never sent me his monthly *tukutuku* [report] of his doings”.⁵⁰ Ma`afu was not alone in revisiting the past, since George Henry applied to Gordon to renew his claim to Vanuabalavu, disputing Consul Jones’ 1865 ruling that the island properly belonged to Ma`afu. Henry based his new claim on Ma`afu’s renunciation of all the Tongan lands in Fiji and on a “confirmation” by Cakobau of his, Henry’s, purchase. Another settler, George Winter of Levuka, made similar application, asserting that he had purchased Vanuabalavu from Henry in 1863 and that he, too, held a “certificate of confirmation” from Cakobau.⁵¹ This tangled web of claims would not be unravelled until the Lands Claims Commission hearings in 1880. In the meantime, Ma`afu held the field on Vanuabalavu.

The difficulties associated with implementation of the *Vakapiritania* in Lau and elsewhere were not likely of easy resolution. The most pressing of all was taxation, which Gordon addressed in his message to the Legislative Council at the end of 1875. The “Native Tax”, redeemable in money, had come in practice to be repayable in labour, which led to abuses such as those we have considered and which Gordon described as “an exceeding waste of both power and money”. He saw the tax as unsatisfactory because it dealt with individuals instead of communities. A new system was to be community-based, with the Legislative Council assessing, by annual Resolution, the amount of “Native Taxes to be paid by each Province or District”. Such taxes were to be paid “from the proceeds of native produce to be raised in such time and manner as may be hereafter described in Law”. Lau was assessed at £1,500 for 1876, a figure within the middle range of all the provincial assessments.⁵²

49 Holy Tonga, by The Vagabond, reprinted from the Melbourne *Leader*, Shirley Waldemar Baker, Papers.

50 Le Hunte to Gordon, 6 Dec 1875, *Fiji: Records...*, 1, 377; Gordon to Le Hunte, 15 Dec 1875, *ibid.*, 379–381.

51 LCC R926 Vanuabalavu.

52 LC Sessional Papers 1875–1880, Proceedings 29 and 31 Dec 1875, CO 85/2.

Taxation was regulated by an Ordinance passed in February 1876.⁵³ Seeking to stimulate "native industry" as well as trade, Gordon was successful to the extent that, in 1876, taxation revenue, partly under the old system and partly under the new, amounted to £9,342, compared to £3,499 in 1875. By 1878, revenue would amount to almost £19,000.⁵⁴ If the proceeds of taxation were to become significant, Fiji's resources had to be developed quickly, with Fijians themselves playing an active role. Taxation in kind was meant to assist them to remain cultivators of their own soil, rather than paid labourers in a plantation economy. Since Fiji's traditional political and social divisions were retained under British rule, the islands' economic system had also to be maintained. Retention of the existing communities would also act as a means of social control, since unrest would be less likely if Fijians continued to cultivate their land and pay their taxes within a framework to which they were accustomed. Chiefs would continue to be responsible for organising plantations, as well as growing and collecting produce for taxation. Assessments for tax would be made by the Colony's Legislative Council and would be "based, as regards each province, on mixed considerations of the amount of the population, the nature and productiveness of the soil, and the degree of civilization which the province has attained".⁵⁵

Lau began less than auspiciously in the new system when Gordon wrote to both Ma`afu and Le Hunte that he was not "at all pleased about the copra business".⁵⁶ The new Ordinance was in fact experiencing teething problems throughout Fiji. Fison, perennial observer of the Fijian scene, had written in January that "The Governor ... can't get his full amount of taxes, and yet we [i.e. the Wesleyan mission] can raise so much money ... if he would manage his affairs as well as we manage ours, he would have no difficulty whatever". The missionary forbore to add that the mission had more than 40 years' experience in Lau, while the British administration had been in place only a few months. Fison reported from Lakeba that while sufficient copra had been collected in Lau without difficulty, the government had disposed of it to a German trader in Levuka who lacked enough small vessels to collect it. As a consequence, most of the copra rotted. If the copra had been sold instead to local traders, who possessed "plenty of small vessels", the loss would not have occurred. "If [Gordon] would just say to Ma`afu: 'I want £2,000 from Lau. You and Messrs Rooney and Fison get it for me', we would take the thing in hand, and send him the money without one farthing expense in collection". In similar vein, Isaac Rooney at Lomaloma regretted that "The action of the Government with reference to taxes has precluded the idea of missionary meetings up to the present time", since the people could not afford

53 Ordinance to regulate the Assessment and Collection of Native Taxes, 17 Feb 1876, CO 383/3.

54 Arthur Gordon, *Paper on the System of Taxation in force in Fiji*, read before the Royal Colonial Institute, 18 March 1879.

55 *ibid.*

56 Gordon to Le Hunte, 20 Mar 1876, *Records...*, 1, 470.

to support the mission as well as paying taxes. "So far as Lau is concerned, the policy is a very unwise one. We however have no power to interfere and have just to stand by and see the country go to ruin".⁵⁷

Despite these difficulties, Fison could report later in the year that his "lads" at Lakeba had "made all their copra, which is now awaiting the Governor's pleasure. I hope he will be liberal enough to let them off scot free".⁵⁸ Ma`afu, meanwhile, had acted a chiefly part at Ono, where, accompanied by Le Hunte, he had sailed in haste aboard the *Xarifa* to quell incipient civil disturbance. "You would have been pleased to have heard the Tui Lau's speech; he did give it to them", Le Hunte reassured Gordon. The magistrate did not neglect to inform the Governor of other weighty matters: "I saw Tui Lau's Queen at Lakeba: she is *not* as fat as Adi Lydia, but much less refined-looking".⁵⁹

In the wake of his successful intervention at Ono, Ma`afu was involved in a case of possible corruption. According to Le Hunte, every man in Lau was ordered to make two bags of copra "to go towards the payment for a schooner which Tui Nayau wants at Lakeba". Ma`afu explained that since the Lakeba people had once helped him to buy a vessel, "it was *vaka viti* for him to help Tui Nayau in return". The schooner, under construction in Auckland, was to be employed collecting copra in Lau. "It is not difficult for my mind to see that this is a piece of Ma`afu and Hennings' work", Le Hunte averred. Hennings and Ma`afu apparently had a secret agreement: the trader had paid for the schooner in return for Ma`afu's selling him, at a low price, all the copra he could supply. Hennings then exported the copra to England, where with current high prices he would secure a handsome profit. With most Lauans resentful about their unwilling part in the scheme, Le Hunte had sought to reassure them. "If your Chief tells you to do what he is not allowed to enforce, he will be stopped". Le Hunte told Gordon that "such a thing as this savours very much of a private bit of business, the results of which will be a considerable enlargement of Mr Hennings' balance at the bank". While not attributing "sharp practice" to Hennings, Le Hunte blamed him for influencing Ma`afu to agree to the arrangement. "Tui Lau should get your permission before doing such a thing, so that the influence of anyone else should not lead him to exceed his recognised, or tacitly acknowledged, power". While Ma`afu argued that the Lakebans did not have enough money to pay for the vessel, Le Hunte's chief concern was that Tui Lau should "take care that every penny's worth of tax-produce is to be made for the Government first".⁶⁰ With Tui Nayau also having ordered the Lakebans to make 100 tons of copra, again to be sold to Hennings, the Lauans were likely to have few coconuts

57 Fison to Chapman, 31 Jan 1876, MOM 99; Rooney to Chapman, 18 Sep 1876, MOM 165.

58 Fison to Chapman, 5 Jun 1876, MOM 104.

59 Le Hunte to Gordon, 18 Feb and 2 Mar 1876, *Records...*, 1, 466 and 468 (italics in original).

60 Le Hunte to Gordon, 3 Mar 1876, *Records...*, 1, 469–470.

left for themselves.⁶¹ When the schooner, called the *Uluilakeba*, finally reached Lau from Auckland in December, it was seized by Ma`afu, since Tui Nayau had died three months earlier. Le Hunte would note that Ma`afu appeared "a little ashamed" about the yacht, shirking any discussion of the matter. The magistrate believed that Ma`afu was "being done horribly" concerning the schooner, with the chief blaming "the late Tui Nayau", Ratu Tevita, for his involvement.⁶²

Le Hunte had been uncertain how he should approach Ma`afu about the matter of private *lala*, especially since its imposition, although an undeniable burden for the people, was in accordance with custom. Gordon did caution Ma`afu about the scheme, which was also objectionable on the grounds that most men in Lau were unable to work for their own benefit or to raise tax produce in the face of the demand, while the price Hennings paid Ma`afu for the copra was well below the market rate.⁶³ The evidence does not allow us to determine how willing a partner Ma`afu was: while he probably had little choice, given his eternal debt to the trader, the schooner would eventually be his.

In the face of admonitions from both Gordon and Le Hunte, Ma`afu continued as Roko Tui Lau, spending time in March breaking up the old *drua*, the *Ra Marama*, now rotten. "A relic of olden times", Le Hunte described it,⁶⁴ with reason since Cakobau had presented the *drua* to Tupou I in 1853. A new courthouse at Lomaloma, erected by the Tongan community there under Ma`afu's direction, earned praise, along with Ma`afu's other creation, the botanical garden, as "handsome and valuable additions" to the village.⁶⁵ He was quick to take action against a teacher and his sister who were convicted of incest, "an offence particularly odious to the natives here, who do not allow a brother and sister to have the most ordinary intercourse in everyday life".⁶⁶ The governor permitted Ma`afu to impose whatever penalty he thought appropriate, short of death.⁶⁷

In the exercise of his authority as Roko Tui Lau, Ma`afu seemed undeterred by the realisation that he was now subject to a superior. For reasons unknown, he strongly objected to the appointment of the Reverend David Wylie to succeed Isaac Rooney as missionary at Lomaloma, when Rooney wanted to transfer to the Wesleyan training institution at Navuloa in Rewa. "There was nothing for it but for me to remain and ... [for] Wylie to put down for Navuloa", Rooney lamented.⁶⁸ Ma`afu's unique position among the chiefs of Fiji remained undiminished, as Gordon acknowledged when, advising Lord Carnarvon of

61 *FA*, 28 Jan 1876; *Tonga Times*, 19 Feb 1876.

62 Le Hunte to Gordon, 10 Jan 1877, *Records...*, 2, 261.

63 Gordon to Le Hunte, 20 Mar 1876, *ibid.*, 1, 471.

64 Le Hunte to Gordon, 23 Mar 1876, *ibid.*

65 *FT*, 1 Apr 1876.

66 Le Hunte to Gordon, 1 Apr 1876, *Records...*, 1, 472.

67 Gordon to Le Hunte, 21 Apr 1876, *ibid.*, 474.

68 Rooney to Chapman, 17 Apr 1876, MOM 165.

prospective savings in rokos' salaries, wrote that "No successor to Ma`afu need receive more than half the salary enjoyed by that Chief".⁶⁹ Considerations of mission personnel and of salaries were insignificant, however, in the face of the Kai Colo wars on Viti Levu. After warriors from the interior of Fiji's main island attacked some Christian villages in the Sigatoka Valley, Gordon realised that he had to deal with the problem quickly, without help from outside Fiji, if the disaffection were not to spread. The "little war", as the Governor would call it, was over by August, although not without loss of life and much disruption. As part of a large mobilisation of all available forces, both Ma`afu and Tui Cakau sent troops to aid the government, with the former using the *Xarifa* to convey men to Ra.⁷⁰ Gordon described the Lau and Cakaudrove contingents as "the 60 finest men ... I have yet seen in Fiji. They must have been carefully picked. Their arms are ... wretched, but *que faire?*"⁷¹ When the yacht was no longer needed as a troop transport, it conveyed "Ma`afu and suite" down to Levuka, where he dined with the Gordons on 5 July. Lady Gordon again enjoyed his company:

Ma`afu dined here last night; he is a very great chief – a bitter enemy of Cakobau. He comes from Lomaloma in his yacht with a large suite. When he heard that Cakobau had arrived after dinner for yaqona, a change came over his face, and he said he felt tired and should go home. Ma`afu is a very handsome man, with a remarkably fine head. He is the cleverest of them all.⁷²

Ma`afu had clearly lost none of his charisma. He was to need that quality in abundance to deal with a strange occurrence on Matuku, an episode which ranks as the most bizarre of his years as Roko Tui Lau. Lorimer Fison vouchsafed the essentials to his Society's secretary in Sydney:

A man at Matuku has given himself out to be an angel, and ... appears to have succeeded in imposing on our Native Minister in charge of that island ... he has been allowed to preach, and according to ... Ma`afu, he has been preaching some most extraordinary doctrine, and doing no little mischief.⁷³

Ma`afu and Fison sailed down to Matuku, where they learned that two class leaders from Natokalau village named Eremasi and Aminio "had proclaimed themselves to be angels". Almost all the local people, including Caleb Tuvunuvai, the Native Minister, lent credence to the two men, Caleb even permitting one of them to preach in the mission chapels. Eremasi had announced himself to

69 Gordon to Carnarvon, 7 Jun 1876, PP [C.1624].

70 Fison to Chapman, 15 Jul 1876, MOM 104.

71 Gordon to Capt. Knollys, 10 Jul 1876, *Records...*, 2, 73.

72 Lady Gordon to Mrs Ryan, 6 Jul 1876, *Records...*, 2, 65–66.

73 Fison to Chapman, 15 Jul 1876, MOM 104.

Caleb late one night with the words, "My name on earth in Eremasi. In Heaven I am called Lagilagi, and in Hell my name is Seru-i-degei. I am sent from Heaven to preach in this town".⁷⁴ He and his fellow "angel" announced that they had received a letter from Heaven, but when Caleb went to their village to hear it read, "they said it had been withdrawn from them again because of the disbelief of the king of Matuku, who had spoken scoffing words concerning it".⁷⁵ When Caleb eventually saw through the hoax, the "angels", furious at his disaffection, announced that his village of Yaroi would be destroyed by fire from heaven. After many villagers fled in fear to Natokalau, "a number of young men in that town were seized by a sort of madness, impelling them to frantic howlings and leapings, and all manner of violent gymnastics" which continued for several nights, even though Yaroi was spared destruction. Eremasi and Aminio were joined by a woman who also proclaimed herself an angel. The three made threats of retribution against the people, announced that Yaroi had been superseded by Natokalau as the chief village of Matuku, "and threatened with summary vengeance all who should oppose this decree". Such was the situation when Ma`afu and Fison arrived in Matuku.

Fison's questioning of the two "angels" convinced him they were "madmen" suffering from hallucinations which they mistook for "Divine promptings ... They are too hopelessly stupid to be thoroughpaced impostors". Ma`afu had a decided view of how to deal with the miscreants: "Ma`afu is going to try the spirits with a cat o' nine tails. If they are really angels the application would [not] hurt and if they are impostors it would be well deserved, when in any case all things will be lovely".⁷⁶ In the event, Ma`afu decided to remove them and keep them in custody "until he should receive instructions from the Government as to their disposal".⁷⁷ As for the woman, Fison supposed she had been "taken in by a dream".⁷⁸ When he and Ma`afu departed on the *Xarifa*, they took the two male "angels" with them, leaving the woman behind. The Governor praised Ma`afu for the way he dealt with the Matuku "angels":

[Ma`afu] showed in his treatment of the matter his usual shrewdness and sense of humour. He summoned the `Angels' before him. The woman appeared with a baby in her arms. `Are you married?' asked Ma`afu. `Yes', answered the woman. `And is that your child?' `Yes'. `And you think you are an angel?' `Yes I know it'. `Pooh pooh my good woman, you have mistaken your vocation. Can't you read your bible? Look at

74 Fison to John Thurston, 13 Aug 1876, Fison Letterbooks.

75 Statement of Caleb Tuvunuvai, Appendix to Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Fiji District begun at Levuka 28 Sep 1876, PMB 1138.

76 Fison to James Moulton, 10 Aug 1876, Fison Letterbooks.

77 Fison to Thurston, 13 Aug 1876.

78 This account is based on Fison to Chapman, 21 Aug 1876, MOM 104.

the 23rd Chapter of St Matthew, and you will see that the angels neither marry nor are given in marriage, but you are both married and have a child’.

In a similar way, he made the male `angels’ thoroughly ridiculous, and then gave judgment. `Let the female angel go home and take care of that baby of hers – the charge against her is dismissed. As to the men, I am rather puzzled. It is a crime to personate a policeman, but I don’t know that it is an offence, against either white or native laws, to personate an angel. However this may be, I know it is an offence to obtain money under false pretences, as they have certainly done, or to be rogues and vagabonds as they certainly are; and for these offences I sentence them to a year’s imprisonment, and work on the roads at Lomaloma’. And he carried them back with him in the `Xarifa’ ... [and] ... lectured the people on their egregious folly.⁷⁹

Fison also approved, writing that “Ma`afu’s visit was in all probability just in time to prevent serious disturbances at Matuku which would have doubtless resulted in blood shedding”.⁸⁰ The missionary was “by no means sure that our visit, Ma`afu’s and mine, and the taking away of the `angels’ has put a stop to the mischief”.⁸¹ Their return voyage to Lomaloma, with the “angels” in custody, was enlivened by further humour from Ma`afu, who seems to have enjoyed the whole episode. On leaving Navucimasi passage in rough seas, Ma`afu sought the “angels”’ help: “Pay attention, angels, for the bow is heavy”. Later at sea, Ma`afu remarked to Fison, “Let the angels cut firewood in the deep”. At one island stop, when the “angels” asked if they should sleep ashore, Ma`afu replied, “Yes, spread your wings and fly to the forest yonder and rest there”.⁸² The episode of the Matuku “angels” is one of the very few occasions in Ma`afu’s life when we are enabled to discern his sense of humour through the fogs of time.

A few weeks earlier, Lady Gordon had described her dinner guest as “a very great chief”, a description he merited by his manner of dealing with the social disruption on Matuku occasioned by the advent of the “angels”. Here was a glimpse of the old Tui Lau, unrestricted by the demands of the new colonial hierarchy. In the light of Ma`afu’s long years in Fiji, there remains an air of unreality in the many accounts of his need for the Governor’s leave to undertake certain tasks. When, for example, a new church was needed on Lakeba and Fison sought Ma`afu’s willing help, the missionary reported enthusiastically:

79 Gordon to CO, 18 Dec 1876, CO 83/11. See also Fison to Chapman, 15 Jul 1876, MOM 104; FA, 25 Aug 1876; Lakeba Circuit Report 1876, MOM 15; Julian Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, London 1886, 26–27; Des Voeux, *My Colonial Service*, London 1903, Vol. 1, 340–342.

80 Fison to Langham, 13 Aug 1876, Fison Letterbooks.

81 Fison to Arthur Webb, 11 Sep 1876, Fison Papers.

82 Fison to Rooney, 13 Aug 1876, Fison Letterbooks. I am grateful to Mr Sitiveni Yaqona for translating Ma`afu’s words from the Fijian.

"we can build [a church] which will be a credit to the place. Ma`afu is pledged to this, and has received the governor's permission to come and live at Lakeba in order that the work may be done".⁸³ For decades, Ma`afu had voyaged at will between Vanuabalavu and Lakeba but now, as Roko Tui Lau, he needed "permission" to quit his post at Lomaloma.

Ma`afu enjoyed good relations with Fison, writing to him in August that he had received reports from Tonga indicating that the people were "sorely harassed beyond measure and discontented".⁸⁴ Several Tongans, arriving in Lakeba seeking to settle there, presented "a petition on behalf of many more who want to come ... in consequence of harassing laws". Fison, describing the situation in Tonga and doubtless mindful of the need to maintain good relations with his colleague Shirley Baker, contented himself with an aside he knew would be understood in Sydney: "The baker there seems to be making his loaves too crusty".⁸⁵

The Governor, on his way to open the 1876 *Bosevakaturaga*, to be held at Waikava in Cakaudrove, took Ma`afu on board the *Nymphe* at Levuka and sailed to Lomaloma, "a place I particularly like", for a short visit. As well as dining with Ma`afu in his house and on board ship, Gordon recorded his favourable impressions of both the new courthouse and the botanical garden. He was entertained at a *yaqona* session:

I do not like the Tongan fashion of *yaqona* so well as the Fijian. There is no clapping of hands or chanting, and none of the weird gesticulation and beating time one is accustomed to. And I think the Fijian custom of assuming that every one's rank and precedence is thoroughly known is more dignified than the Tongan custom of *naming* each person to whom the bowl is to be taken. On the other hand, it must be admitted that when they *do* sing, the Tongan singing is much more pleasing to the ear than a Fijian *meke*.⁸⁶

The Governor and Ma`afu proceeded separately to Waikava, where the *Bosevakaturaga* opened on 23 November. Ma`afu's first address to the Council revealed him in an unaccustomed light, apologising to his fellow chiefs because "we of Lau have been unable to subscribe our share of food for the assembly such as turtle pigs and fowls". His reason was that he had received the Roko Tui Cakaudrove's notice of meeting only four days before the Governor reached Lomaloma. "We had absolutely no time to gather provisions". Most of this initial speech was devoted to the Matuku "angels", with Ma`afu informing the Council that the great deception had originated with the unnamed woman and

83 Fison to Chapman, 26 Oct 1874, MOM 104.

84 Fison to Chapman, 21 Aug 1876, MOM 104.

85 Fison to Chapman, 26 Oct 1876.

86 Gordon, Journal, 15 Nov 1876, *Records...*, 2, 210.

that “the whole of them believed it both at Matuku and Totoya”. In dealing with “a matter of moment”, Ma`afu had wanted to “flog” the two class leaders but, as we have seen, he conveyed them to Lomaloma, where they remained. Despite his jocular dealings with the “angels” en route from Matuku, he remained concerned about conditions on that island: “At the present moment I am quite convinced that these absurdities had gained a complete hold on the people’s minds. Although these men have been a long time in Lomaloma since, yet they still have faith in their new belief”.

Mafi, Native Stipendiary Magistrate at Lomaloma, expressed to the Council his frustration concerning interference by the European Clerk of the Court who, during Le Hunte’s absences, prevented Mafi from holding court. In the matter of conflict generally between European and Fijian magistrates, Mafi was supported by Tui Cakau, Tui Bua and some of their bulis. Finally, Ma`afu informed the gathering of the death at Lakeba four days previously of Tui Nayau, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba.⁸⁷ To replace Tevita, he suggested Eroni Loganimoce, son of Taliai Tupou, the previous Tui Nayau, and grandson on his mother’s side of Tuikilakila, a former Tui Cakau. Eroni held *vasu* rights at Lomaloma, a distinction that would have counted for much with Ma`afu.

A brief consideration of the remaining matters to which Ma`afu devoted his attention at the *Bosevakaturaga* will provide an insight, not only into the kinds of issues which came to his notice as Roko Tui Lau, but also into the nature of his relationship with the indigenous Fijian chiefs. During a discussion about prisons, Ma`afu told the chiefs that all prisoners at Vanuabalavu and Lakeba ate the same food as he did and were employed in provincial works such as road maintenance. The *Bosevakaturaga* resolved that prisoners not under central government control were to be employed and fed by the rokos and securely housed at night, while officers who supervised them would be paid from provincial funds. Five resolutions concerning prisoners, to be applied throughout Fiji and all supported by Ma`afu, were adopted, an indication both of his mastery of detail and of his skill in seeing his ideas through to fruition. There were few dissenting voices, and those only on minor points.

Five days later, during a lengthy debate over the division of lands in Fiji, Ma`afu declared that the topic interested him but little, since all had been arranged in Lau “and I have seen the good results”:

The division of lands is a good thing, the people have rest through it; if there were no divisions made, the people would be stubborn and, as a vain excuse, one would say – ‘It is difficult for me to pay my tax, because I have no land’.

87 Fison to Chapman, 20 Nov 1876, MOM 104.

At Lau, when the land is divided and a portion with few cocoanuts on it falls to the share of any person, he is given another piece in a place where cocoanuts are plentiful.⁸⁸

Tui Ba agreed, since such a system meant that no land remained "unused or unoccupied, the chiefs and people alike would be landowners, but let tribute be paid by people for the occupation of the lands". It was resolved that once the division of lands in Fiji was complete, nobody should be allowed to claim other lands or fruit-bearing trees as his own. Inevitably, there arose the question of chiefly *lala* and of the difficulties that practice caused people required to pay their taxes. When Tui Ba proposed limiting such *lala*, Ma`afu responded:

There are two things, owing to which bad reports have been spread. First, on account of bad natives of low origin, and, secondly, that some Europeans are in the habit of writing what is not true.

As regards the division of time, this was tried at Lakeba by Tui Nayau. He gave the people three days a week, on which they were not called upon to do any "lala" work, still there was a scarcity of food in the land.

Plenty depends on the providence of the people, and the care of the Chiefs, and not on the days appointed for *lala*.

Towards the end of the *Bosevakaturaga*, during a discussion of planting requirements, Ma`afu stated that the regulations for planting "500 hills of yams" was too onerous, especially in some Lauan islands, where the land was "not good". However, a resolution on favour of compulsion was adopted against Ma`afu's wishes. He was nevertheless allowed the right to reduce the "500 hills" in those parts of Lau where it was not possible to plant so much. He approved a further resolution whereby idlers were to suffer four months' imprisonment.

On the final day of the *Bosevakaturaga*, with all 12 rokos, as well as the Vunivalu, in attendance, a letter to Queen Victoria was drafted. The Queen was thanked for her expressions of sympathy at the time of the measles epidemic, and the Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, praised for his wise administration. Ma`afu joined the other rokos in signing the letter.⁸⁹ The Great Council of Chiefs, in large part Gordon's creation, had been a success. Although the chiefs of Fiji were no longer answerable to themselves alone, their authority as a "co-opted indigenous hierarchy" remained. In the Council of 1876, the first full *Bosevakaturaga* since the experimental conclave at Bau the previous year, Ma`afu and Mafi loomed larger than any of their fellows, exercising their will in many sessions of debate. Tui Lau had lost none of his lustre.

⁸⁸ *Published Proceedings of the Native Councils, or Councils of Chiefs, from September, 1875, 23 et seq.*

⁸⁹ The letter was duly received and "laid before the Queen" by the Colonial Secretary. SSC to Gordon, 26 Apr 1878, FCSO.

The death from influenza of the Buli Lakeba, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, had removed one of Ma`afu's family links with his adopted home. Ratu Tevita had become *sau ni vanua*, chief of the land, on the death of his great-uncle Taliai Tupou in 1874 and had functioned briefly as Governor of Lau after Ma`afu's dismissal from office under the Cakobau Government. His wife, Adi Asenaca, a daughter of Cakobau, had died during the measles epidemic. Tevita's premature death, which precluded his formal installation as Tui Nayau, meant that the title would revert to the direct descendants of Taliai Tupou. The new *Sau*, later formally Tui Nayau, was Eroni Loganimoce, who would eventually be chosen as Roko Tui Lau after Ma`afu's death. According to the *Fiji Times*, Ratu Tevita had been regarded as a tyrant by the people of Lakeba,⁹⁰ a description borne out by Ma`afu. Tevita's tyranny involved frequent demands for copra throughout central and southern Lau, random imposition of fines, flogging of defaulters and kidnapping young women for his use as concubines. After investigating complaints from Tongans and Europeans resident at Lakeba, Ma`afu had advised Gordon that because of his gross maladministration, Tevita should be removed from office as Buli Lakeba and that he, Ma`afu, should replace him. Gordon duly issued a severe reprimand to Tevita shortly before the chief's death.⁹¹ All district meetings in central and southern Lau had to be postponed until after the Tevita's burial, which in turn had to await Ma`afu's arrival from the *Bosevakaturaga*.⁹²

In Tonga meanwhile, none of the social disruption occasioned by the severe hand of Shirley Baker was reflected in a speech by the King to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first permanent Wesleyan missionaries in the country:

There are many things which ought to cause rejoicing today. Tonga is still owned by the Tonguese, and governed by Tonguese. We are not subject to any land. Remember how Fiji is forever lost to the Fijians ... Other groups of islands have been fined by the various men of war, but during the last fifty years Tonga never was...⁹³

In November, the King signed a Treaty of Friendship with Germany, whereby the German Emperor recognised Tonga's independence in return for the establishment of a coaling station at Vava`u.⁹⁴ The treaty would have been of little moment to Ma`afu who, having returned to Lomaloma in January 1877, following a tour of Lau, found his attention occupied by the mundane. After confiscating a large shipment of tobacco that had arrived unexpectedly from Tonga and on which no duty had been paid, Ma`afu gained a windfall when

90 *FT*, 8 Dec 1876.

91 Emberson to Sec. NA, 14 Dec 1874, CG Set 41; W.B. Chute to Thurston, 30 Jul 1875, CG Set 10; Emberson to Sec. NA, 16 Dec 1874, *ibid.*; M.H. Frazer to Emberson, 14 Jul 1875, *ibid.*

92 Fison to Chapman, 20 Nov and 22 Dec 1876, MOM 104.

93 *WMN(A)*, 1 Jan 1877, 85.

94 *Tonga Government Gazette*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 4 Nov 1876, clipping enc. in Edward A. Liardet to Lord Derby, 6 Dec 1876, FO58/150; *TA*, 9 Feb 1877.

the Governor recommended that he should be allowed to keep it. He was not so fortunate when he sought Gordon's advice about payment of rents by European leaseholders. He was instructed, probably to his chagrin, that rent should be paid to those who leased the land and, by implication, not to the Tui Lau. As we saw in Chapter Nine, Ma`afu never fully complied with this direction. He was also enjoined to see that all public roads, including those passing through Europeans' lease holdings, should be maintained in good condition.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Lau's Native Taxes for 1877 had been assessed at £2,000, part of a total of £19,300 for the whole of Fiji.⁹⁶

While Ma`afu had loomed large over the *Bosevakaturaga*, the minutiae of his routine as Roko Tui Lau did not constitute the career he envisaged when, 15 years earlier, he revealed his great ambition to Consul Pritchard. While "building a little house ... made from the top of a great canoe" on his pier at Lomaloma, Ma`afu became unwell and "so cross that no one cared to go near him. He sent one white man out of his house at the `double' the other day". By mid January, he was reported as "all right again now".⁹⁷ Two months later, after "a very pleasant cruise", he arrived at Levuka aboard the *Xarifa* with Le Hunte as his passenger. Dining with the Governor on 19 March, in company with other chiefs, Ma`afu "talked of various ships he had had", while after dinner some of his Tongan entourage came to sing for his host. A few days later came news of a yacht race planned for May: the *Xarifa* was to sail against the *Victoria*, the vessel presented to Cakobau by the British government.⁹⁸ Ma`afu nevertheless had more than the Levuka social whirl to occupy his mind. Gordon had written to "my deputy, the Roko Tui Lau" to remind him to "get on with" the 1877 tax collection, details of which the Governor had at his fingertips. All copra from Lau was to be sent to Messrs Stuart Cooper and Co., who would pay £13-7-6 per ton, while linseed oil was to be sold to Messrs Caine and Co. at £7-10-0 per ton. Ma`afu, admonished for making the people work for long hours on tax produce, was told to ensure that their hours of labour were strictly regulated and that all surplus production be returned to them. Further, improvement in the quality of dried copra was needed, with Ma`afu enjoined to pay special attention to the smaller districts in this regard, while ensuring that people there received their due rewards.⁹⁹

While enjoying cordial relations with the Governor, Ma`afu could have been in no doubt that his rule as Roko Tui Lau was subject to an unprecedented degree of scrutiny. In May he was ordered to cease unnecessary logging on various Lauan islands including Kabara, Vulaga and others nearby. The controversial yacht *Uluilakeba*, the subject of much correspondence the previous year and

95 Gordon to Ma`afu, 25 Jan 1877, FCSO OC.

96 LC Proceedings, 30 Nov 1876, CO 85/2.

97 Le Hunte to Gordon, 16 Jan 1877, *Records...*, 2, 262.

98 *FT*, 24 Mar 1877.

99 Gordon to RTL, 2 Mar 1877, FCSO OC.

reported now to be Ma`afu's property, had arrived at Levuka in March without necessary papers and logbook. It sailed for Lakeba a week later without being cleared.¹⁰⁰ Ma`afu was not forthcoming with the papers, and remained so quiet that Gordon reported from Levuka that the Roko was showing "no signs of life". Gordon feared moreover that Hennings Brothers had "entrapped him into some sort of timber-supplying contract", which explained the excessive logging in southern Lau. A planned trip to Tonga appeared to have been postponed.¹⁰¹ Le Hunte, replying to the Governor from Lomaloma, could not enlighten him:

Ma`afu – I can't understand what it all means. I am afraid he is one of those people who would rather let himself be cheated than bothered. I am surprised that he has bought the schooner, but I am not in the least surprised that Hennings has done him into the timber contract. If you remember I said that it was not unlikely to happen.¹⁰²

When Gordon, who was similarly puzzled, heard that Ma`afu was in Bua, he announced plans to sail to that province especially to meet him and "to discuss a few things together".¹⁰³ While the significance of Ma`afu's visit to Bua is unknown, it might well have concerned the voyage to Tonga by both Ma`afu and Tui Bua later in the year, and with rumours of a plot by Vava`u chiefs to overthrow Tupou and replace him as King with Ma`afu.

Despite the strictures being applied from Levuka, Ma`afu was able to continue, at least in some spheres, to pursue his own agenda with only sporadic interference from his superior. It is significant that the Governor thought it necessary to run him to earth in Bua, instead of waiting to meet him more conventionally in either Levuka or Lomaloma. Gordon was concerned about something. Nevertheless, the bureaucracy bade fair to tighten its grip, even in distant Lau. A new Code of Regulations for all Fiji, which came into force on 31 May, was effectively summarised by the Governor for his masters in Whitehall:

[The Code] constituted the threefold system of councils and district and provincial courts; regulated the authority of the chiefs and the custom of *lala* and dealt with crimes, with marriage and divorce, registration of births and deaths, schools, Sunday observance, fines, pounds and planting...¹⁰⁴

The new Code was all very well, but on the ground in Lomaloma, the continuing absence of both Ma`afu and his Native Stipendiary Magistrate Mafi was causing real difficulties. William Seed, the acting Stipendiary Magistrate, complained that with the two chiefs away, police officers were often forced to discharge people

100 Gordon to RTL, 1 May 1877, *ibid.*; *FT*, 4 May 1877.

101 Ma`afu to Le Hunte, 11 May 1877, *Records...*, 2, 472.

102 Le Hunte to Gordon, 19 May 1877, *ibid.*, 474.

103 Gordon to RTL, 21 May 1877, FCSO OC.

104 Gordon to Carnarvon, 16 Jun 1877, *Records...*, 2, 507.

arrested. There was worse: "on several occasions, Ciale [sic] Ma`afu has sat on the bench and biased the cases brought before it. This ... is highly injudicious as Ciale is not a magistrate, and in some cases the evidence has not been taken and the accused told he is guilty and condemned". Siale`ataongo's acting as a magistrate was akin to a fox supervising a hen house. Mafi, before leaving Lomaloma, had liberated a Tongan man sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment for adultery when the condemned man presented him with a canoe worth £50. Seed pleaded for a replacement magistrate and a Tongan interpreter.¹⁰⁵ Despite his success in a milieu such as the *Bosevakaturaga*, Mafi, who could "hardly read or write", should not have been employed as a magistrate, even if he were honest. Clearly, the absent Roko needed to return home quickly and get his teeth into the many problems. That, however, was likely to prove difficult:

Ma`afu ... has been weather bound at Levuka. He looks somewhat the worse for wear, but says a dentist will improve his appearance. We hope the Sydney dentist will make him a good fit, but we are disposed to think a dentist should have been on the spot to do full justice to such a fine mouth. The stormy weather having abated, Ma`afu left for Lomaloma last Tuesday.¹⁰⁶

Seed was not alone in his complaints about the justice system in Lomaloma. A settler, writing of Native Stipendiary Magistrates in general, added, "If Mafi ... is a fair sample of his class, the doing of these gentlemen is enough to drive the people into rebellion. He seems to have no idea of justice, and deals out fines and penalties at random". Mafi was in the habit of levying fines against people who did not meet their planting quota of 500 yams and 100 bananas, exacting both money and labour, without the defaulter ever appearing in court.¹⁰⁷ This practice was said to form part of the greater oppression that had befallen the people since British rule. Much dissatisfaction, not only among the Fijians, existed concerning *lala* and especially the roles of Ma`afu and Tui Cakau, those "doughty warriors", and "their rather loud talking followers".¹⁰⁸ While often vague references in the press to "bondage" cannot be accepted as reliable evidence of social disquiet, specific complaints such as those made by Seed reveal many of the shortcomings of the administration of justice in Lau under Ma`afu's rule. Mafi again came to notice when H.L. Tripp, the harbourmaster at Lomaloma, complained of his interference. Tripp had seized Ma`afu's schooner *Favourite* for a breach of the Quarantine Ordinance and for having a false name on her stern. He was swiftly upbraided by Mafi, who told him he must wait for the Roko. In the presence of Tui Lomaloma and Tui Mavana, Mafi, according

105 William Seed to Col. Sec., 11 Jul 1877, Monthly and Quarterly Reports on Lau Islands, 890/77, FCSSO.

106 *FT*, 20 Jul 1877.

107 *ibid.*, 11 Aug 1877.

108 *ibid.*, 8 Aug 1877.

to Tripp, said “that my way of doing things here is like stealing, that I do not tell the natives the laws but all at once put them up for breaking them”. Tripp disavowed Mafi’s claim, pointing out that when the *Caroline*, with Elenoa aboard, sailed for Tonga, he (Tripp) “particularly warned Ma`afu about the Quarantine laws and he said he would write to Tonga”. Ma`afu “distinctly refused” to allow Tripp to take the *Favourite* to Levuka.¹⁰⁹ Mafi was using his chiefly status, and his *mana* as Ma`afu’s *matapule*, to exploit the Fijians of Vanuabalavu within the framework of a judicial system alien to him.

Ma`afu’s mind, if not his heart, seemed to lie elsewhere during these months. Against the background of the *Fiji Times*’ view that Great Britain could assume the administration of Tonga after the death of the King,¹¹⁰ Ma`afu was intent on visiting his homeland. “Ma`afu *will* go to Tonga”, Gordon lamented, “it cannot be helped, but it would be much better if we met at Lomaloma. I cannot work well without seeing the driver of the engine – the stokers and oilers are not satisfactory people to deal with when he is away”.¹¹¹ The Governor wrote to Ma`afu, strongly urging him to come to Levuka for a meeting before proceeding to Tonga. Gordon had already spoken to Mafi, who “confessed” to having urged the people to pay their taxes in money rather than in produce.¹¹² With overwhelming evidence that Mafi was both incompetent and corrupt, it was Ma`afu’s responsibility to meet the Governor and resolve the problem before leaving Fiji. It appears that no meeting took place, since the Governor wrote again in September saying, “I have nothing more to say because your trip to Tonga has been finalised”.¹¹³

Gordon valued his relations with Tupou and sought to use Ma`afu’s trip, irksome though it was, to advantage. Wishing Ma`afu to convey to Tupou a letter expressing his personal regard for the ageing monarch, Gordon wrote to the King, “Ma`afu, Roko Tui of Lau, is preparing to sail to see you in compliance with your request”. Gordon regretted that pressure of work, in particular his forthcoming appointment as “High Commissioner for Western Polynesia”, prevented him visiting Tonga himself.¹¹⁴ By late September, Ma`afu was reported to be “cutting a great dash” in his homeland, having, accompanied by Elenoa, sailed down in the *Xarifa* escorted by his other two vessels, the *Uluilakeba* and the *Favourite*.¹¹⁵ Tui Bua was also in the kingdom, reportedly for a seven-week stay and taking with him “a large quantity of mats, sandalwood and cloth”.¹¹⁶ While Ma`afu’s visit was apparently at the King’s request, we are

109 H.L. Tripp to Col Sec., 5 Jun 1877, FCSO IC.

110 *ibid.*, 7 Jul 1877.

111 Gordon to Le Hunte, 23 Jul 1877, *Records...*, 2, 542.

112 Gordon to RTL, 2 Aug 1877, FCSO, Fijian Letters.

113 Gordon to RTL, 24 Sep 1877, *ibid.*

114 Gordon to George Tupou, 5 Sep 1877, CO 83/14.

115 *FT*, 29 Sep 1877.

116 *ibid.*, 28 Sep 1877.

uncertain why Tupou sought the company of his kinsman. There appeared to be something afoot in Tonga: an English visitor, Constance Gordon Cumming, called at Neiafu, Vava`u in September 1877. There, she made the acquaintance of the governor of Vava`u, Wellington Ngū, grandson of Tupou and son of Tevita `Unga, whom the visitor reported to be in poor health. "At present the Vava`u chiefs are in some disgrace", she laconically noted, "as they are suspected of plotting against King George".¹¹⁷ This would not be the last reference to moves in Vava`u to depose the King in favour of Ma`afu. With Tonga still a non-literate society, so far as contact between chiefs was concerned, any such "plot" was most unlikely to have been documented.

Ma`afu duly gave the King the cordial letter from Gordon, in which the Governor stressed his reliance on Ma`afu as a trusted counsellor. Tupou replied in kind:

I have received your letter brought by Ma`afu to me in which ... is manifest your sympathy and love to me, to my land and to my people, and oh it is not becoming to of me to give thanks, to rejoice, as I now know your regard and love Who brought Christianity to our land but the English? Who printed for us the sacred book? Who gives us missionaries but the English? Who were the first who traded with us Tongans? ... The love [and] consideration of the English is clear, disinterested...¹¹⁸

While such exchanges were nothing more than diplomatic niceties, the press in Fiji was aware that Ma`afu's visit "may not be altogether without some political significance". It was however noted that Ma`afu's formal severance of ties with Tonga and the fact he was no longer young rendered his prospects of becoming King of Tonga somewhat limited.

The dignity which `doth hedge around a crown' is not ... to be attained by any or every body, and may still present sufficient temptations to induce the astute and proud old chief to assert a claim thereto. Ma`afu is a clever man, and if in the course of nature he should succeed King George, the Tongans may boast a no unworthy ruler.¹¹⁹

The "proud old chief" was still only in his early fifties. If the editor was unaware of the provisions of the Tongan Constitution of 1875, Ma`afu certainly knew where that document placed him in terms of the succession. With `Unga's descendants becoming more numerous, any prospect of the throne

117 C.F. Gordon Cumming, *A Lady's Cruise in a French Man-of-War*, Edinburgh and London 1882, 45 (written 13 Sep 1877).

118 George Tupou to Gordon, 18 Oct 1877, CO 83/14. An anonymous hand in the Colonial Office minuted the file of correspondence between Gordon and the King: "These mellifluous exchanges of thought are not to be discouraged".

119 *FT*, 29 Sep 1877.

passing lawfully to Ma`afu was fast diminishing. If his visit to Tonga had been occasioned by any move to place him on the throne, the rumours noted by Miss Gordon Cumming and others might have had some substance. The British Vice Consul, Alfred Maudslay, visiting London when Ma`afu was in Tonga, expected a disputed succession on the King's death. Since he held such a view despite the constitutional provisions for the succession, it is likely he was aware of some potential for trouble in the kingdom.¹²⁰

Whatever his immediate prospects were in Tonga, Ma`afu was neglecting his duties at home. When Le Hunte returned to Lomaloma in early November, he at once complained to Gordon about the "very complicated mess into which Lomaloma has got" in the absence of Ma`afu and Mafi. Many problems predated their departure: Ma`afu had, since Cession, been disposing of Fijian lands that had fallen vacant for any reason, and now Le Hunte wished to know by what right he did so. The Roko gave such lands to Tongans, a practice which served only to augment existing enmity between them and the Fijians on Vanuabalavu. Le Hunte was anxious for Ma`afu's return, "as practically very little can be done until he comes. I never saw any place so deteriorated as Lomaloma has since I first came here. The town is dirty and badly kept. ... The Tongans and Fijians are at enmity; the people complain of the burden that the Roko's officers and prisoners are on them ... Everything is adrift; and when I point this out the reply is, 'Very true, when Tui Lau comes back it will be all right' ... Worst of all is the disagreement between the white officials and the natives".¹²¹

For all Le Hunte's criticism, both Ma`afu and his home had earned praise from Miss Gordon Cumming during her stay just before Ma`afu left for Tonga. Having called to partake of a *magiti* with Elenoa, whom she described as "a very fine old lady" and from whom she parted as "excellent friends", Gordon Cumming, like many other European women, did not stint her praise for Tui Lau:

Ma`afu himself had just started for Levuka. He is a splendid man, stalwart and stately; and whenever I have seen him he has always been dressed in native *tapa*, thrown around his waist in handsome heavy folds. He has the proud bearing of his race, for among the Tongans even the common people walk as if they scorn the ground they tread on.¹²²

Miss Gordon Cumming's fleeting observation touched upon the heart of much future trouble in Lau.

Although Siale`ataongo was absent when Le Hunte returned to Lomaloma, it is not certain whether he accompanied his parents to Tonga. He appeared responsible

120 Alfred Maudslay to Lord Selborne, 24 Oct 1877, Stanmore Papers.

121 Le Hunte to Gordon, 6 Nov 1877, *Records...*, 2, 636–638.

122 C.F. Gordon Cumming, *At Home in Fiji*, Edinburgh 1882, 339.

for some of the Fijians' lands being allocated to Tongans, since in October John Thurston reported complaints from Tui Lomaloma, whose land Siale had seized and given to Tongans, who had commenced planting and cutting down breadfruit trees. Thurston believed that "there are good materials for brewing a row at Lomaloma",¹²³ a town where neglect, corruption and malpractice reigned. Ma`afu had levied an unauthorised tax of one shilling per acre on all European landholders in Lau, "pending the settlement of their claims by the [forthcoming] Royal Commission".¹²⁴ As for unoccupied Fijian lands, the Governor believed that while a Roko Tui has power concerning "the *occupation* of [Fijian] land temporarily or permanently vacant", he had no right to dispose of such land.¹²⁵ Gordon also suggested that Siale would likely be absent from Lomaloma for some time, in view of the disquiet there over his activities. Isaac Rooney meanwhile, about to leave Fiji, felt that his successor would have no difficulties dealing with Ma`afu if he possessed "common sense" and "a little gumption".¹²⁶

Despite the malpractice occurring on Vanuabalavu, the *Fiji Times* reminded its readers that because of the leasehold tenure existing in Lau, planters there were "regarded ... with considerable justice, as being amongst the most wealthy in the country".¹²⁷ Such a view reflected narrow settler interests only, ignoring the province's many problems. Ma`afu and Tui Bua, in their separate vessels, reached Levuka from Tonga in late November and were expected to wait for the approaching *Bosevakaturaga* at Rewa before proceeding to their provinces. Ma`afu brought with him "a very handsome double canoe, a present from King George to Cakobau", with another to follow, destined for Tui Cakau. Gordon believed that Ma`afu's Tongan visit "must have had a useful effect in tranquilizing the minds of those who have anticipated the probability of his contesting the succession to the Crown of Tonga on the death of the old King". Ma`afu reported to the Governor that taxation was high in Tonga and that the people were "much harassed by injudicious measures, which have been prompted partly by the King's eagerness overhastily to push on the adoption of European habits, and partly at the interested suggestion of German and English traders".¹²⁸ Although Leo Layard still anticipated trouble over the succession,¹²⁹ Gordon refrained from making any comment on that question to the Colonial Office.

Ma`afu still enjoyed his annual salary of £600, paid from general revenue, far more than the salaries received by other rokos, which ranged from £100 to £360.¹³⁰ Taxes for Lau were assessed at £2,100 for 1878, an increase over the

123 Thurston to Gordon, 17 Oct 1877, Stanmore Papers.

124 "A Scotchman" to the Editor, *FT*, 22 Aug 1877.

125 Gordon to Le Hunte, 21 Nov 1877, *Records...*, 2, 638 (*italics in original*).

126 Rooney to Chapman, 25 Oct 1877, MOM 165.

127 *FT*, 24 Nov 1877.

128 Gordon to Carnarvon, Despatches to SSC, Vol. 2, 160, FCSO.

129 Consul Layard to Lord Derby, 19 Nov 1877, Baker Papers.

130 *Fiji Blue Book*, 1877.

1877 allocation of £1,900.¹³¹ At Lomaloma, still an official Port of Entry, customs revenue for 1877 would amount to £709, a significant increase over the £397 raised in 1876.¹³² These statistics would have been of little interest to Ma`afu as he prepared for the approaching *Bosevakaturaga*. Having received from Gordon an indirect “hint as to not bringing an unnecessary number of attendants with him to Rewa”,¹³³ Ma`afu arrived late at the Council, which began on 5 December. After Gordon and Ma`afu “had yaqona and a long talk about many matters”, the Governor, in his opening address, praised Roko Tui Lau and three other rokos for their “energetic efforts” in tax collection.¹³⁴ Such praise, while probably deserved, served to highlight the great and widening gap between convivial and leisurely discussion at the *Bosevakaturaga* and the harsh realities of life among the people.

Various aspects of Ma`afu’s rule in Lau came into the spotlight during the ensuing weeks, not always to his advantage. Tui Lomaloma, who spoke of imperative orders from Roko Tui Lau to raise money for the *Vakamisinari*, had himself been forced to borrow money from a settler to meet his contribution. Before leaving to attend the *Bosevakaturaga*, he instructed his people to make copra so the debt could be discharged. “This is the custom in Lomaloma”, the chief advised his fellows. “It is a case of rivalry between Roko Tui Lau and Mr Fison, the Missionary at Lakeba, as to which collection shall be the largest”. When discussion turned to the level of debt among the people, several chiefs stated that personal debts to white traders should be resolved between debtor and creditor, without chiefly involvement. Ma`afu evinced a note of despair:

It is good to have a preventative for this thing. The behaviour of the white man is incomprehensible. When we go to their stores, they give their goods, and say, ‘Take them, and pay when it suits you; pay in one or two years, or at any time it may be convenient to you.’ But when the goods are taken away, in a few days only he comes and asks, ‘Where is the payment for the things you took? Give me nuts or copra, or give me labourers in payment’.

Ma`afu was probably articulating his own frustration in the face of his everlasting debts to Hennings Brothers, as much as he was giving voice to another small tyranny for the people of Lau.

As always, taxation was debated at length, with Mafi reporting that the Lakeba people were obliged that year to collect 1,000 pounds of copra, 500 pounds for taxes and the balance to pay for a vessel (the *Uluilakeba*). He pointed out

131 LC Proceedings, 29 Nov 1877, CO 85/2.

132 Fiji Miscellaneous 1872–1880, RHL.

133 Gordon to Le Hunte, 21 Nov 1877.

134 Gordon, Journal, 5 Dec 1877, *Records...*, 2, 646–647; *FT*, 12 Dec 1877.

that Vanuabalavu could never have raised such an amount, since it was blessed with far fewer coconut palms than Lakeba. Tax requirements, Mafi believed, should be tailored to suit each community's circumstances. The *Bosevakaturaga* adopted a Resolution to the effect that "for the future the procuring of produce for tax purposes may cease at the time of the yearly Council", with all roko tuis obliged to furnish the Council with a detailed tax report for their respective provinces.¹³⁵ The Governor duly approved this long-needed reform.

Taxation also featured in Ma`afu's Lau Report. He advised that "while our taxes are completed at Lau", there was not enough land at Vanuabalavu for sufficient coconut palms to be planted to meet the island's quota. He was very circumspect about other problems there, seeking to absolve himself even of potential blame. "The roads were in good condition when I was at Lomaloma, but when I was away in Tonga I heard they had not been kept clean". Ma`afu was at pains to deal with two matters that had been "misconstrued": firstly, he often sent messengers to villages with orders to the *turaga ni koro* "to urge on" work in gardens, roads and house repair. The messengers were not themselves appointed as *turaga ni koro*, as rumour had it. Secondly, Ma`afu denied that no food was provided for people building houses for the Tongans on Vanuabalavu. Ma`afu also "took the lead" in a discussion concerning bulis and their exemption from tax. He and other speakers were unanimous that the exemption, seen as "the principal attraction" of the post of *buli*, should continue. He was also critical, probably with reason, of the bulis' treatment at the hands of taxation officers and Europeans generally.¹³⁶ While the Native Taxation Ordinance met with approval, Gordon identified dissatisfaction with "the way in which it was worked" as the principal theme of the 1877 *Bosevakaturaga*.

The Lau report was largely an exercise in dissimulation, since matters such as judicial incompetence and corruption, problems exacerbated by his long absence in Tonga, were not mentioned. Ensuing exchanges between Tui Lomaloma and Mafi reflected poor relations between Fijians and Tongans on Vanuabalavu, with the chief especially critical of the Tongans' manners. In terms of addressing the state of Lau as it really was, the Roko Tui Lau's report to his fellows was almost valueless. Apart from problems occasioned by Fijian-Tongan relations and by the island's geography, the people of Vanuabalavu, like most other Fijians, continued to suffer the dual demands of taxation and *lala*. The picture at the end of 1877 was not rosy.

While Ma`afu probably returned home after the end of the *Bosevakaturaga* on 3 January 1878, the documentary record is silent concerning whatever steps he

135 Resolution 8, Minutes of Annual Meeting of Chiefs at Rewa in Dec 1877, enc. in Gordon to CO, 25 Jan 1878, CO 83/16.

136 Wilkinson to Gordon, 21 Dec 1877, Stanmore Papers.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

might have taken to deal with the malaise on his island. Vanuabalavu, and indeed the whole of Lau, shared with the rest of Fiji continuing problems associated with implementation of the tax laws, an area where disquiet had spread even beyond the shores of the Colony. An “old colonist” who had moved to Australia voiced a settler view:

Your system of native taxation is a disgrace ... the Customs duties are the highest in the world, and the system of taxing trades and professions simply barbarous, and opposed to all correct principles of political economy ... help you will not get until you help yourselves.¹³⁷

On Vanuabalavu, four months after the Council, the Tongans were still causing problems, with one settler complaining that up to 30 coconut palms were destroyed for each Tongan house that was constructed, “a culpable destruction of our principal article of export”. There was further loss of trees occasioned by the need of many women, who had been fined £10 for unspecified reasons, to pay the equivalent in produce. The problems did not stop even there:

The Fijians complain bitterly that they should still be forced to build or thatch Tongan houses. Why they should be compelled [to do so] without payment any more than the Governor should order them to build white men’s houses for nothing is to them one of those mysteries than can never ... be explained.¹³⁸

Ma`afu could have provided some explanation, but for the first three months of 1878, the record is silent.

Sir Arthur Gordon, while remaining Governor of Fiji, was in 1877 appointed as the first High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. Among his new duties were the conduct of British relations with Tonga and the maintenance of law and order among British subjects living there. Making an official visit to Tonga as High Commissioner, Gordon instructed Ma`afu to accompany him.¹³⁹ The Governor sailed from Levuka on 3 April and after calling at Lomaloma to take Ma`afu on board, reached Tonga five days later. Gordon reported favourably on his visit and on Ma`afu’s part in several “nocturnal conversations” with the King, sometimes with Tungī Halatuitui`a present. He emphasised in his report that Tupou “writhes under [Shirley Baker’s] tyranny” and “abhors the Bakerian system”. Having been despondent about his kingdom’s future, Tupou came to see “some light”:

as he said to Ma`afu after I had left the room: ‘I thought Tonga would die: that when I died all would end. Now I see Tonga may live ...’ In

137 *FT*, 4 May 1878.

138 *ibid.*, 30 Mar 1878.

139 Gordon to Ma`afu, 4 Mar 1878, FCSO Fijian Letters.

the presence of Ma`afu and Tugi, and with David Uga's full agreement, he promised that in the forthcoming Parliament the ridiculous and oppressive laws now in force should be either wholly repealed or materially altered. Both Tugi and Ma`afu tell me that the King's promise, thus made, may be absolutely relied on.¹⁴⁰

After a two-day visit, Gordon and Ma`afu returned to Lomaloma, where the Governor remained for Easter: "It was pleasant enough sitting in front of Ma`afu's door in the shade ... the neat enclosure, the short grass, the `nokonoko', sandalwood and other trees the pretty view of the bay, and the sweet evening sunlight".¹⁴¹ Ma`afu's thoughts about his visit to Tonga and the continuing parlous state of Lau are unknown.

Gordon favoured formal British recognition for Tonga and a treaty similar to that existing between the kingdom and Germany. Also, mindful of the many fugitives from justice living in Tonga, he advocated an extradition treaty. With the appointment of Alfred Maudslay as a resident Deputy Commissioner and Vice Consul to Tonga, the country's links with both Great Britain and Fiji were strengthened.¹⁴² These matters of international relations were of no apparent concern to Ma`afu, who again fades from the record after his return from Tonga, except for his advice to the administration of the existence of an uncharted rock in the sea near Fiji, "very difficult to see in fine weather. It breaks only in gales". The discovery was duly named "Ma`afu rock".¹⁴³ Shortly before the Governor left Fiji for a visit to Britain, he advised Ma`afu that Eroni Loganimoce was to be removed as Tui Nayau for an unstated offence, although permitted to remain as acting Buli Lakeba.¹⁴⁴ There was to be further trouble in Lakeba later in the year.

Ma`afu's biggest problems during 1878 continued to involve land: as David Wilkinson recorded, "under all kinds of pretences the lessees of his lands try to refuse to pay [their] rents regularly". The leaseholders apparently feared that the government would soon take over all lands, forcing them to pay again. Ma`afu requested "a letter from the Colonial Secretary which he could show to them that he has full right and authority to receive such rents".¹⁴⁵ Rents were always of major concern to Ma`afu because of his perennial debts, reports of which had even reached Shirley Baker in Tonga.¹⁴⁶ He also had to deal with Tongans stealing boats in Vanuabalavu in order to return to Tonga, as well as an unprecedented level of theft on both Vanuabalavu and Lakeba. The Governor

140 Gordon to Carnarvon, Apr 1878, *Records...*, 3, 100–101.

141 *ibid.*, 112.

142 Gordon to Lord Derby, 27 and 29 Apr 1878, *ibid.*, 113–115; Gordon to SSFA, 27 Apr 1878, FO 58/119; Gordon to CO, 27 Apr 1878, FCSO Fijian Letters; *FT*, 27 Apr 1878.

143 Hydrographic Notice, 10 May 1878, *Fiji Royal Gazette*, Vol. 5, No. 10, 10 May 1878.

144 Gordon to Ma`afu, 7 May 1878, FCSO Fijian Letters.

145 Wilkinson to Gordon, 7 Jun 1878, *Records...*, 3, 143–144.

146 Maudslay to Gordon, 8 Aug 1878, *ibid.*, 394.

instructed Ma`afu to proceed to Lakeba, with Mafi, to assist the European magistrate there in court. The latter's counterpart at Lomaloma, Charles Swayne, recorded that Tui Mavana, wishing to reduce the number of robberies, had sought permission to arrest people wandering in his village at night. Swayne saw this request as an example of a chief using the Colony's laws as a means of maintaining their traditional authority, now somewhat diluted under British rule.¹⁴⁷ In the event Swayne, who reportedly disliked Ma`afu, followed him to Lakeba to investigate the wave of thefts. Ma`afu disobeyed Gordon by leaving Mafi in charge at Lomaloma during his absence.¹⁴⁸

Swayne was given no immediate cause to alter his poor opinion of Ma`afu. While in Lakeba, he heard from several older men in Levuka village, near Tubou, "that Ma`afu had given a large tract of land belonging to them to a Tongan named Devi. On this land they said they depended to pay their taxes". Although Devi had taken more land than his entitlement permitted, Ma`afu justified his action by saying that Devi held the land as guardian for a child. Swayne, having heard "no great report of ... Devi from whites or natives", urged Ma`afu to consult the Levuka elders again when he next visited Lakeba.¹⁴⁹ While the truth of the matter cannot be determined, there is evidence from outside Lau of further unjust instances of *lala* involving Ma`afu. In October 1878, three of his vessels sailed to Natewa Bay in Cakaudrove, where a *tabu* had long been in place on most produce, in preparation for a chiefly feast. The vessels were

with their respective nobility ready to receive their gifts vakaviti. They were not disappointed, and the unfortunate natives were cleaned out ... a Bau chief ... received as his share 350 large nets, each of which would have been sold on the spot for ten shillings, while the Ului i Lakemba returned to Lomaloma with a full load of mats, tapa, and other things below, and pigs, turtle etc on deck, all of which were sent to Tonga.¹⁵⁰

The *Uluilakeba* continued to be the bane of the Lakeban people who, by October, had been subject to two further copra levies, one of 500 pounds per man to help pay for "a schooner Ma`afu has taken from the Lakeba people", and another of 100 pounds per man "to pay some debts the late king left unpaid on taking his departure".¹⁵¹ This was done despite Ma`afu's advice to the Lakeba chiefs a year earlier that he would defray the cost of the schooner within three months.¹⁵²

147 Swayne to Col. Sec., 16 Aug 1878, Reports on the Province of Lau, FCSO IC; petition to the Governor for remission of sentence upon Simone Jiale, minute by Thurston, *ibid*; Swayne to Gordon, 1 Jul 1878, Lau Reports, FCSO.

148 Le Hunte to Gordon, 10 Jul 1878, *Records...*, 3, 365; Thurston to Gordon, 15 Sep 1878, *ibid.*, 413.

149 C.R. Swayne's report on his visit to Lakeba, Koro, Oneata, Nayau, 10 Nov 1878, Lau Reports, FCSO.

150 *FT*, 10 Sep 1879.

151 J.D. Jory to Chapman, 5 Oct 1878, MOM 165.

152 Ma`afu to chiefs of Lakeba, 14 Sep 1877, HP.

None of these problems was to be aired at the 1878 *Bosevakaturaga*, which commenced at Bua in November. With Gordon still in Britain, the Lieutenant Governor, Sir William Des Voeux, opened proceedings, which included "a great distribution of presents" and a procession of delegates before Des Voeux. With Ma`afu absent through illness, he "had sent his young daughter" according to Des Voeux, "and it was a sight not easily to be forgotten when this little lady, apparently not more than 11 years old, walked past me in the most stately fashion with her train of tapa carried by some 200 of her father's retainers".¹⁵³ Since Ma`afu and Elenoa had no daughter, the girl was possibly the child of a different mother or, more likely, a classificatory daughter. Later, Ma`afu and the Lauan delegation, augmented by 60 or 70 Tongans who had sailed up from Lomaloma, participated in a spectacular display of *meke* and *solevus* from various parts of Fiji. Roko Tui Lau's diplomacy was tested when, after the host Tui Bua presented *solevus* to Lau, Cakaudrove and Macuata, Tui Cakau "gave half his to Lau because of the extra Tongans". Ma`afu accepted the gift only because he did not want to risk offending Tui Cakau.¹⁵⁴

The chiefs' major concern at this Council was, not unexpectedly, land:

We fear for the age to come, and we say, 'What shall become of the people when they have lost their lands?' We do not seek or desire to take hold of or get back any land has been truly and righteously sold; but on the other hand, neither do we wish that one piece of land shall be lost that has simply been seized upon or sold wrongfully.

Still our peace is incomplete as it is not yet clear what will be our position or status in reference to our lands in future, and the thing is crowded with rumours and apprehensions.¹⁵⁵

The chiefs' concerns arose in part from the appointment in 1875 of a Lands Commission, which would bear fruit with the hearings of the Lands Claims Commission of 1880–1881. During this *Bosevakaturaga*, Roko Tui Lau proved reticent, announcing in his first address, "I have very little to say in reference to my Province. The general work is progressing favourably; the towns, houses and all our roads are in good condition, and the taxes for the Province are finished".¹⁵⁶ His failure, before an audience of his peers, to address the manifest problems of Lau brings into focus the notion of the *Bosevakaturaga* as theatre, where many chiefs, conscious of the eyes and ears of their little world, played a role increasingly divorced from the realities of life on the ground. Mafi, with

153 Des Voeux, Vol. 1, 373 (14 Nov 1878). See also *FT*, 23 Nov 1878.

154 Le Hunte, Rough Diary, 15 Dec 1878, *Records...*, 3, 469–470.

155 Resolutions of the Council of Chiefs, Bua Meeting, December 1878, enc. in Des Voeux to Michael Hicks Beach, 8 Jan 1879, CO 83/19.

156 *ibid.*, 19 Nov 1878.

details of some carefully chosen incidents, again referred to difficulties with European magistrates. Despite Mafi's many shortcomings as a Native Stipendiary Magistrate, those difficulties were real enough and were articulated by Ma`afu:

... it was not so ... formerly, now the whites are coincided with and assisted. When the European Stipendiary Magistrate first arrived at Loma Loma we agreed very well on matters, until one day I sent Mafi to him saying I had received a letter for the three of us to proceed to Lakeba in order to hold a court; he said to Mafi, 'It is not your and the Roko's duty, and if you two proceed there you cannot hold any court'.¹⁵⁷

If correctly reported, the magistrate was right in objecting to the presence of Ma`afu and his NSM. The Roko was doubtless anxious that his chiefly authority not be further eroded by the new hierarchy that had arisen on the foundation of the old. His speech about this matter was his longest at the Great Council, where even Lau's continuing tax problems were not raised. While deliberations were still in progress, the province's tax assessment for 1879 was announced: £2,100, equal highest, with Cakaudrove, among the 15 provinces. The figure did not bide well for Lau's, or indeed Cakaudrove's, long-suffering people.

The tax system operating in Lau continued to be onerous and inefficient. Each taxpayer was required to contribute 500 pounds of copra as his annual tax which, at the contracted selling price, raised a gross amount of £3–10–0 for the government. The cost of collection was such that the net return to the government was only £1 per head. While some of the discrepancy can be attributed to the geography of Lau, with its small, widely scattered islands, the rest of Fiji revealed, to a lesser extent, similar inefficiencies of collection. These difficulties, among others, prompted the British Colonial Secretary, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, to express his disapproval of the Native Taxation Scheme.¹⁵⁸ Gordon, the Scheme's chief protagonist, regarded as an "evil" the massive debts owed by many Fijians to traders, many of whom continued to pay for tax produce in kind rather than in cash, as had been intended.¹⁵⁹ According to one settler activist, "dozens" of Fijians had been driven to suicide by the Scheme's exactions.¹⁶⁰ Settlers also encountered difficulties: faced with a collapsed cotton market, lack of capital and an uncertain labour supply, many quit Fiji during the late 1870s.¹⁶¹ In Lau, where settlers generally fared better than elsewhere in Fiji, the Fijian population continued to face the double burden of taxation and an unpredictable and equally onerous imposition of *lala*.

157 *ibid.*

158 *FT*, 11 Jan 1879.

159 Gordon, *Paper on the System of Taxation in force in Fiji*, London 1879.

160 *A Colonist, Fiji: Remarks on the Address Delivered by Sir Arthur Gordon K.C.M.G. at the Colonial Institute March 18, 1879*, Levuka 1879.

161 For a discussion of settler disquiet, see Anon., *The First Three Years of Annexation under Governor Sir Arthur Gordon K.C.M.G.; or, A Crown Colony of a very Severe Type*, c. 1878.

Ma`afu, who kept his own counsel about these matters, pursued his efforts to improve living conditions in his own immediate environment of Sawana and Lomaloma. His idea to supply piped drinking water to these villages, to be conveyed from a spring at the back of Lomaloma by means of iron pipes and financed by a special levy on settlers, was considered feasible by Swayne and approved by the Colonial Secretary, John Thurston.¹⁶² Reported to be in a "very good humour" at dinner with Le Hunte in early March, Ma`afu was thought by David Wilkinson to be pleased with the population growth revealed in the Census of that month. His pleasure, Wilkinson asserted, was "greatly strengthening [his] attachment to the Government and its policy".¹⁶³ While Ma`afu was always adept at charming his European hosts, there remained some who would not be charmed. William Hennings, always Ma`afu's creditor, warned him of the consequences of his "wrong-doing to tenants ... Remember Ma`afu, if Captain Swayne prosecutes you, it would not be a matanitu business. You will have to deal with Mr Gorrie [the Chief Justice of Fiji]". "Veitalia" [do as you please], replied Ma`afu,¹⁶⁴ who had been frustrated and disappointed so often during his 32 years living in Fiji. Was it possible that he did not care any more?

If Ma`afu sensed his isolation as "a subordinate administrator" in the Colony of Fiji, that perception might have been enhanced with the sudden death at Somosomo on 11 April of his longest-serving Fijian ally, Ratu Golea, Tui Cakau, whom Ma`afu had known for almost 40 years. It was Golea's father Tuikilakila who had given Ma`afu the levying rights in Vanuabalavu that ultimately led to his residence there. The chief legacy of Golea as Tui Cakau was the alienation of numerous islands within his domain, which he sold to Europeans, largely in response to the failed Tongan campaign against him under Wainiqolo and which remain freehold land to this day.¹⁶⁵ Ma`afu, in company with Cakobau, numerous other Fijian chiefs and Lieutenant-Governor Des Voeux, attended Golea's funeral at Somosomo. The new Tui Cakau would be Golea's son, Ratu Josefa Lalabalavu.

The death and funeral of Tui Cakau delayed Ma`afu in distributing that year's tax surplus at Lakeba. Conditions in Lau, in so far as they were reflected in official correspondence, appeared to have improved, with Swayne reporting that "the prospects of food supply in all the islands is [sic] very good. Yams are plentyfull [sic]".¹⁶⁶ What Swayne did not reveal was how much of this food would remain for the people, once the exactions of *lala* and taxation were met. Whatever

162 General Report for the Province of Lau, 21 Jan 1879, FCSO.

163 Le Hunte, Rough Diary Notes, 3 Mar 1879, *Records...*, 3, 530; Wilkinson to Gordon, 29 Mar 1879, *ibid.*, 558. The relevant population figures on 4 Apr 1880 were 1,172 for Vanuabalavu, 1,135 for Lakeba, 7,284 for Lau and 127,095 for Fiji. *Report on the census of the population of Fiji 1881*, Fiji Registrar-General's Dept.

164 Thurston to Gordon, 4 Feb 1879, *Records...*, 3, 518.

165 See obituary, *FT*, 26 Apr 1879.

166 Lau Report for May 1879, 13 Jun 1879, FCSO.

pleasure Ma`afu might have taken in the superficially improved outlook was likely diluted by remaining problems at Lomaloma, where he again sought to assert chiefly rights now proscribed by his position as Roko Tui Lau. He “forcibly removed” from the gaol “a prisoner under sentence for misdemeanour” and assaulted a keeper who tried to prevent him. Des Voeux, seeking to deal with the matter discreetly, sent for Ma`afu, Le Hunte and “all concerned with the affair to come forthwith to Government House [where] a detachment of the armed Constabulary” was on standby. While police intervention was not required, “at interview ... Ma`afu appeared excited, and he informed me with some warmth that the prisoner, who was a Tongan of his province, had complained to him more than once of ill-treatment, that he felt bound as his chief to see justice done to him and that he had therefore brought him to me”. Des Voeux decided that Ma`afu had acted on impulse and “had no idea of having done wrong”. The acting Governor nevertheless faced a dilemma, since

owing to his position as one of the most influential chiefs in Fiji, and as the rightful heir and successor of the King of Tonga, any public punishment would be most humiliating, and might have very undesirable consequences, if resented as unjust. On the other hand to overlook such an offence committed in the public view ... was of course impossible.

Des Voeux informed Ma`afu that he could not accept his plea of ignorance of the law and that he would have to answer for his offence before the Police Magistrate.

With a view however to lessen the humiliation, which he felt very keenly, the magistrate at my request took the case the same morning a few minutes before the ordinary time for beginning business; and as Ma`afu, by my advice, pleaded ‘Guilty’, he was fined £10 and had left the court before the public became aware of what was going on.

Dining with Des Voeux the next day, Ma`afu revealed no ill feeling, “though the occurrence was of course not mentioned”. Des Voeux was happy that the affair “had so happy a termination”, since it was “especially important ... (that) cordial relations” should be maintained with “a most valuable public officer”.¹⁶⁷ It was not worth the public humiliation of a great chief to place at risk the authority of the *matanitu* in Lau.

A few days later, Sir Arthur Gordon returned from his long visit home, with the *Xarifa* among many yachts sailing out to escort the Governor’s ship into harbour.¹⁶⁸ When the Lieutenant-Governor departed the following week, he recorded that “Among the many who came to see us off was Ma`afu, who was

167 Des Voeux to Hicks Beach, 9 Sep 1879, Despatches from the SSC to the Governor of Fiji, FCSO. See also Des Voeux, *My Colonial Service*, Vol. 1, 397–399.

168 *FT*, 13 Sep 1879.

crying as he wished us good-bye. However incongruous are tears with so huge a frame as that of this chief, we in this case could not but be touched by them, especially in view of the disagreeable scene which I had with him a few days before".¹⁶⁹ A moment of unguarded emotion was rare for Ma`afu, who was likely grateful to Des Voeux for allowing him to avoid a public humiliation. The Roko was about to make another visit to Tonga where, according to David Wilkinson, resident Germans had gained a greater influence over the King that that enjoyed by the British Vice-Consul, Alfred Maudslay, much to Ma`afu's puzzlement.¹⁷⁰ Maudslay had earlier advised Gordon that in the event of Ma`afu's succession as King, Great Britain should seek to establish a protectorate over Tonga. "I think there is a way of making it acceptable to him", Maudslay wrote, evidence perhaps that he had discussed the idea with Ma`afu.¹⁷¹ Although Tonga was unable to manage its international relations unaided, a protectorate at this time would have been most unlikely, even had the British been disposed to offer one. Two years earlier, according to the *Fiji Times*, "Tonga will never even be tendered to the British Crown".¹⁷² The Tongans' disposition would not have changed in 1879.

On the eve of Gordon's return, the Foreign Office instructed him to ensure that relations with Tonga "should be of the most satisfactory description". He was urged "to impress upon the King ... that as his country is affected by the interests of Great Britain more largely and more intimately than by the interests of any other country, Her Majesty's Government ... considers that he should be prepared to listen to their wishes as expressed through you with especial favour".¹⁷³ The new High Commissioner accordingly advised the King of his intention to visit Tonga in October, so that "a lasting Treaty of Friendship" could be concluded. Ma`afu was to precede Gordon to Tonga aboard the *Xarifa*, carrying with him official despatches and armed with an official "Sailing Letter", enjoining all to whom it might be presented to allow the *Xarifa* to proceed "without let or hinderance [sic]".¹⁷⁴

Ma`afu's ties with his homeland had earlier been reinforced in a manner not conducive to good government in either Lau or Cakaudrove. Reference has already been made to the produce extorted, in the guise of *lala*, at Natewa Bay in October 1878. Four months later, two of Ma`afu's vessels visited the district again "to collect native produce, as Ma`afu's presents to Tonga, to be sent by the Tongan government schooner, *Mata ki Tonga*". Then in July 1879,

169 Des Voeux, *My Colonial Service*, Vol. 1, 407.

170 Wilkinson to Gordon, 29 Mar 1879, *Records...*, 3, 557–558.

171 Maudslay to Gordon, 4 Mar 1879, *ibid.*, 542.

172 *FT*, 16 Jun 1877.

173 Lord Salisbury FO to Gordon, 4 Jul 1879, CO 83/20.

174 Gordon to King of Tonga, 18 Sep 1879; Thurston, "Sailing Letter", 19 Sep 1879, Governor's Letter Book 1876–1883, 36/1879, FCSO.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

the *Arabian Girl*, belonging to Ma`afu, “went to Tonga crammed to the hatch combings with tapa, sandalwood, sinnet, mats, fish nets etc, nearly all collected in Cakaudrove”. The *Fiji Times*, lamenting the loss of income to the people, articulated a fundamental social evil:

What use for them to labor if all the produce of their hands is to be seized for the glorification of their chiefs? This “lala” privilege was exercised far more mercifully in the old days of law when might was right. Now it has degenerated into simple robbery, and the chiefs’ hands are strengthened by the approval of an English Government.¹⁷⁵

It is unfortunate that the voices of the Lauan people themselves on the matter of *lala* cannot now be heard. There remained much resentment in the province over land given to Tongans, as Thurston, writing in June 1879, made clear:

it is currently believed among natives that any Tongan arriving in Fiji is sure to get Fijian land allotted to him, and that domiciled Tongans fall in for the planting grounds of deceased Fijians to the exclusion of the proper successors.¹⁷⁶

There is no evidence that Ma`afu, during his years as Roko Tui Lau, made any significant efforts to address either of these crucial and fundamental problems. This failure is scarcely surprising, since it was always his object to maintain the Tongan ascendancy in Lau. When he sailed to Tonga as envoy for Sir Arthur Gordon, Ma`afu was enacting a role divorced from his responsibilities as a “subordinate administrator” in the Province of Lau. During Gordon’s visit to Tonga in November, the Treaty of Friendship was signed, subject to ratification in both Tonga and Great Britain. The Treaty’s six articles provided, among other benefits, trading privileges for British subjects living there, who could also now be tried in certain cases by the British Consul. “Perpetual friendship” was guaranteed between Great Britain and Tonga, the latter a “nation” which did not yet enjoy international recognition.¹⁷⁷ Ma`afu was not among the four signatories to the Treaty, which was not ratified until 1881.

Relations with Tonga would occupy much of the attention of both Gordon and Ma`afu, for different reasons, during the coming year. In the meantime, the Roko attended the 1879 *Bosevakaturaga* at Bau where, by way of contrast with the previous year’s Council, he presented a detailed report for Lau. He appeared somewhat vague on the matter of his province’s taxes whose amount he did not know, since some produce had been sent to Lomaloma and some direct to

175 *FT*, 10 Sep 1879.

176 Minute by Thurston, Swayne to Col Sec., 12 Jun 1879, FCSO IC.

177 Treat of Friendship, etc, between Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and the King of Tonga, signed at Nuku`alofa November 29, 1879, WPHC Records 1877–1978. See also *FT*, 3 Dec 1879; Gordon to SSEA, 5 Dec 1879, FO 58/164.

Levuka. This year, Ma`afu had the grace to admit that "some of our affairs ... are not in [a] good ... condition". He mentioned communication difficulties in reporting births, deaths and marriages from the Yasayasa Moala, as well as "small matters of disagreement [which] are generally settled amicably. That is all I have to say in reference to our province".¹⁷⁸

Roko Tui Ba, seemingly ready to confront Ma`afu, wanted to know why the "work" in Lau had suddenly become so difficult, suggesting that the province's geography and lack of vessels might be the cause of the problems outlined by Ma`afu. "Formerly Lau was the head of all in the management of its affairs, but lately it has seemed to drop behind. What is the cause?" Some heated debate ensued, in which Ma`afu took no part but where Malakai Vakameitagake, the Tongan *buli* at Moala, bore the brunt of accusations of improper conduct. It was apparent that some chiefs resented the authority of a Tongan over the "taukeys of the land" at Moala.¹⁷⁹ Such resentment extended also to Malakai's master, Roko Tui Lau, apparently absent following presentation of his report. Roko Tui Ba and Roko Tui Ra both referred to the fact that Ma`afu had left the Council: "Whatever we are discussing it is with the root of the matter absent. I do not know what it means", observed Roko Tui Ra. Finally, Ma`afu was urged, in his absence, to ensure that the *Bosevakayasana* (the provincial councils) were held regularly and that "the whole of the province should be represented".¹⁸⁰

Ma`afu's absence from the *Bosevakaturaga* during discussion of the Lau report was more than a discourtesy to his fellow chiefs: it reinforced the impression that conditions in the province were unsatisfactory. The chiefs' concerns appeared to be well founded since David Wilkinson shortly afterwards advised the Governor that "The work [in Lau] is all at sixes and sevens, and several things require to be put right or enquired into".¹⁸¹ At least the province had met its tax requirements, according to its Roko, and was again assessed equal highest among the 15 provinces for 1880, with a figure of £2,100 out of a total assessment of £20,000.¹⁸² In March 1880, Gordon was able to advise the Colonial Office that in 1879, for the first time, taxation revenue had exceeded estimates, an advance which resulted from increased prices for copra as well as an expansion in other crops.¹⁸³ Although Lau had contributed its share, its Roko remained unwilling to devote his full attention to the province's ills. He remained preoccupied both with his personal life and with the affairs of his homeland.

178 *Published Proceedings of the Native Council or Council of Chiefs from September 1875*, 1879 Council, 54.

179 Malakai was a son of Tu`ipelehake, a senior Tongan noble, and had been in Fiji since the 1850s. He was married to a daughter of Tali'ai Tupou. Malakai, NSM for Moala as well as *buli*, died in 1887. Swayne to Thurston, 11 Feb 1887, FCSO.

180 *ibid.*, 55.

181 Wilkinson to Gordon, 3 Jan 1880, *Records...*, 4, 157.

182 *Published Proceedings...*, 1879 Council.

183 Gordon to CO, 29 Mar 1880, CO 83/22.

For unknown reasons, a rift had developed between Ma`afu and his wife, probably before the end of 1879. Wilkinson, who delighted in writing to Gordon at great length during his journeys in both Fiji and Tonga, reported in February 1880 his “good hopes that a reconciliation has come about between Ma`afu and Elenoa. I left them together when I came away and it’s many years since I have seen Ma`afu so cheerful”. Wilkinson had spoken to Elenoa “as plainly ... as the delicacy of the position would allow”, with Elenoa replying “‘duty is truth’ and ‘duty is our Lord’”.¹⁸⁴ During this time Ma`afu, visiting Levuka, earned a severe rebuke from Gordon, who had waited in vain for him to come and say goodbye before Gordon left for Moturiki:

Now such as this ... is not right and proper between us Chiefs ... I was pained, I was ashamed also, when I heard that you were intoxicated and going about so on the beach ... When I heard all about your unbecoming behaviour ... going about the streets and beach of Levuka, and ... that you were going about with a drunken white man, that your son was intoxicated and many of your own people that accompanied you – yes, when I heard all this, I refused to believe it possible of Ma`afu to follow such a course ... It will be of no use to me to name all you did ... Such habits are unbecoming and evil, and you know it well ... I pity you truly in my heart, but I must have regard to my duty and our joint work. But what shall I do? Shall I prohibit your coming to Levuka for a time? Or what else? ... I send my love to you.¹⁸⁵

Ma`afu had fallen further from grace than at any time since his youth in Tonga. If there was something on his mind, apart from the difficulties with Elenoa, no evidence has survived to enlighten us. His rampage in Levuka was no isolated event, since his reputation for insobriety would be mentioned at the 1880 *Bosevakaturaga* at Mualevu. Ma`afu’s *angst*, whatever its cause, persisted for months, with Wilkinson advising the Governor in July of further indiscretions. A large group of Tongans, with smaller numbers of Fijians, Europeans and Samoans, most of them intoxicated, had congregated on Hennings’ wharf in Levuka, near the Polynesian Hotel. Among them were Ma`afu and a visiting Englishman named Theodore Wood, nephew of a “lord” according to Gordon, with whom Ma`afu was staying, “both very much intoxicated with drink”. Siale`ataongo, also affected by alcohol, was of the party, most of whom boarded the *Xarifa*, the *Uluilakeba* and a Tongan schooner and set sail for Lau.

Wilkinson did not provide details of the scenes that took place on the wharf, a spectacle he described as “simply disgraceful and disgusting”. He was concerned in part because of his efforts to effect a reconciliation between

184 Wilkinson to Gordon, c. Feb 1880, Stanmore Papers.

185 Gordon to Ma`afu RTL, c. 18 Feb 1880, *Records...*, 4, 199.

Ma`afu and Elenoa and to encourage Ma`afu to abjure alcohol. "The chief [was] degraded and disgraced before his people", Wilkinson lamented. It seemed he placed some blame on Europeans who had supplied the "natives", including Ma`afu, with liquor. Wilkinson discerned a motive for this largesse: "The chief has been followed feasted and flattered into the signing of documents and papers incurring debts and liabilities by impotent traders and designing men". Ma`afu had left for Lau with Theodore Wood, the latter reported to have "some business or other with Ma`afu up there". Further, while Ma`afu was in Levuka, he had, Wilkinson asserted, been induced "by carpenters and traders" to sign promissory notes, and although "it is quite uncertain to what extent it may have been led ... and though the chief cannot be brought to court for debt his character and efficiency as a public officer must be prejudiced by such conduct". Six months earlier, Wilkinson continued, Ma`afu had been "induced to take delivery of two boats from Drew the carpenter". Although both men were informed that the purchase was irregular, Ma`afu "pestered Drew into accepting a promissory note, even though the carpenter knew that he could not sue Ma`afu for payment". Since Ma`afu failed to honour the debt, Drew had been following him "day after day to sign a renewal or a new promissory note ... and has probably succeeded. Neither is this a solitary case as they occur continuously giving endless trouble".¹⁸⁶

Wilkinson was concerned that Ma`afu had left Levuka in company with Wood, "a man known to be in needy circumstances and who has been making his boast that he can get the chief to do just as he likes and has certainly succeeded in some things". Wilkinson appreciated the difficulties Gordon faced in dealing with a Roko who had so transgressed, "but it is not by any means the first act of indiscretion and misconduct he has been guilty of". Much more than "an ordinary reprimand" was required. Wilkinson expected Ma`afu to submit to any punishment the Governor might decide on "and will do so chief like while that very docility may have its embarrassment as it will be humiliating to him in the sight of his fellow chiefs, but they already regard him as a very serious transgressor and his indecorous conduct has often called forth very sharp comments".¹⁸⁷

Although our glimpses of Ma`afu's daily life during his years as Roko Tui Lau are too fragmentary for firm conclusions to be drawn, the episodes described by Wilkinson suggest that the Roko maintained his blatant disregard for his financial liabilities. Although Ma`afu bore, like all other residents of Fiji, a responsibility to obey the law, it would be a mistake to view his eternal financial troubles, extending over decades, as solely the actions of a man devoid of integrity in money matters. Ma`afu had been born a chief in a society where chiefs enjoyed the right to take possession of whatever property they pleased.

186 The name, apparently Drew, is indistinct in the original.

187 Wilkinson to Gordon, 26 Jul 1880, Stanmore Papers.

Exposed to European ways since his childhood in Tonga, Ma`afu was sufficiently acculturated to understand the concept of personal debt and the legal purpose of promissory notes. He understood, but he did not care. He remained a Tongan chief of high rank; if a Tongan chief fancied acquiring two new boats, he acquired them. If signing a piece of paper was a necessary prerequisite, then sign it he would, but what were the odds? There were none, for a chief.

The matter of Ma`afu's drunkenness is not so easily explained. An oral tradition painted a picture of Ma`afu in his final years: "An old fat man, sitting in the shade of a `nokonoko' tree near the beach, distributing with a drunken smile bottled beer to a few hangers on".¹⁸⁸ It is easy to ascribe his alcoholism to his chagrin over his thwarted ambitions in Fiji, where he had bidden fair to become "chief at Bau", or to his marital difficulties, or even perhaps to his uncertain prospects in Tonga, where there remained a real prospect of his succession, especially now that the designated heir, Tevita `Unga, had died. All this, though, is but speculation: we simply do not know what drove him towards public intoxication, to the destruction of his dignity as a chief, or to seek the company of dubious characters who possessed their own reasons for cultivating his favour. His fondness for "the bottle" had been noted by a visitor, Lord George Campbell, in July 1874,¹⁸⁹ while according to an after-dinner anecdote by Sir Arthur Gordon, Ma`afu had begun to drink heavily soon after Cession and was encouraged by Gordon to sign the pledge.¹⁹⁰ Ma`afu's conduct on Hennings' wharf was not that of a Roko, much less that of a king in waiting. Was he on the skids?

Tonga continued to claim much of his attention in 1880. We have noted how, during the previous two years, he had ruthlessly exploited the custom of *lala* to gather "gifts" to be sent to Tonga. Whether such "gifts" were designed to encourage his supporters in the kingdom remains unknown. At the 1879 *Bosevakaturaga*, it had been revealed that Ma`afu had told the bulis to issue orders for the preparation of *tapa* as gifts for Tupou.¹⁹¹ His contacts with Tonga, and his visits there every year, continued to cause some concern to British officials.¹⁹² Following Tevita `Unga's death in Auckland in December 1879, the succession question assumed greater significance for Ma`afu. Although the Constitution provided for the succession to pass to `Unga's descendants, with his son Wellington Ngū now the ostensible heir, speculation about Ma`afu's intentions persisted. Henry Symonds, the acting British Consul in Tonga, believed that had `Unga survived his father, he "would never have become king

188 Quoted in T.R. St Johnston, *South Seas Reminiscences*, London 1922, 122.

189 Lord George Campbell, *Log Letters from the Challenger*, London 1876, 139.

190 Brunson Fletcher, *The Black Knight of the Pacific*, Sydney 1944, 161–162.

191 *Published Proceedings...*, 1879 Council.

192 *ibid.*; Tripp to Col. Sec., 5 Jun 1877, FCSO.

without a struggle" owing to his unpopularity. Ngū, though, enjoyed increasing public favour and should succeed without objection, "unless such objection be originated from without".¹⁹³

Mention of an objection to Ngū "from without" was a reference to Ma`afu whom, according to Shirley Baker, Gordon wanted to succeed Tupou. "If [Gordon] could get Ma`afu appointed he would sign over Tonga", Baker wrote in Auckland as he waited to accompany `Unga's remains to Tonga for burial.¹⁹⁴ If that was indeed Gordon's view, he revealed nothing in his official correspondence. James Blyth, whom Gordon appointed Vice-Consul to Tonga during Maudslay's leave of absence, was instructed that in his "intercourse" with the King and government of Tonga, he was to remember that Great Britain had "no selfish objects to obtain" in Tonga, whose independence must be respected. Blyth was urged to watch carefully any moves towards the assumption of power or influence in Tonga "by any other State", since such a development would be against British interests, in view both of the proximity of Fiji to Tonga and of "the social connection between the two groups".¹⁹⁵

These instructions, couched in the cautious tones of diplomacy, neatly outline contemporary British policy towards Tonga. Naturally, nothing was said concerning the succession, a topic that continued to occupy people's minds. The veteran missionary in Fiji, Frederick Langham, supported British policy, telling Baker that "If [the Tongans] have a successor to King George like him, they will be much better without British influence and authority".¹⁹⁶ Wilkinson, writing from Tonga in February 1880, said that he would advise Ma`afu to attend `Unga's funeral. Wilkinson, who believed that Ngū "would never hold his own against the people", favoured Tungī to succeed as "he has the confidence of the king and the esteem of the people". Wilkinson sought instructions from Gordon about how Ma`afu should be handled.¹⁹⁷ The Governor remained displeased with Ma`afu, however, reporting that the Roko had gone to live with Theodore Wood, "a step I greatly deplore". What was worse, at least for Ma`afu, was that he had been "awfully cheated" concerning the denture he had ordered from Sydney. Whether he had been overcharged, or whether the mail order teeth did not fit, has not been revealed to history.¹⁹⁸

Ma`afu, still in Fiji in June, was instructed to proceed to Levuka with Mafi for consultations with the Governor. Gordon wished to learn the full history of Rabe, the island in Cakaudrove which the former Tui Cakau had presented

193 Symonds to Gordon, 10 Jan 1880, *Records...*, 4, 173.

194 Baker, undated fragment, Baker Papers.

195 Gordon to James Blyth, 16 Feb 1880, *Records...*, 4, 197. See also Gordon to SSFA, 31 Jul 1880, FO 58/168.

196 Langham to Baker, 14 Jun 1880, MOM 103.

197 Wilkinson to Gordon, 21 Feb 1880, *Records...*, 4, 210–211.

198 Gordon to Wilkinson, 13 Jul 1880, Stanmore Papers.

to Tupou in 1855 and which the King had sold in 1871.¹⁹⁹ It was probably significant that Ma`afu did not attend the opening of the Tongan Parliament on 24 July, when the King announced that Shirley Baker was to be Premier of Tonga and that the treaty with Great Britain, if approved, would be ratified.²⁰⁰ When Parliament was prorogued one week later, the King made an announcement of considerable significance to Ma`afu: "The Constitution will be adhered to, and I hereby appoint my grandson, Wellington Tupoumalolo, as my successor and Crown Prince of Tonga".²⁰¹

There was no reason to suppose that the constitutional provisions for succession would not be carried out on Tupou's death. Gordon, as High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, was chiefly concerned to thwart German influence in Tonga, an influence he believed was promoted by Baker. He made his point to the Foreign Secretary, who minuted one of Gordon's despatches, "I was not aware that the Fiji Islands were so mingled with the Tongan group, as to bring our own possessions into immediate and inconvenient contact with the latter".²⁰² Gordon's concerns were actuated by the extensive German trading interests in Fiji, where the proprietors of the long-established trading firm of Hennings Brothers had for years exercised a marked influence over Ma`afu.²⁰³ Thurston, who shared Gordon's fears about German intentions in Tonga, advised the High Commissioner that Tupou had received "valuable presents" from the German Emperor and Crown Prince. One positive development, Thurston reported from Tonga, was that the new Tongan Crown Prince appeared to oppose Baker's policy of favouring German interests.²⁰⁴ Gordon had sent Thurston, still Colonial Secretary of Fiji, to Tonga to "expostulate" with the King, who apparently did not intend now to ratify the treaty with Great Britain. Following pressure from Gordon and the Foreign Office, the King agreed that the deadline for ratification might be extended to December 1881.²⁰⁵

Ma`afu appears to have dropped from official view for several months in 1880. When the new Tui Cakau, Ratu Josefa Lalabalavu, was installed at Wairiki in August, there was no mention in the press of Ma`afu's presence, although it is likely that he attended.²⁰⁶ He re-emerged into the spotlight in November, when he played host to the *Bosevakaturaga*, held that year at Mualevu in northern Vanuabalavu. During the same month he gave evidence at a sitting of the Lands Claims Commission held in Lomaloma to investigate numerous European claims in Lau.

199 Gordon to Ma`afu, 14 Jun 1880, FCSO.

200 Blyth to Gordon, 30 Jul 1880, *Records...*, 4, 378 and 3 Aug 1880, FO 58/68.

201 *FT*, 23 Sep 1880.

202 Minute by Lord Kimberley, Gordon to FO, 31 Jul 1880, CO 83/22.

203 Gordon to SSFA, 31 Jul 1880 and 30 Dec 1880, FO 58/168.

204 Thurston to Gordon, 11 Nov 1880, FO 58/168.

205 Gordon to Thurston, 5 Nov 1880, Gordon to King of Tonga, 5 Nov 1880, *Records...*, 4, 490; CO to Under SSFA, 16 Oct 1880, FO 58/171; Gordon to SSFA, 29 Dec 1880, FO 58/168.

206 *FT*, 11 Aug 1880.

Missionary David Wylie had been prescient when he wrote in 1873, "The question of Land Titles is likely to become a serious one in Fiji".²⁰⁷ Some land had been "sold" more than once, with several claims from both chiefs and settlers resulting. The Deed of Cession had recognised lands "in bona-fide [possession] ... of Europeans or other foreigners", but what constituted "bona-fide possession" under Fijian land tenure was far from clear. The Lands Claims Commission had been established following the chiefs' adoption, after much debate, of the Lands Claims Ordinance of 1879 at that year's *Bosevakaturaga*.²⁰⁸ The Commission's chief concern was traditional indigenous rights to land in Fiji and "whether the vendors of each [foreign] claim were empowered, by their own custom, to alienate the land in question".²⁰⁹ Europeans claiming land in Fiji were required to give evidence of the transactions with Fijians on which their claims were based, while chiefs and others representing the *mataqali*, the traditional owners of the land, were also questioned about the supposed alienation of the lands claimed by Europeans. The Commission set out, in principle, to ensure that where continuous Fijian occupation could be demonstrated, "sales" of such land to foreigners would not be recognised. The only "sales" deemed valid were to be those made by a chief who ruled in fact as well as in name and where there was clear evidence of consent from the *tauvei* who lived on and planted the land in question. Since much land alienation had occurred because of Fijian cupidity, where people were anxious for a share of rents, and because of deception and often threats on the part of European "purchasers", the enquiry would prove to be prolonged and extremely complex. By the time LCC investigations were completed in 1882, fewer than one third of claims had been recognised.²¹⁰

We have already noted examples of the many leases Ma`afu made to Europeans on Vanuabalavu in the 1870s and earlier.²¹¹ Over three days of hearings at Lomaloma, days when he had to be excused from attending the *Bosevakaturaga*, Ma`afu gave evidence to the Commission in relation to at least 19 separate claims. His depositions, seen in an attenuated form in the Commission Reports, demonstrate his thorough knowledge of the lands of Lau and those who worked them, as well as a prodigious, if sometimes selective, memory. It often seemed that he could account for every physical feature, every foot almost, of the land of Vanuabalavu and other islands in the province of Lau.²¹²

207 D.S. Wylie to Chapman, 19 May 1873, MOM 165.

208 Correspondence Relative to Land Claims in Fiji, PP [C.-3584], 1883. See also Gordon, "Native Councils in Fiji 1875-1880", *The Contemporary Review*, Jul 1883, 722.

209 Peter France, *The Charter of the Land*, Melbourne 1969, 116.

210 R. Gerard Ward, *Land Use and Population in Fiji*, London 1965, 116.

211 See Ch. 9.

212 Evidence from Ma`afu can be read in all of the LCC Reports of cases heard at Lomaloma in Nov 1880.

Ma`afu was a busy man during the final weeks of 1880, since after the Commission hearings concluded, he resumed his role as host of the *Bosevakaturaga*. Following the Council's official opening by Sir Arthur Gordon, Ma`afu, in Gordon's presence, addressed the chiefs on the progress Fiji had made under British rule:

In former times, which I well remember, there were no such gatherings as these. In those days there was no unity and one-mindedness ... From the time that the Vunivalu decided to give Fiji to Great Britain, we have been united ... But now, Sir, you are about to leave us behind. One thing ... let me urge. Do not forget us ... We Fijians are not persevering. We are easily discouraged, and are very much so at your going away.²¹³

There was no dissent among the chiefs. Gordon also regretted his departure, for more than one reason, writing of Vanuabalavu as "the most enjoyable part of Fiji" with "an air of comfort ... which is particularly attractive to me".²¹⁴ When Gordon sailed from Mualevu, on his final departure from Fiji, he was saddened at parting from so many "old friends" among the chiefs. One in particular would remain in his memory:

There were many touching incidents, but the one thing burnt into my memory for ever was the expression on Ma`afu's face. He knew that in losing me he lost his strongest external help to the maintenance of his better nature. He spoke not a word, but held my hand with both his as though he could not let go his hold, and looked into my eyes, his face speaking – sorrow, affection, respect, and something of reproach at my deserting him were all mingled there. And the pitiless rain came down all the time in blinding torrents.²¹⁵

Ma`afu would need a friend during the *Bosevakaturaga*. During a discussion of Rewa, whose head, Roko Tui Dreketi, was a notorious alcoholic, Roko Tui Bua addressed the chiefs:

There are two amongst us whose habits of drinking are notorious. One is Roko Tui Dreketi, the other is Roko Tui Lau. Who are they, and what are they? Are they great and valiant men that their habits are thus? They are but men like ourselves Both these chiefs have been spoken to, counselled, and admonished, but they follow their ways, the fruit of which they do not eat alone – we are all sharers in their reproach and shame. It is unlawful to take ... a person out of prison under sentence ... Roko Tui Lau ... did so in Levuka, and what was the result? None of us are devoid of sympathy and the desire to help his fellow, all of us have

213 *Proceedings...*, Mualevu 1880. See also Gordon, Journal, 15 Nov 1880, *Records...*, 4, 503.

214 Gordon to Lady Gordon, 4 Dec 1880, Stanmore Papers; Gordon, Journal, Dec 1880, *Records...*, 4, 500.

215 Gordon, Journal, 16 Dec 1880, *Records...*, 4, 505.

our failings and weaknesses, but if we are chiefs and are called upon to fill our positions in the government of our people, the faithful discharge of this duty surely ought to be our object...²¹⁶

The matter was dropped after further discussion. A few days later, Council deliberations again reflected badly on Ma`afu when Mafi referred to a major cause of disquiet in Vanuabalavu that the Roko had done nothing to address. Many children placed in the daily care of religious teachers had been made to work all day on the teachers' plantations without being fed, contrary to Fijian custom. The problem was resolved only when the missionaries forbade the practice and ensured the children attended school. Ma`afu played no part in ending the children's suffering.

Of greater concern to Ma`afu was the continuing resentment felt by other chiefs towards the Tongan ascendancy in Lau. When Mafi mentioned increasing thefts, Roko Tui Ba was quick to suggest a cause:

there are two mataqalis notorious for thieving in Fiji; one, strangers from another place, the second, Tongans newly arrived. We Fijians are naturally respectful and docile towards strangers, but you Tongans are a very different thing, and the fast youths amongst us have imitated the Tongan habits, and it is the picking up of these untoward habits of foreigners which has most to do with the creation of lazy and indolent people who become thieves and evil doers in the land. Formerly they were put down ... by *vakavanua* usages. Now, they defy these...

Mafi, tongue in cheek, agreed with this description of a society under the stress of social change. He proceeded to remind Roko Tui Ba that the Fijians of Vanuabalavu were "notorious thieves" who were permitted "to defy ... chief, law, policemen, Government and all". "Yes", replied Tui Ba. "That is because they have been well taught by you in your own land, before they came".²¹⁷

Not surprisingly, Ma`afu was not forthcoming when he addressed the Council: "I have nothing much to report of our province". He spoke of Mafi's laxness in not travelling about Lau as he should, without acknowledging that it was his own responsibility as Roko to ensure that Mafi attended to his duties. Although able to recognise deficiencies and worse in his province, Ma`afu was not sufficiently motivated to set them to rights. Was that because the degree of social control he had established amply suited his purpose?

Siale`ataongo, whose unseemly conduct had been brought to Gordon's notice, was the subject of another rebuke from Roko Tui Ba. Referring to Siale's known

216 *Proceedings...*, Mualevu 1880.

217 *ibid.*

illicit relations with various married women, two of whom he had struck, Roko Tui Ba suggested that he had not been brought before a court because he was the Roko's son. Mafi demurred, citing a lack of any formal complaint as the reason. There followed a litany of further accusations against Siale, whom Mafi described as "a daring, bad young man. His father has lectured me twice for not bringing him to court, but the difficulty has been that no-one will lodge a complaint ... He is a bitter fruit, indeed, to us Tongans, as well as to Lau as a whole. He is a chief, a high chief, amongst us", Mafi added, coming to the heart of the matter, "and the fear he causes is great". Siale`ataongo who, at 16, had been described by a visiting missionary as an "Adonis", was part of the Tongan oppression in Lau and would in fact be deported from Fiji within two years. His conduct emerges in the context of the *Bosevakaturaga* as further evidence of a lack of control from the top.

Many of Lau's problems arose because the province was a society in transition. Aside from the repressive nature of Ma`afu's rule, Lau was affected by the diminution of chiefly authority as the new colonial hierarchy became entrenched. The new rule of law, as Siale's case exemplifies, blunted at the edges in the face of social attitudes surviving from the days when there was no statute law and neither gaols nor magistrates. At the *Bosevakaturaga*, Buli Lakeba complained "There are fornicators and adulterers in numbers, but no-one will charge them, and they are not brought to trial ... there is disquiet everywhere". The problem, at least for the *buli*, lay in the families of those involved in marital problems agreeing to settle the matter among themselves, often with compensation being paid, so that those guilty of breaches of a strict moral regime which the law sought to impose could never be brought to court.

Ma`afu appeared to address the problem:

It is true that the evil of Lakeba is great ... What the Buli has stated I know well I have been told it is the age of law, of Courts, the road to which is straight. Though the evil of Lakeba be great, I believe the same evils on Vanua Balavu are greater. Here ... all law is at an end. A man steals a fowl, and is brought to Court, but a man may violate his neighbour's wife, or his neighbour's daughter, and everybody says (raising his hand to suit the word), 'Hush, hush, hush' Such persons defy the elders of the land, and they easily defy the Courts and the laws.

When Ma`afu ordered that a notorious offender on Lakeba be flogged, he was "lectured" for having taken the law into his own hands. "I ask the Council, I ask the Commissioner, I ask the law, the Government, and the Governor, 'How can you expect the land to be clean?'" One chief, Ratu Osea, could not resist

a rejoinder: "Lau formerly was not as it is now represented to be. These habits must have entered from Tonga".²¹⁸ In the days before the *Vakapiritania*, the chiefs were the law, and Ma`afu would never have been so constrained.

Aside from Ma`afu's continuing dilemmas concerning application of the new laws, there remained much resentment on Vanuabalavu over Fijians being forced to provision Tongan residents for their visits home and to repair the Tongans' houses. Ma`afu was supposed to have informed the new Governor, William Des Voeux, that the Fijians would not be evicted from the island as long as they continued to supply labour to the Tongans. If true, it seemed that Ma`afu and his Tongan cohorts, far from neglecting the social ills of their domain, had achieved just the right degree of social control necessary to maintain the Tongan ascendancy.

The Roko Tui Lau was, nevertheless, moved to complain when he saw both Fijians and Tongans as the victims of injustice. On islands in Lau leased to Europeans, voyaging Fijians who sought to shelter "during stress of weather" were usually refused, often being forced to remain on board their canoes, whatever the conditions, contrary to Fijian custom. They were also denied food. Ma`afu could not restrain his bitterness: "Doubtless it is [because] we are black and they are white, we are, in their eyes, filthy, and they are clean". Was he accurate in his summation of settler attitudes, lingering from the days of the Cakobau Government and earlier, or were the resentments of a lifetime leading him to make common cause with the Fijians, whose rights in so many other areas he treated with contempt? Roko Tui Bua spoke in his support, at the same time giving voice to a malaise that was one more unintended consequence of the European intrusion into Fiji:

No one who sold land in those past days ever supposed he was selling all *vakavanua* rights and privileges with what he sold. Whoever thought he was selling his reefs, or the water? Yet all are prohibited by white men when they are not of good mind. We are prohibited from landing on their shores. Supposing that we prohibited them, what a noise there would be about it! ... If this kind of thing is to continue, we shall indeed be in a pitiable condition.²¹⁹

In addressing the *Bosevakaturaga* on its final day, Ma`afu resumed the seemingly discarded cloak of statecraft:

With reference to our lands, formerly we were very much perplexed, and we have often discussed the matter, but never arrived at any satisfactory conclusion; but now we are thankful the law has been enacted which meets our case fully. It also certifies to us that the tales we have been told

218 *ibid.*

219 *ibid.*

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

that the Government would take away our land, and we should be left in a pitiable condition, were not true ... There is however one other matter which gives us concern, namely, our reefs ... All reefs have ownership from the past down to the present time; that is clear to us ... We beg of your Majesty that they may be registered with our lands ... that the rights of owners may be fixed on a clear basis...²²⁰

Ma`afu saw the Lands Claims Commission as a vehicle for reconciling traditional land tenure with the requirements of English law and European settlers. In view of the practices of many settlers in denying voyagers their traditional rights, similar protection was needed for the country's reefs.

With the close of the *Bosevakaturaga*, the chiefs departed and Ma`afu returned to Lomaloma. The *Fiji Times*, four months later, cast aspersions on the Mualevu Council, addressing matters unlikely to have surfaced during the chiefs' deliberations:

The dearest aspiration of Ma`afu's heart was that in every respect the Lau Bose should outrival that held at Bau the previous year. In this he was so peculiarly successful ... that has made it notorious even in the annals of Fijian licentiousness and debauchery. It is asserted that drunkenness and immorality were its distinguishing features; that the deliberative business ... served as a cloak ... for ... the most degrading vice and lasciviousness...²²¹

The newspaper's hyperbole renders its judgment suspect. There had certainly been problems, most notably the cutting of the Cakaudrove fishing nets during the Council, supposedly with Ma`afu's knowledge. John Thurston, while careful not to accuse Ma`afu without evidence, advised Gordon, "it is hard to see how anyone dared do it except with the sanction or by the direction of the chief. The objects assigned have been numerous – one being that the Chief desired to snub Cakaudrove because they did not contribute more food. Another because Ratu Lala has put his foot down upon Tongan spoliation in Cakaudrove".²²² The Tongan raj, as Thurston referred to it, was coming under unprecedented pressure throughout eastern Fiji. With his various public humiliations, exemplified in his alcoholism, his personal ascendancy in Lau might well have appeared precarious.

Thurston, the wisest contemporary observer of the political scene in Fiji, addressed some fundamental aspects of Ma`afu's rule, resolution of which would be needed in the future. The most important was his assumed right to lease Lauan lands without reference to the taukeis, a continuing cause of resentment for many years afterwards, as we saw in Chapter Nine. Secondly, Thurston asked

220 *ibid.*

221 *FT*, 30 Apr 1881.

222 Thurston to Gordon, 18 Feb 1881, Stanmore Papers.

by what right Ma`afu appropriated the whole income from such lands, leaving the taukeis without a penny in rent. Should the system be allowed to continue during Ma`afu's life, and if so, what course should be adopted after his demise? Should the leases be allowed to run their course, up to 50 years, to the detriment of three generations of taukeis, or should the lands be returned to them, whose interests Ma`afu had so comprehensively ignored? The Tongan ascendancy on Vanuabalavu, and to a lesser extent elsewhere in Lau and beyond, had become characterised by discontent, injustice and incipient social breakdown under a chief whom Lady Gordon had described, not without reason, as "the cleverest of them all".

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.