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Theologies of *Mana* and *Sau* in Fiji

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Nineteenth-century Methodist missionaries saw something miraculous in Fijian *mana*. David Hazlewood's pioneering dictionary defined *mana* as a noun meaning 'a sign, or omen; a wonder, or miracle' and an adjective meaning 'effectual; efficient, as a remedy; wonder-working' (Hazlewood 1850: 85). Thomas Williams, who wrote the first major ethnography of Fijian society, explained the name of the god Kanusimana (*kanusi* means 'spit') by writing that he "'spits miracles," i.e., does them easily' (Williams 1982 [1858]: 218). And when the Bible was translated into Fijian, the noun phrases *cakamana* and *cakacaka mana* (working *mana*) and (*vei*)*ka mana* (*mana* thing/s) were often used for the English word 'miracle/s'.¹

Both missionaries and (potential) converts operated in a world where spiritual power was expected to be made visible and tangible. Yet the missionaries' use of the term 'miracle/s' suggests that *mana* was seen by them as a kind of going-beyond, a transgression of the normal order of things, when in fact it might well have been woven into that normal order in pre-Christian Fiji. What if there was nothing

1 For early published references to *mana* in Fiji that do not come from the pens of missionaries, see Charles Wilkes (1845: 209) and Horatio Hale (1846: 399). The former describes the pairing of *mana* and *dina* (true) in ceremonial language, which we discuss below; the latter, similar to the missionaries, defines *mana* as 'a miracle'.

miraculous about Fijian *mana*? Indeed, each of the examples given in the opening paragraph raises questions about how missionaries' presuppositions might have shaped their treatment of *mana*. First, after Hazlewood offered the two definitions quoted above, he added another for *mana* as an adverb 'used when addressing a heathen deity—so be it, let it be so: also used after uliaing a report expressive of confirmation, as above' (Hazlewood 1850: 85).² This third definition, despite mentioning 'a heathen deity', is less theologically freighted than the first two; it is simply an affirmative and performative speech act, and is no more miraculous than saying 'amen'. Second, Williams' explanation of Kanusimana's name is flawed. In 'Kanusimana', *mana* is not a grammatical object of spit (*kanusi*). The name is a verb phrase, and can be translated more accurately as '[his] spit is prophetic' (that is, his spit makes things come to pass), or more compactly as 'magic spit'.³ Kanusimana is not spitting miracles, but his spit makes things happen—which, although extraordinary, is quite a different portrayal of magical mechanics than Williams'. Finally, *mana* in older Fijian accounts is strongly associated with acts of speaking, as we describe below, but the Methodist missionaries who favoured *mana*-based terms for translating 'miracles' in the Bible used the term *vosamana* (speak *mana*) more often to denigrate the lying speech of false prophets than to exalt the effectiveness of divine speech (Tomlinson 2006: 178).⁴

Our purpose in this chapter is not to argue over translations, however. As more than a century of scholarship has shown, isolating the word *mana* to search for a context-free meaning is not a productive enterprise, and there is an obvious danger in what Michael Lempert (2010: 394) has called 'word prospecting'—pulling terms out of context and treating them as emblems, or fetishising them. There is significant variability in how *mana* is used in different contexts within a society, between societies, and over time—and the larger point is that terms in language never precisely map onto concepts, practices,

2 By 'uliaing' he means 'to receive a message respectfully; to assent to, or return an answer to a report, or message' (Hazlewood 1850: 157).

3 The translation '[his] spit is prophetic' was suggested in personal communication by Paul Geraghty.

4 Coincidentally, but with suggestive resonance, they also used the term *mana* for the homonym 'manna' (food from heaven) (see also Kolshus, this volume). Karen Brison writes that Fijian Pentecostals do not often use the term *mana*, and quotes an interlocutor who says, 'Hmm, man[n]a. That's not really a Fijian word, is it? I think it comes from the Bible and means something like bread' (Brison 2012; cf. Ryle 2001: 233).

or effects. We focus, rather, on the ways that *mana* has become an object of analysis by indigenous Fijian Methodist theologians. In the first half of this chapter, we examine *mana*'s association with speech and with the term *sau*, a word with which *mana* is often paired and sometimes contrasted. In the second half, we turn to Fijian Methodist theologians' analyses of *mana* as well as *sau*, especially as they compare the authority and effectiveness of church leaders with that of hereditary chiefs. Ultimately, we aim to rethink Fijian *mana* as something which is not necessarily miraculous, but is instead a poetic expression used to articulate and evaluate models of divine and human speech.

Speaking *mana*

The first monolingual Fijian dictionary, published a decade ago, defines *mana* as 'achieving its intended purpose' (*yaco dina na kena inaki*; Tabana ni Vosa kei na iTovo Vakaviti 2005: 356). This sense of *mana*, hinted at in Hazlewood's third definition from 1850 ('so be it, let it be so'), is regularly made clear in indigenous Fijian communities during ceremonial speeches. For example, during *isevusevu* (offerings of kava between guests and hosts), the speeches made by those receiving the presentation feature aspirational phrases such as 'Let fish be abundant' and 'Let chiefly authority be maintained', and those who have given the presentation often respond '*Mana*' to these lines; the Methodist theologian Savenaca Vuetanavanua (2009: 35) writes that *mana* in this context translates as 'May it be so'.⁵ Some events may feature context-specific wishes, such as a wedding's invocation, 'may the couple live happily together for the rest of their lives'. At the end of the speech of acceptance, all those present often chant together '*Mana, e[i] dina, a muduo*'.⁶ '*Mana, e dina*', means '*Mana*, it is true'; '*a muduo*' does not

5 The Fijian phrases which Vuetanavanua translates as 'Let fish be abundant', and 'Let chiefly authority be maintained' are *Cabe tu na ika mai takali* and *Dei tikoga na itutu vakaturaga*. A more literal translation of the first would be '[Let] fish rise from the sea'.

6 Eräsaari (2013: 154) writes that in Naloto village, Verata, *mana, e dina* is presented as a dialogue, with the individual speech-giver announcing '*mana*' and other participants then responding '*e dina*'. In comparison, Bigitibau has observed that a speaker's cadences and voice quality, as well as the specific phrases the speaker uses, can signal to the audience that the speech is about to conclude; if audience members recognise the cues, they are likely to join the speaker in chanting '*mana, e dina*', but if they miss the cues, they will chime in with '*e dina*' only after '*mana*' has been said. On the differences implied by *e dina* and *ei dina* in one part of Fiji, see Tomlinson (2009a: 69n5).

have a literal translation, but is a poetic closure followed by rhythmic clapping and sometimes repetition of '*muduo*'. In chanting '*mana, e dina*', the thing that is true (*dina*) is not *mana* itself. Rather, the thing that is (becoming) true are the words spoken before the chant; for example, the fish will be abundant, chiefly authority will be maintained, and the married couple will live happily ever after.

In such speeches and chants, *mana* has illocutionary force, per J.L. Austin (1975: 13): 'in saying these words we are *doing* something'. It also manifests the 'poetic function' of language, per Roman Jakobson, displaying a 'focus on the message for its own sake' (1960: 356). As a formula, '*mana, e dina*' follows the previously mentioned metonyms of the good life in traditional Fiji—plentiful food, strong leadership, a happy couple, and so forth—and ties them together with the affirmative and performative chant that aligns *mana* (may it be so) with *dina* (what we have said will come to pass). *Mana* and *dina* are an irreducible dyad whose utterance ties together and accomplishes what has been said, emphasised by the rhythmic, unified clapping and repetition of *muduo* which generally follows, with styles varying in different regions of Fiji.

Mana is also linked with speech in the verb phrase *vosamana* (speak *mana*). In the 1920s, Methodist minister Epeli Rokowaqa published an account of ancient Fiji in a mission magazine, and of the 20 times his history mentions the term *mana*, 13 times it is linked with the verb *vosa*, either in the phrase *vosamana*, as in 'He was a good man and spoke *mana* [i.e. he determined the future by speaking]' ('*Sa turaga vinaka ka dau vosa mana*'), or in more complicated expressions such as 'Those words came to pass' ('*A mana na vosa ko ya*'; Rokowaqa 1926: 16, 54). In two other cases, Rokowaqa mentions the '*mana, e dina*' formula, meaning that in three-quarters of his examples, *mana* is connected to speech.⁷

7 Rokowaqa's 75,000-word account of Fijian history was published as *Ai Tukutuku kei Viti* (meaning *Stories of Fiji*) in 1926. His text contains tales of Fiji's origins, the migrations and wars of the great chiefdoms, and explanations of how the present social order came into being—the chiefly system, orders of hierarchy, and clans' traditional obligations. Rokowaqa had attended the Methodist mission school at Navulua in the early 1890s (France 1966: 111), and his account of Fijian history has 'a style reminiscent of the Book of Revelation' (Geraghty 1977: 28).

In looking for early appearances of *mana* in the Fijian literature, we have found references to it in the Methodist missionary Jesse Carey's survey of his 'native teachers' in Kadavu Island in the mid-1860s. Of the six times that Carey's texts mention *mana*, it is always used as part of the phrase '*mana, e dina*'. In three of these instances, the phrase is attributed to people attending a healing session who are responding to the words of a traditional priest. In two cases, the speaker's identity is not clear. In one case, from the lyrics of a chant (*meke*), it is a spirit or god who says the words.

Carey's examples from healing ceremonies, which were reported to him by the teacher Joeli Nau, are worth examining for the way they differ on a crucial matter of detail. In the first example, Nau describes a priest praying for a sick person:

E dua mada na yaqona e laki
cabo vua a sa ta[ra]i au tara ga
ka bula ga na baca, ni sa oti
ko ya ka mama, ka lose ni sa
tauya, sa qai masu lakina ka
vaka, Ai sevu kei Ravouvou
... kei ira kece ga na Kalou mai
na tui cake mai ra tale ga mo
dou yalovinaka, ka me bula
na mate, era qai vaka, mana
e dina, ka sa dina.

Kava is presented to him,
and when received [he says],
'I receive it, and the sick will
get well'; after that [the kava]
is chewed and mixed. Upon
receiving it, he then prays for
it like this: 'The offering for
Ravouvou ... and all of the gods
from the east and from the west
as well. Be merciful and let this
sick person be cured'. Then
they say, 'mana, it is true', and
it is true. (Carey 1865: 198)⁸

Thus, this event concludes with the performative utterance of '*mana, e dina*' making the healing effective. In comparison, when '*mana, e dina*' is mentioned in a discussion of sacrifice (*isoro*) made for a priest who is sick, there is a coda added:

8 This passage is also quoted in Tomlinson (2006: 175). While conducting research for that article, Tomlinson worked from a transcript of the original document prepared by an anonymous researcher. Since then, he has consulted a microfilmed copy of the original at the Mitchell Library in Sydney and noticed numerous transcription errors which do not, however, change the meaning of the passage. The Fijian versions of the Carey texts presented here are reproduced verbatim except for bracketed inserts and the deleted names of various traditional gods (indicated by ellipses); the idiosyncratic phrasing and (lack of) punctuation in the originals is retained, as well as the inconsistent verb tenses. The English translation of the first example is a refinement of that presented in Tomlinson (2006).

Nai soro e na vuku ni dua sa tauvi mate, sa vaka oqo. Ke dua na Tabua se liga sa mudu, ka kauta e dua na turaga e na mataqali s[a] yacana nai qaravi, ka laki cabora, ka vaka, Oqo Ratu nai soro e na vukuna na nomu batiniyaqona sa tauvi mate no, ia keitou sa vakawirimadigi, a sa qara vua sa tauvi mate, ia na kenai soro oqo mo lomavinaka me bula, ia, ke vaka ko sa tiko e keru mo vosu mai. Sa qai kaila na bete ka vaka Ai valu! Koi au, a cava talega ko dou tawa kilai au kina? Au sa cakacakava vaka¹⁰ ga vei kemudou, ka dou tawa kila ga, e na sega sara ni bula na mate. A sa masu tiko ga na turaga ko ya mo yalovinaka ga me bula, ke vaka e na bula, au na qai tara e dua na nomu Bure vou. Sa qai vakadonuya, io, sa na qai bula; sa qai laki tara na tabua ka vaka au tara ga oqo ka bula ga [na] mate sa qai vaka ko ira kece sa tiko, mana e dina ka sa dina, sa qai masu laka na kamunaga, ka vaka, Au sa qai taura na kamunaga sa kauta mai oqo na qau i qaravi; ka kila ko yau kei Vuetiono...kei ira kece na Kalou vaka [ya]dua ga mai Natuicake, mai ra tale ga meda loma vata me bula na mate. Era qai kaya tale mana e dina, ni sa oti sa qai lako na Bete ka tara na mate me bogi va.

The sacrifice for a sick person is like this. If a whale's tooth or a cut-off hand is taken by a man of a clan, it is called a *qaravi*, and is formally presented as, 'Ratu, this is the sacrifice for your kava priest who is sick, we have cast lots and it pointed towards the sick, hence this is a sacrifice [on his behalf] that you may grant him mercy and let him live. If you are there, may you speak.' The priest then shouts and says, 'A war! It is I, how come you don't recognise me? I have worked ten times already for you and you still don't recognise me, the sick shall not recover.' But the man continued pleading, 'Be merciful and let him live; if he shall live, I shall build you a new temple.' He then conceded and said, 'Yes, he shall live'; then he went and took hold of the whale's tooth and said, 'I touch this, and the sick shall recover'. All those present said, '*mana*, it is true', and it is true, then he prayed over the whale's tooth, 'Now I take this whale's tooth, brought by my servant [or brought as a sacrifice]; and I know, as well as Vuetiono ... and all individual gods from the east and the west as well, let us be of one spirit for the sick to get well.' They all said again, '*mana*, it is true', then the priest left to attend to the sick for four nights. (Carey 1865: 201)

Whereas in the first example the words are automatically effective, in the second example the priest leaves to attend to the sick person (another priest) for the ritually significant period of four nights, and this physical attention helps to effect the healing. Thus, in the first example, '*mana, e dina*' is performative in and of itself: people show their agreement and support by chanting the formula after the words of the priest, and the healing comes to pass. In the second example, by comparison, effectiveness seems to depend partly on the healer making sustained contact with the sick.⁹

Because the utterance of *mana* concludes ceremonial speeches so prominently, it is easy to imagine how it might be treated as an indigenous emblem, something that defines Fijian spirituality. Indeed, as we discuss below, the Methodist theologian Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere approaches *mana* in this spirit. Moreover, Sekove Bititibau has observed how, in his homeland of Nakelo, it is traditional for a person receiving a presentation of kava on others' behalf to say '*kaloumana i dina*', linking traditional deities (*kalou*) to the previously spoken words. (Those on whose behalf the kava is received respond '*mana i dina, sa dina*', confirming and supporting what has been said.) Linking pre-Christian spirits, kava and *mana*, these speech practices are apparently traditional, pre-Christian forms.

Mana? *What mana?*

However, several ethnographic reports tell of other Fijians who consider *mana* to be a foreign term. Buell Quain, who conducted research in Vanualevu in the 1930s, wrote, 'The term *mana*, impersonal supernatural power, is understood at Nakoroka [in Vanualevu] and occurs in ceremonial chants. But the equivalent in the local dialect is *sau*' (1948: 200n30). In other words, people in Nakoroka knew what *mana* meant for other indigenous Fijians, and chanted it; but their term for what

9 Over a century after these reports were written, the anthropologist Barbara Herr wrote a doctoral dissertation on psychology and healing in Fulaga which resonates with Nau's second example. Herr wrote, 'The skilled, mature female vuniwai [healers] know medicines in great detail, and they reported receiving intentional instruction. They also, however, believe that the power to heal in their "fingers" is supernaturally dictated. One vuniwai who was also a good friend emphatically stated on several different occasions "sa bau mana a ligaqu!" (lit. my hands really work), to explain the quickness of a cure at her administration' (Herr 1983: 181). She adds 'or "my hands really have mana"' as a possible second translation, but this is misleading, as there is nothing in the Fijian phrase to indicate that *mana* is a possession.

Quain knew his audience would consider to be *mana* was not *mana*, but *sau*. (Unfortunately, Quain did not elaborate on what he meant by ‘equivalence’, nor on the local pragmatics of *sau*.) A second example comes from a forthcoming book chapter by the French anthropologist Françoise Cayrol based on her research in Vitilevu. She offers the following observation: ‘Nasau people insist that the term *mana* does not belong to the language of the region. Formerly, this term did not exist there; only the idea of *sau* was present (Cayrol, n.d).’

Sau can be defined specifically as ‘chiefly power’ (Eräsaari 2013: 49) or generally as ‘powerful and effectively influential to cause ill or good’ (Ravuvu 1983: 120). Bigitibau has observed how *sau* typically refers to individual chiefs and the way their instructions and plans to their people must be followed or else misfortune (accidents, sickness and so forth) will afflict those who have disrespected the chiefs’ words.

Theologian Savenaca Vuetanavanua writes, ‘On many occasions, *sau* is used interchangeably with *mana* (especially in Lau) [eastern Fiji]’ (Vuetanavanua 2009: 67; see also Ravuvu 1983: 86). Similarly, anthropologist Steven Hooper, also writing of Lau, states that ‘the word *sau* is often used as an equivalent to *mana*, although in discussions there was some uncertainty as to whether their meanings were precisely the same’ (Hooper 1996: 262). Matt Tomlinson, working in Kadavu, has observed how *mana* and *sau* are spoken of together in Methodist discourse, used as a pair in statements meant to glorify God by emphasising God’s ultimate power (see Tomlinson 2009b: 76). Bigitibau, who has extensive research experience throughout Fiji, has come to conclude that although indigenous Fijians distinguish between *mana* and *sau* in speech, understandings of their differences generally remain unarticulated.

Mana is now prominent in the writings of Fijian authors, and is generally treated in the ways that people from Nakoroka and Nasau seemingly distrust. That is, it is treated as a thing—as spiritual power. As Tomlinson has argued elsewhere (2006), and as suggested above, *mana*’s notional transformation into a thing—the kind of transformation that Roger M. Keesing (1984) accused anthropologists themselves of generating—seems to have been influenced by Methodist missionaries’ Bible translations.

In becoming thinglike, *mana* has also become strongly associated with the power of chiefs. For example, education scholar Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, in her monograph on indigenous Fijian social science research

methodology, writes, ‘Daily life among the Vugalei [people] includes talk of the mana of chiefs, which is said to be divine’ if they have been installed by the people of the land (Nabobo-Baba 2006: 51). Similarly, Asesela Ravuvu wrote that direct or indirect physical contact with a chief was forbidden to lower-ranked people because in making such contact, ‘one is not only undermining the veneration and sacredness accorded to the chief, thus weakening his authority and prestige, but one is also being contaminated and affected adversely by his *mana*’ (Ravuvu 1983: 92). Semi Seruvakula, writing in Fijian, cautions that ‘it is very dangerous for us to touch the heads and necks of our chiefs, because those are the site of *mana* and the seat of the *sau* of the land and people’ (*‘Ia na uludra li se domodra na noda gone turaga sa qai ka rerevaki sara meda bau tara yani, ka ni oya na itikotiko ni mana ka idabedabe ni sau ni vanua’*) (Seruvakula 2000: 36).¹⁰

10 The three most incisive recent anthropological treatments of chiefliness and *mana* in Fiji have been those of Steven Hooper, John D. Kelly and Matti Eräsaari. Hooper deftly observes the complications of analysing Fijian *mana* and provides useful summary characterisations, noting *mana*’s connection with chiefs’ effective speech, with healing, and with places like the sea (Hooper 1996: 257–59). He also provides useful lengthy transcripts in Fijian of indigenous Fijians’ own statements about *mana* (see also Hooper 1982).

Kelly argues that the *mana* of Fijian chiefs must be understood as a term dialogically co-constituted with Indo-Fijian *shanti* (‘a conception of religious peace and well-being, the calm after the storm and the experience of grace’) (Kelly 2011: 236). The most inspired part of Kelly’s argument is his claim that the relative lack of lethal violence in Fiji’s coups is due ‘almost entirely to the valorization of *shanti*’ by Indo-Fijians, more than three-quarters of whom were Hindus in the mid-1990s and who were the main targets of physical aggression by militant Fijian Christians during the coups of 1987 and 2000 (Kelly 2011: 245). The least convincing part of his argument is his poetic claim that where power (as *mana*) is truth for indigenous Fijians, truth (as *shanti*) is power for Indo-Fijians (see also Kelly 2005). The equation of *mana* with truth, as stated above, is based on the misleading equation of the terms *mana* and *dina* due to their use together in ritual speech (see Kelly 2011: 240; see also Hocart 1914; Sahlins 1985; for a critique see Tomlinson 2009a). Kelly’s most provocative statement, not yet developed into a full argument, is that ‘devotional Hindu values have fundamentally challenged and are altering the practices and significances of ethnic Fijian *mana*’ (Kelly 2011: 246n4); he adds teasingly, ‘here lies the truest scandal, if it is true’. This claim, as phrased, is unquestionably true to the extent that indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian histories have developed in dialogue with each other since the late nineteenth century: with long-term engagement, there is necessarily challenge and alteration. But an in-depth argument with supporting ethnohistorical and linguistic detail on interactions between those speaking of power in terms of *mana* and those speaking of truth in terms of *shanti*, with an eye to reciprocal indigenous uptake of *shanti* and Indo-Fijian uptake of *mana*, has not yet been made.

Finally, Eräsaari analyses *mana* and *sau* with reference to objects in ceremonial exchange, namely kava and whales’ teeth, and notes that when *mana* is seen as a practice, ‘it appears much less “supernatural” or religious than commonly understood. Observed within a sequence where an intention is first declared, then accepted and finally announced, *mana* becomes the outcome of strictly controlled conditions that ensure the performative quality of these rituals’—with nothing, in short, miraculous about it (Eräsaari 2013: 156).

It is important to emphasise that *mana* is not tied exclusively to chiefness. As seen in the examples above, traditional priests could speak in dialogue with their audiences to act (with) *mana*. In another example, from a tale told by Rokowaqa, carpenters speak *mana* when a man named Cameletamana steals an axe from them. The carpenters tell the thief's fellow villagers: 'Whoever stole our axe, he and his descendants will not be able to build boats.' Hence, according to Rokowaqa, 'Those words came to pass [*A mana na vosa ko ya*], enduring until today, the descendants of Camelematana, who live at Navunivesi, do not know how to build boats' (Rokowaqa 1926: 54).¹¹ It is also important to note that much discourse in modern Fiji characterises history in terms of loss, implying that the ability to act with *mana* is waning for humans, as described at length in Tomlinson (2009b). In the old days, many Fijians indicate, the ancestors were socially unified and acted with strength and propriety under truly authoritative chiefs. Today, in contrast, many people say that chiefs are unable to act in the powerful ways they once did and the social order is breaking down. Figures who can act more effectively are the ancestral spirits who sometimes curse the living. In short, *mana* in contemporary Fiji is often a diagnostic of what people feel they are losing or have lost.

Methodist theologians do not fully endorse this diagnosis of the decline of *mana*. Instead, they present *mana* as something to which they have a special claim as God's representatives. The balance of power between church leaders and hereditary chiefs, all considered to be under God's ultimate authority, is the site of theological argument to which we now turn.

Methodist theologies

The Methodist Church in Fiji has had a close relationship with many of Fiji's high chiefs for more than a century and a half, but it has had a problematic relationship with the national government in recent years. Fiji became independent from Great Britain in 1970 and has suffered four coups d'état since. In the coups of 1987 and 2000,

11 In the original: '*O koya sa butakoca neimami matau, e na sega sara ni kila na ta waqa, me yacovi ira sara nona kawa ... A mana na vosa ko ya, sa yaco tikoga edaidai, ko ira ga na kawa i Camelematana [sic], era tiko oqo mai Navunivesi era sega sara ni kila na ta waqa.*'

conservatives in the Methodist Church tended to support the actions of coup leaders by justifying them in the name of indigenous rights and against the rights of non-indigenous citizens, primarily Indo-Fijians, the descendants of indentured immigrants who arrived in Fiji between 1879 and 1916. Progressives and moderates in the Methodist Church were marginalised. In the most recent coup in 2006, however, the Methodist leadership opposed the takeover of government—it was a coup in which the indigenous-dominated military removed an indigenous-led government—and since then the Church has suffered serious repercussions, including the arrest of leading ministers and repeated cancellation of its annual conference.

In this political context, defining the proper relationship between divine and human power is a matter of urgent concern for many citizens. A theological analysis of the *mana* or *sau* of chiefs versus that of church leaders is thus a pressing task, not simply an academic exercise. It is a task that needs to attend to Christianity's profound engagement with the *vanua*, which means 'land', 'people under a chief', and 'chiefdom', and connotes the system of chiefly leadership, land ownership and ritual exchange which is 'tradition' writ large and publicly displayed. The term *vanua* is often heard in Fijian religious and political discourse, and it carries strong emotional resonance: the *vanua* is a homeland, a gift from God, and a group identity, but it is also under threat from modern forces which threaten to dissolve indigenous Fijian unity and compromise land ownership. 'The *vanua* and the Methodist church are regarded as inseparable by most Methodist church members', as Bigitibau has observed (see Degei 2007: vi), but chiefs, who lead the *vanua*, also incarnate ancestor gods and therefore might plausibly derive at least some of their efficacy from a non-Christian source (Hooper 1996: 260; see also Nayacakalou 1961: 7; Quain 1948: 200–201).

The foremost thinker on the subject of Fijian *mana* is theologian Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere, who has served as principal of the Pacific Theological College in Suva (1982–88), president of the Methodist Church in Fiji (1996–98), and an honorary lecturer at the School of Theology at the

University of Auckland.¹² In 1992, Tuwere earned his doctorate from the Melbourne College of Divinity with a dissertation on the theology of the Fijian *vanua*. In 2002, he published a revised version of his dissertation as *Vanua: Towards a Fijian Theology of Place*; here, we discuss this book rather than the dissertation.

In *Vanua*, Tuwere devotes an entire section to *mana* (the book's other three sections are 'Birth', a general introduction; 'Face', on God's emplaced presence; and 'Ear', on the need to listen and to respect silence). In his discussion of *mana*, Tuwere uses the term to articulate various contradictions in Fijian understandings of spirituality. He writes that it 'involves a semantic domain that includes a number of other terms such as *tabu*, presence, blessing, success, creative force, fertility and more', but also writes that it is integral to sorcery (Tuwere 2002: 142, 161). *Mana* is implicated in social control, but also in ultimate freedom: Jesus 'is the source of all life-giving *mana*', and in sacrificing himself on the cross he gave 'lasting *mana* for all those who believe' and 'for the whole world to have healing and integrative *mana*'; *mana* is power, but also powerlessness as seen in Jesus' humility and despair (136, 141, 155, 156, 164, 166–68). Keeping these irreconcilable meanings in tension, Tuwere writes that '*Mana*, illustrating the reconciling work of God in Christ ... does not exhaust the nature of God but ... is the only meaningful way of describing God and what his power may mean in the Fijian context' (165).

In his radically inclusive approach to *mana*, Tuwere, curiously, does not say much about *sau*. He mentions that the concepts are 'related' and observes *sau*'s resonance with Māori *hau* (72–73, 147), but does not firmly distinguish the terms. He does, however, cast a politely critical eye on the authority of chiefs, writing:

Chiefs are vital as ritual brokers between spirits and people ... But *mana* is not simply vested in someone's person or self. It demonstrates itself outwardly through chiefly qualities or *i tovo vakaturaga* [chiefly customs/behaviour]. I often hear young men in the village saying,

12 We refer to people as theologians if they have earned a Master's or Doctorate in theology. Savenaca Vuetanavanua received his Master's in 2009 from the University of Auckland for a thesis on chiefly installation ceremonies, and three others mentioned in this chapter received their Master's degrees from the Pacific Theological College in Suva: Lesila Raitiqa in 2000 with a thesis titled 'Jesus: Healer of Vanua Sickness and Mana of the Vanua', Apete Toko in 2007 with a thesis on post-coup reconciliation, and Lisa Meo in 1993 with a thesis on garment industry workers.

Ke ra vinaka walega na noda i liuliu (if only our leaders were good), referring to traditional leaders in general and implying that *mana* is slipping away from its source. In pre-Christian time[s], lack of *mana* indicated a defect in the chief's relation with the gods so the rule of the club [i.e., murder] was applied. Today, no action is taken, people merely grumble and speculate. (Tuwere 2002: 138)

In Tuwere's theology, those old gods do have *mana* (162), but it is a misused *mana* that is life-destroying rather than life-affirming. To really belong to the land, he argues, Fijians must seek 'new *mana* in Christ' (158–69): new *mana* which can overcome the nationalist, pro-chiefly forces that have led Fiji into multiple coups; new *mana* to straighten out misguided Church leaders who have enabled and even exacerbated the political turmoil in Fiji.

A Methodist theologian whose understanding of *mana* echoes Tuwere's in some ways, but who emphasises a distinction between *mana* and *sau*, is deaconess Lesila Raitiqa. In her Master's thesis, she refers to Jesus as 'the True *Mana* of the *Vanua* [land and people]', and writes that '*Mana* is something wholesome and good ... [and] belongs to the spirit or the divine realm', even as it is manifest in human qualities (Raitiqa 2000: 53, 63). These human qualities include markedly aesthetic ones as well as ones associated with raw power. For example, Raitiqa identifies *mana* with 'the quiet dignity of a chief or royal person' and 'the beauty of kinship' as well as special strength and survival (52–53). *Sau*, for Raitiqa, is dangerous and frightening, and discovered only when one is afflicted (58). She quotes from an interview she conducted with scholar Pio Manoa in which he stated that '*mana* is the fruit of the *sau*', but Raitiqa characterises the relationship somewhat differently: '*sau* is the executor of *mana* ... A chief would utter an angry word or pronounce a blessing, but it is the *sau* which [affects] the one for whom the blessing or curse was intended' (58–59). Ethically, for Raitiqa, *mana* is entirely positive—'wholesome and good'—but *sau*, as executive power, is ethically ambiguous.

Another theologian whose understanding of *mana* resonates with that of Tuwere is Apete Toko, whom Tomlinson interviewed on 10 June 2009 when Toko was the Secretary for the Men's Fellowship of the Methodist Church. Asked about *mana* and *sau*, Toko mentioned the performative use of *mana* in ceremonies—he summarised it as 'Let it be. *Me yaco mai* [Let it be]. *Emeni* [Amen]. So be it'—and then moved on to a second meaning:

E vaka e jiko e dua na, e dua na vakabauta ni tu e so na mana. Na mana ni vanua, na mana ni lotu.... Jiko na mana ni vanua. Na mana rau veiwekani jiko kei na karua ni vosa e vatokai na sau. Na mana ni sau, e dua sa buli me turaga se me tui me liuliu ni, ni dua na vanua. Ah, na mana ni na italatala. Baleta na cava? Baleta ni o koya sa, sa buli, sa lumuji me tamata ni Kalou, talai ni Kalou. Talatala is a person of God. Not only that, but he is anointed. Kevaka sa tu kina e dua na mana levu se sa tu vua e dua na sau, e rawa ni vosa e na yaco na ka e tukuna. Se kevaka e masu me da qarauna na nona masu. Na ka sa na tukuna mai sa na yaco. Ia kena ibalebale na mana vata kei na sau e vaka e sema tu kei na dua na, kei na dua na kaukaua levu e jiko.

It's like there is a, a belief that some *mana* exists. The *mana* of the land and people, the *mana* of the church ... There is the *mana* of the land and people. *Mana* is related to a second word, *sau*. The *mana* of *sau*, when one is installed as a chief or paramount chief in order to be the leader of a land. Ah, the *mana* of the church minister. Why? Because he is, he's installed, he's anointed to be a person of God, messenger of God. The church minister is a person of God. Not only that, but he is anointed. If there is a great *mana* or he has *sau*, he can speak and what he said will happen. Or if he prays, we should pay attention to his prayer. What he says, it will happen. This means that it's like *mana* and *sau* are joined in a, in a great power that exists.

Like Tuwere and Raitiqa, Toko ties *mana* to both God and humanity: it is 'of the land and people' as well as 'of the church'. He mentions chiefs in order to explain *sau*, but then, observing that church ministers are installed or anointed in their positions like chiefs are (or at least as they are supposed to be—many chiefs today are not actually installed; see Eräsaari 2013: 222–23), Toko focuses on the position of the minister, who as a 'person of God' is linked to *mana* and *sau* alike 'in a great power that exists'. In short, Toko begins with a Tuwere-style model of *mana* rooted in the land and, like Tuwere, goes on to suggest that church ministers are now the ones with the most effective connection to divine *mana*, which is to say ultimate *mana*. In this way, Toko's discussion of *mana* and *sau* resonates with an earlier discussion

that Tomlinson had with a Methodist catechist who stated bluntly, '*Mana* and *sau* is with the people of God [i.e., church officials]. Less is with the chiefs of the land of Fiji' (see Tomlinson 2009b: 76).¹³

Lisa Meo, another Fijian Methodist theologian, wrote an entry for the *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* in which she describes the Pacific Islands as patriarchal places but does not mention chieftainship specifically. She does, however, explicitly prise open a gap between *mana* and *sau* in the same way as Raitiqa. Meo also emphasises the distinction's ethical aspects, drawing a sharper line than Raitiqa does:

For Pacific Island people, theologies are an integration of traditional and Christian beliefs of the nature of God and gods, and a craving for God's power. God's power brings blessings, *mana*, and to be without God's power means a curse, or *sau*. One can interpret feminist theologies as an acknowledgment of God's power that will bring forth empowerment for the powerless, especially, in this case, women. (Meo 1996: 109)

For Meo, the key distinction between *mana* and *sau* is the ethical evaluation of *mana* as blessing and therefore inherently good, and *sau* as cursing and therefore inherently bad. *Mana* is godly and *sau* is godless. Her identification of both *mana* and *sau* as Pan-Pacific concepts is highly problematic (see also Vamarasi 1987), but her theology is noteworthy for making a clear, explicit break that the

13 This catechist's life had been profoundly influenced by Toko, which is one of the reasons Tomlinson sought out Toko for an interview (see Tomlinson 2009b: 200–202). On *mana* in relation to chiefs and church leaders, see also Nabobo-Baba's discussion of 'public *mana* providers' who 'are people who must be present before a function is considered *dodonu* (correct); they provide *mana* and blessings to an occasion'; such public *mana* providers include chiefs and elders, she observes, but also 'increasingly today, a church minister' (Nabobo-Baba 2006: 67–68).

scholars quoted above do not make: *mana* is ultimately a thing of the Church and *sau* is not, meaning the Church has an ethically grounded right to claim power on behalf of the powerless.¹⁴

Conclusion

What does this wealth of information actually tell us?

At the very least, it reveals that some indigenous Fijians think *mana* is foreign and irrelevant, and others think it is the key to the order of the universe and eternal spiritual salvation. *Mana* cannot be understood without *sau*, but whether they draw together in similarity as ‘a great power’ or diverge in opposition as blessings versus curses is not something on which all indigenous Fijians agree. *Mana* has key aesthetic dimensions, both in its poetic chanting at ceremonies and in theological characterisations of it in terms of dignity and beauty (Raitiqa 2000: 52). It has key ethical dimensions, too, especially when opposed to *sau*, as in Meo’s feminist theology, which explicitly associates *sau* with the power to curse. These aesthetic and ethical dimensions should both expand and nuance scholarly equations of *mana* with power and, reading against the grain of early Methodist missionary translations, should trouble any equation of *mana* and

14 In 2009, Tomlinson also interviewed two Christian ministers who were not theologians but who offered especially thoughtful contributions on the topics of *mana* and *sau*. A Seventh-day Adventist minister in Suva, Timoci Beitaki, said that:

mana is God’s, it comes from Him, eh? ... *Mana* belongs to God in heaven because he made things out of nothing. But people in positions of leadership because they are leading, are respected in a chiefly way, and are considered to be sacred chiefs because they are appointed by God, are installed by God, but *mana* is not with them [the chiefs] ... it is with God, *sau* is with them [the chiefs] (*ki vua na Kalou koya e nona na mana, e?* ... *Na mana e nona na Kalou ni lomalagi e, baleta o koya e cakava na ka mai, mai na sega ni dua na ka. Ia na tamata na itutu ni veiliutaki baleta ni sa mai veiliutaki sa rokovi vakaturaga ka namaki ni tamata e turaga tabu saka yani era sa mai vua na Kalou, e buli tiko [ira] na Kalou, ia, e sega ni tiko vei ira na mana ... e tiko vua na Kalou, e tiko vei ira na sau*). (Interview, 8 June 2009)

A Fijian Methodist superintendent minister (*talatala qase*), Maika Sorowaqa of the Matuku district in Lau, eastern Fiji, equated *sau* with cursing like Meo does, explaining, ‘here’s an example. You say something, it happens. It’s like this, if I should curse you. You will go out today, even if you haven’t heard what I said, you will meet with misfortune. You’ll go and get hurt, eh? ... That’s one translation of *sau*’ (*‘kena vakatautauvata oqo. Mo cavuta e dua na ka, yaco. E va beka qo, me’u cursetaki iko. O na lako nikua, ke o sega ni rogoca noqu vosa, o na sotava e dua na ka rarawa. O lako ga, mavo, e? ... Ya dua na ivakadewa ni sau’*). When asked whether *mana* and *sau* were similar or different, Sorowaqa replied that in his opinion they are ‘in the same family’ (*matavuvale vata*) (Interview, 2 June 2009).

truth or *mana* and miracles. As we have suggested in this chapter, Methodist theologians who attempt to claim the moral authority of the church against the executive authority of chiefs, speaking (with) *mana* as they do, face the dilemma of valorising tradition and the chiefly system as keystones of indigenous Fijian identity while both depending on and trying to supersede them.

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