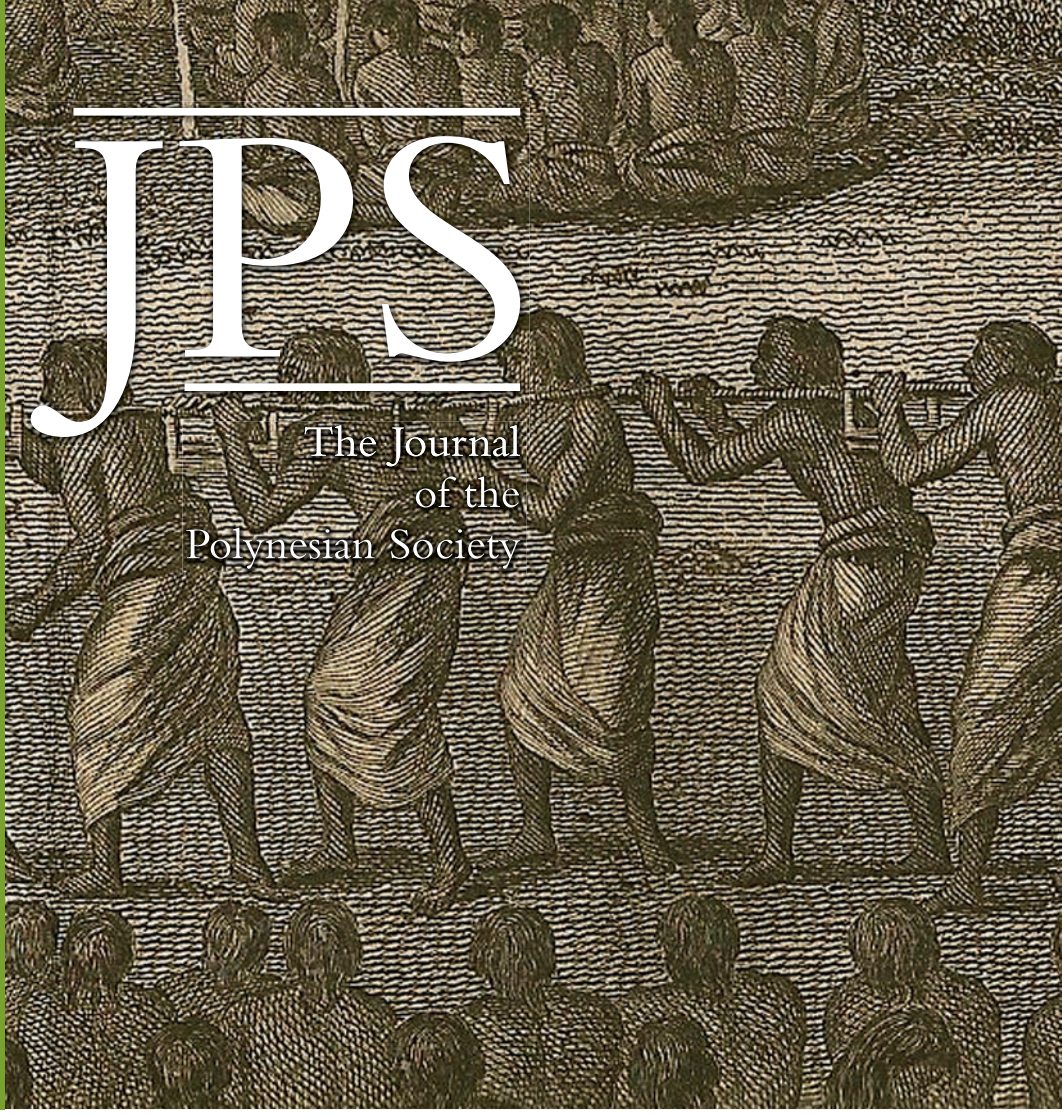

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TABUA AND *TAPUA*:
WHALE TEETH IN FIJI AND TONGA

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TABUA AND *TAPUA*: WHALE TEETH IN FIJI AND TONGA

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Cover image: Detail of men bearing wooden tokens of *kahokaho* yams slung like *tapua* for presentation at the *'inasi 'ufîmui*, Lapaha, Tongatapu, July 1777. Engraving after John Webber.

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CONTENTS

The articles published in this issue are outcomes of a research project entitled *Fijian Art: Political Power, Sacred Value, Social Transformation and Collecting since the 18th century*, based at the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the University of East Anglia, UK, and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University. The project is funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (2011-14; AHRC grant no. AH/I003622/1; www.fijianart.sru.uea.ac.uk), whose support is gratefully acknowledged by the authors. Other results of this project are an exhibition in Cambridge, *Chiefs and Governors: Art and Power in Fiji*, and its associated catalogue (Herle and Carreau 2013). Further international exhibitions and collaborations are being planned.

Notes on the Authors

Fergus Clunie, formerly Director of the Fiji Museum, is a Sydney-based research associate of the Fijian Art project, Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, UK. He is currently investigating cultural overlaps between Fiji and Western Polynesia, particularly Tonga.

Steven Hooper is Director of the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the University of East Anglia, UK. He completed his PhD in 1982 at the Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge University, after conducting over two years of fieldwork in Lau, eastern Fiji. During 2003-2006 he ran a research project on Polynesian art, culminating in the exhibition and publication *Pacific Encounters: Art and Divinity in Polynesia 1760-1860* (2006). He is currently (2011-14) principal investigator on a research project focusing on Fijian art (www.fijianart.sru.uea.ac.uk), which involves several exhibitions and publications.

Notes on Orthography

The following usual orthographic conventions for Fijian have been adopted: /b/ is pronounced /mb/ as in English a*mb*er; /c/ is pronounced /th/ as in English *th*at; /d/ is pronounced /nd/ as in English 'u*nd*er'; /g/ is pronounced /ng/ as in English 'si*ng*er'; /q/ is pronounced as the /ng/ in English a*ng*er. The prefix *i* has been attached to the noun concerned rather than separated from it, e.g., *isoro* not *i soro*. Compound words have been spelt as one word, e.g., *kalouyalo* not *kalou yalo*; compound place names have been similarly treated, e.g., Vitilevu, not Viti Levu, Vanualevu, not Vanua Levu, etc. For both Fijian and Tongan, we have not indicated vowel length. It is rarely indicated in historical sources and is sometimes controversial.

INTRODUCTION

STEVEN HOOPER and FERGUS CLUNIE
Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia

'Presentation whale teeth' (*tabua*), deriving from the sperm whale (*Physeter catodon*), are extremely important in Fiji today and their cultural importance is well-attested since the early 19th century. In Tonga, the contrast could not be greater. 'Ivory shrines' (*tapua*) have not been used since the mid-19th century, but their absence masks their former significance.

The two papers in this volume supplement the relatively limited scholarly attention given to whale ivory in the region (in the case of Tonga, practically none). The essay by Hooper aims to provide insights into the contemporary use and meanings of *tabua* in Fiji since the 1970s, before tracking accounts of their use through the 19th century and into the 20th century. Combining the ethnographic and historical material, the author develops an understanding of the enduring value of *tabua* and their association with chiefs, and originally with gods. The essay by Clunie takes a Tonga perspective, uncovering evidence for the great importance of *tapua* in the pre-Christian period, when they were explicitly embodiments of gods. He also reviews other forms of godly embodiment, notably in shell and wood, and proposes that the terms *tapua* and *tabua* have their origin in crescent-form offerings, notably plantains, in ancient Polynesian fertility rites. Each essay, while centred on Fiji and Tonga respectively, takes account of the historical relationship between the two groups and a clear picture emerges of Tonga as an original source for Fijian *tabua*—materially and cosmologically—as is the case for other aspects of eastern Fijian culture over the last few centuries.

The other main group in Western Polynesia, Samoa, is not covered in this volume, and although a focus on Samoa and other smaller Western Polynesian islands would no doubt reveal further information, whale teeth do not appear to feature strongly in Samoan history and practice, except for a period in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when necklaces made from split teeth, mostly made in Fiji, became popular (Sperlich 2006). These appear to be the only whale ivory items with a Samoan provenance that occur in museum collections, notably those in Germany, which was the colonial power in Western Samoa between 1899 and 1914. Nevertheless, the study of whale ivory—and by extension of marine-sourced materials such as shells and turtle-shell—would benefit from being placed in a wider Oceanic perspective.

To take one example, fish hooks would merit attention as treasured valuables, though they are usually little-considered. In Tonga, hooks with

a whale-bone shank, pearl-shell reflector plate and turtle shell point were prestigious exchange gifts partly analogous to *tabua* in Fiji (and to composite breastplates). Hooks of this kind were collected in the 18th century (see Kaeppler 1978a: 235-36), and in Fiji in 1875 the Tongan chief Maʻafu presented one as an act of fealty to the recently arrived Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, with these words: "You have got the land, I bring you the water, as land without water is useless. Here it is with all the fish and living creatures in it" (von Hügel 1990: 120).

Raymond Firth's work on Tikopia also supplies evidence for the great value of fish hooks on that Polynesian Outlier. He described them as "items of supreme importance in the native exchange system, as in the acquisition of a canoe, or indemnity for wrong" (1965: 380), and was told: "…the bonito-hook, it is alone, in the forefront"; it is "the property of the chiefs" (p. 338), attributes that parallel those of Fijian *tabua*.

There are clearly ancient and deep roots in Oceanic cultures that privilege certain marine, forest and avian species as embodiments of divinity, their material substances—including ivory, shells, wood, leaves, feathers, bones—being adapted for important cultural work, which has led, among other things, to the creation of great works of art.

The authors are only too aware that their essays herein will inevitably lead to more questions than answers, and to further research. This is part of the excitement of research that combines museum and archival resources with contemporary perspectives on historical and cultural processes.

‘SUPREME AMONG OUR VALUABLES’: WHALE TEETH *TABUA*, CHIEFSHIP AND POWER IN EASTERN FIJI

STEVEN HOOPER
Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia

A tabua, a ulu ni weimami iyau
The whale tooth is supreme among [the head of] our valuables

This statement was made during a wide-ranging conversation in May 1978 with Tevita Soro of Naikeleyaga village on Kabara Island in Lau, eastern Fiji. He was an elder in a non-chiefly herald clan in Naikeleyaga, and had long experience of Fijian customary procedures. I had asked him about the significance of *tabua*, sperm whale teeth, pierced at each end for the attachment of a cord (Fig. 1), which I had seen presented on numerous formal occasions in Lau during the previous year (and have seen presented on many occasions since). Tevita went on to explain, “The *tabua* is a chiefly thing. It is their valuable, the chiefs. They decide about it. The *tabua* is their valuable.” He also observed that money (*ilavo*) was a European thing, whereas *tabua* was Fijian, and if a Fijian was engaged in any serious purpose, then it would be appropriate to take there a *tabua*.

Anyone familiar with Fijian cultural practice will be aware that *tabua* have high value.[1] They are presented with speeches on great state occasions and during exchanges involving kin, such as at weddings, mortuary rituals and receptions for honoured guests (Fig. 2). They are also offered when making a special request or entreating forgiveness for some misdemeanour. Given the cultural importance of *tabua*, and the relatively limited discussion of them in the anthropological literature, this article has three main aims: (i) to provide an account of their recent use in Fiji, (ii) to assess the historical evidence for their use since the early 19th century, and (iii) to analyse why they were and are considered highly valuable and suitable for the important roles they have played in Fiji for over 200 years and possibly longer. My article complements that by Fergus Clunie in this volume, which considers the role of whale teeth in Tonga before Christian conversion in the early/mid-19th century, after which they have featured very little in Tongan cultural activities. This diminution in significance in Tonga is in contrast to Fiji where their use has increased and they now serve as *the* pre-eminent valuable (*iyau*), adding gravitas to any formal occasion.

Figure 1. A 19th-century presentation sperm whale tooth (*tabua*) with a coir cord; length 18.5 cm (tooth). Acquired by Sir Arthur Gordon 1875-80. MAA 1918.213.69. (Photo: © Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

A full review of references to *tabua* in the Fiji literature cannot be attempted here. Sahlins (1978, 1983, 2004: 34-35) and Thomas (1991: 65-82, 110-21, 189-200) provide the most comprehensive discussions to date of the cultural and historical significance of *tabua*, but most authors mention their importance without attempting analysis. For example, Thompson (1940: 125) gives an explanatory gloss to the effect that they are "important objects of ceremonial exchange" and Legge (1958: 7) described a *tabua* as an

Figure 2. Joeli Vakarau, on behalf of the host clan, Muanaicake, presenting a *tabua* with mats, barkcloth, cotton cloth and bottles of scented coconut oil to participants at a final mourning ceremony (*vakataraisulu*), Udu village, Kabara, October 1977. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

> …article of great importance in the exchange of gifts…, whose ceremonial significance endowed it with a social value far in excess of its cash price. The gift of a whale's tooth placed upon the recipient the obligation to assist the donor; any request, whether for the hand of a bride, for assistance in time of war, for the forgiveness of an offence, or for any other favour, would be accompanied by a tooth, and the force of the request would be enhanced thereby.

Legge was writing about the 1858-1880 period, but, apart from the war reference, his description holds good for the 1950s and, indeed, today. Roth (1953: 96-106) provided an overview of their use up to the mid-20th century, while Hocart, the great ethnographer of Fiji, wrote surprisingly little about them that was analytical, though he observed they were "valued as potent presents" (1929: 99) and used as offerings in "ceremonial[s] clearly religious

in origin" (1952a: 102). Fijian writers such as Nayacakalou (1975, 1978) and Ravuvu (1983, 1987) provide useful descriptive accounts and general statements, the latter explaining that they are "the highest symbol of respect, deference, loyalty, goodwill, acceptance, recognition and even submission, which an individual or a group may offer to another" (Ravuvu 1987: 22). From an earlier generation, Deve Toganivalu (1918: 9) wrote: "[W]hales' teeth were the property most highly prized, and chiefly property; everything was obtainable (or possible) by them which the chiefs set their minds on, also the desires of the people of the land were obtainable by them." Rokowaqa (1926-: 38) named *tabua* in a list of valuables that included shells and other items made of ivory. Among recent writings, Arno (2005) has discussed them in the context of an "economy of sentiment", Van der Grijp (2007) has reviewed commercial contexts of their use and Tomlinson (2012) has analysed the paradox of their involvement in Christian attempts at transcendence on Kadavu. Let me begin to add to these studies by considering first how they are used.

RECENT *TABUA* USE IN FIJI

My first experience of seeing *tabua* in action in Fiji was in February 1977, when a state reception (*veiqaravi vakavanua*) was held before a large crowd at Albert Park in Suva for Queen Elizabeth II, then head of state of independent Fiji. Among other presentations, a sequence of four *tabua* was offered to the Queen, with speeches by four men dressed in decorated barkcloth, their upper bodies glistening with scented coconut oil. After each presentation speech the Queen received the tooth and passed it to her Fijian herald, who made a speech on her behalf. After this, kava (*yaqona*) was presented and mixed in a large circular wooden bowl (*tanoa*). The Queen drank the first cup and her herald the second. This was followed by a presentation of food—a feast (*magiti*) called *iwase ni yaqona*—and finally the Queen made a speech full of appreciative sentiments about her reception and her wishes for Fiji to flourish. I later learned that this kind of state reception was a standardised procedure for honouring those of high status, especially visiting high chiefs, Fijian and non-Fijian. *Veiqaravi* is a term with very positive connotations involving hosting, serving and doing honour. It is a compound of the word *qara* (to serve, even to worship); *veiqaravi* implies being in an active and respectful relationship with the person or group being served.

Tabua *presentation*

Grand public occasions of this sort are not, however, how most Fijians experience *tabua*. They most regularly appear during inter-clan exchanges at weddings and first birthday rites for a first-born, during visits between kin

and after a death. Fijians are born into exogamous clans, and the maintenance of active and productive affinal relations between inter-marrying clans is regarded as essential to the conduct of healthy cultural life.

A death is not only a deeply personal loss for close relatives, it also affects the deceased's natal clan and other clans connected by marriage, leading to a series of exchanges which activate and give material expression to the 'pathways of kinship' (*wakolo ni veiwekani*) between affinal clans. Most parts of eastern Fiji have patrilineal inheritance, and in Lau when a man dies his natal clan usually take responsibility for arrangements as hosts or 'owners of the death' (*itaukei ni mate*). When a married woman dies, virilocal post-marital residence means that the husband's clan usually act as hosts during mortuary rituals. This was the case on the afternoon of 23 August 1978, when Luisa Paea died unexpectedly in Naikeleyaga village on Kabara Island in southern Lau. She had been born into Matasoata clan in Udu village on Kabara and had moved to Naikeleyaga in 1936 when she married Maikeli Kotobalavu, a man of Naivotavota clan, one of two clans of chiefly status in the village. Widely liked and respected, Paea was an expert in the decoration of stencilled barkcloth (*masi kesa*) and her finely cut stencils were in demand all over the island and beyond.

During the late afternoon envoys conveyed the melancholy news of her passing to the other three villages on the island. In the evening groups began to arrive to pay their respects, taking no heed of the darkness or the long and difficult paths. Close female relatives gathered in the upper part of Paea's house behind a Tongan-style barkcloth screen, having prepared her body on a special bed of fine mats and stencilled barkcloth, with a sheet of Tongan-style barkcloth (*gatu vakatoga*) to cover her. The old *vesi* wood (*Intsia bijuga*) posts of the house she had lived in all her married life rose up from the soft matting, and the dim kerosene light barely penetrated the shadows beyond the timbers of the roof, where her fishing net still hung across an ancient beam. As the women wailed behind the screen, men remained outside drinking *yaqona* with serious formality, two of them periodically entering the house to attend to the condolence presentations of visiting mourners. An atmosphere of solidarity and common purpose prevailed throughout the night, as the community seemed to close ranks against this attack upon its vitality.

In all, 28 presentations of condolence *tabua* (called *ireguregu*)[2] were made that night and the following morning on behalf of the villages and clans of Kabara, and by non-Kabaran residents such as the head of the local Methodist Church, the nurse and some visitors from nearby islands. The first delegation from outside the village arrived about 9 p.m., a group of close kin from Tokalau village some two miles distant. Once they were seated in the lower

part of the house, a murmured request to make a presentation *vakavanua* 'in the manner of the land' was assented to by one of the two men sitting facing them in front of the barkcloth screen. He was acting as 'herald' (*matanivanua*) for the other man who belonged to the host Naivotavota clan. The leader of the Tokalau delegation, Isireli Rarawa, eased forwards on his knees, cradling two *tabua* in his left hand, their cords in his right. His voice faltering with emotion, he began to speak, his body moving gently backwards and forwards, his hands lifting and lowering the *tabua* to emphasise his words:

> In the chiefly manner, sirs, to Naikeleyaga, to all the chiefly house foundations in the chiefly village of Naikeleyaga, and especially, sirs, to you our chiefs, to the Tui Kabara, of the clan of Naivotavota. The people of Tokalau were at home. The chiefly envoy arrived there, sent because of the serious tragedy which touches us all, sirs, this evening. They remained there, but they just could not be at ease. As you can witness, the land is dark and it is late at night, but they have come here to you, the chiefs of Naikeleyaga. It is not an easy task for me to express to you the purpose of this *tabua*. The chiefs of Tokalau know very well that, with respect to you the chiefs of Naivotavota, your tragedy is their tragedy, your weeping is their weeping, your distress is their distress. This is why they have travelled along the coast to come here on this dark night, it is their earnest desire to show themselves here to you…. A weighty tragedy, a chiefly tragedy, a tragedy of kinship has touched our whole island of Kabara this evening. They were not able to stay away; they wished to come to appear before you our chiefs of Naikeleyaga. This tooth which I hold, as you know, this tooth is the condolence of the gentlemen and ladies of Tokalau to you, sirs, the chiefs of Naikeleyaga, especially to the clan of Naivotavota, at the house foundation of Savena [Paea's house foundation]. They know well the tragedy which assails us. Therefore they wish to appear here, according to chiefly custom and because of the chiefly envoy that came to them…. They know that this *tabua* is suitable for them to appear with before you this evening. You behold it, it is small, poorly-sounding its presentation; it is requested that this be forgiven. The *tabua* is offered up to you our chiefs of Naikeleyaga, particularly to the house foundation Savena, that it may be correct, sirs, and accepted.

Isireli passed the two *tabua* to Jiosefate Volauca, a senior man of Naivotavota, who clapped his hands resonantly with crossed palms before receiving them. He began in a quiet voice:

> Ah, I receive, sirs, the *tabua*, the chiefly *tabua*, the *tabua* of kinship which have appeared along the chiefly pathway from Tokalau. It is received in the spirit of thanksgiving: that we may remain healthy, that our responsibilities be fulfilled, that God may be just, and firm may remain our kinship customs. Effective, be it true.

He then passed the teeth to his herald, Jone Mate of Valenikato clan, who raised the two *tabua* to his nose in a sniffing gesture and then spoke at greater length:

> Ah, I take up the chiefly *tabua*, the *tabua* released in the chiefly manner from the sacred village of Tokalau, from all the high house foundations. You have come along the coast tonight because of the weighty tragedy that presses upon the village of Naikeleyaga, likewise on them the clan Naivotavota. A chiefly delegation, in the manner of kinship, has come ashore this evening. The *tabua*, the condolence from the centre of the chiefly village of Tokalau, from all the house foundations, likewise from the ladies, from the children that live under its protection, from there have come magnificent *tabua*, offered to the village of Naikeleyaga, to the clan of Naivotavota, who are being mourned with on this night…. Their call of tragedy, call of distress, their voices have been heard and you have come here to them tonight as kin. The *tabua* are beheld and given up to heaven that the loving God may behold them, that we all may be blessed, that death may recede, that infectious sicknesses may recede, that chiefly customs be firm, and thick be the blood of kinship in all future times.

All present then called out in unison, *Mana, e dina*, 'Effective, be it true', followed by *amuduo* and four claps in unison, then *duo* and two claps in unison, followed by random clapping and words of thanks, after which the visitors withdrew.[3]

This speech sequence has been given at length, though abridged, to convey something of the emotional intensity that can accompany *tabua* presentations. Especially poignant was the speech by the leader of the delegation from Paea's natal clan, which arrived from Udu village just after midnight. They had waited for the moon to rise to guide them on their five-mile walk up the coast. The condolence speeches made by them, and by Tokalau and Lomaji village visitors later the following morning, all expressed the same general theme: distress at bereavement and their wish to come to demonstrate in the appropriate way their continuing respect for the bonds of kinship which linked them with Naivotavota clan and Naikeleyaga village. In presenting the condolence from the Bete clan of Tokalau, their spokesman stressed the blood links between the two groups:

> I weep for the blood of kinship, the chiefly blood which flows away…. We were distressed, we wept, we remembered the importance of the blood of kinship from the past, from long ago, right up to our lifetimes…. We are bound together, sirs, by the chiefly blood which links Naivotavota, the house foundation of Savena, and all the other chiefly house foundations. You behold it and it is small [the *tabua*], it is not good enough for the blood, the chiefly blood that flows away....

On these occasions *tabua* become the focus of powerful sentiments which are transferred in physically embodied form by the presenter to the recipients. There is a dynamic performative dimension, as the body of the presenter and the tooth move forwards and back to emphasise the sentiments expressed. The importance of the occasion is also enhanced by the use in speeches of honorific vocabulary, including the term *kamunaga* for *tabua*, which may be translated as 'treasure, great valuable'. This was the case in the condolence speeches for Paea. In general talk a tooth on a cord is *tabua*, but in formal speeches it is *kamunaga*. (In subsequent translations this term will be left as spoken, and not translated as *tabua*.) Thus, during presentation, a *tabua* is a publicly witnessed vehicle for the profound expression and transfer of wishes, hopes, requests, allegiance, invocations and blessings, which are sometimes explicitly stated to *vodo kina* 'get aboard' the *tabua*, *vodo* being the word used for boarding a canoe, nowadays any kind of boat.

Structure of speeches

The structure and form of the many dozens of *tabua* speeches that I have witnessed in Lau is highly consistent, as is the status, actual or putative, of the three speakers who make them. Where possible, the presenter and first recipient should be from clans of chiefly status (*turaga*), and the second recipient from a non-chiefly clan of herald status (*matanivanua*). If the presenter is a very high chief, then a herald may make the *tabua* presentation on his or her behalf, acting as the chief's mouthpiece. This practice is consistent with the more general custom of particular clans undertaking particular roles.

In the Koro Sea chiefdoms of eastern Fiji, villages are composed of several patrilineal exogamous clans with different statuses, which may be chiefs, priests, heralds, gardeners, fishermen, navigators, carpenters, etc. These statuses are manifested most regularly in a ritual division of labour. There is also a broad binary distinction between chiefs (*turaga*) and non-chiefs/landspeople (*vanua*). When ritual tasks are undertaken senior members of different clans will take on specific roles, such as the division of a communal fish catch (chiefs), the division of a feast (landspeople), the presentation of first fruits, feasts and *yaqona* (landspeople), and the presentation and division of valuables, including *tabua* (chiefs). With respect to *tabua*, the greatest valuable, it is members of chiefly clans who should present and receive them with speeches.[4]

Chiefly clans in villages may or may not be connected by common ancestry to the eminent chiefly clans (originally of foreign origin) of major chiefdoms in Fiji such as Bau, Rewa, Cakaudrove and Lau, but their members have

responsibilities and play roles expected of chiefs throughout Fiji. When no-one from a chiefly or herald clan is available for a *tabua* presentation, then participants will assume the roles of chief and herald in order for it to be done properly. If a ritual procedure is deemed necessary, arrangements can be flexible and anyone available can take an appropriate role. A sports team on tour may designate the manager or captain to take the role of chief for ritual purposes, whether they belong to a chiefly clan or not in their own chiefdom or village. Ritual speechmakers also will be chosen because of their oratory skills, knowledge of titles and familiarity with honorific vocabulary, such as *kamunaga*.[5] Titles and not personal names are used in formal speeches because the people involved do not act as individuals but as instantiations and embodiments of their clan, village or chiefdom, and indeed, as shall be argued later, of their ancestral god.

The speech structure of *tabua* presentation is largely the same throughout Fiji and has become standardised as a fundamental procedure in national culture. The form of *tabua* speeches can be set out as follows:

I. Presenter (*turaga*, of chiefly status)—at length
- i To whom presented, using honorific titles
- ii From whom presented, using honorific titles
- iii Nature and occasion of presentation
- iv Presentation is inadequate and small; forgiveness requested
- v Offered up to senior title of recipients (by implication to their ancestors/gods)

II. Recipient (*turaga,* of chiefly status)—brief
- i From whom presented, using honorific titles
- ii To whom presented, using honorific titles
- iii Nature and occasion of presentation (optional)
- iv Received with thanks and approval
- v Gives blessings, invokes Christian God and calls for beneficial things to occur

III. Recipient's herald (*matanivanua*, of non-chiefly status)—at length
- i From whom presented, using honorific titles
- ii To whom presented, using honorific titles
- iii Nature and occasion of presentation
- iv Presentation is large, magnificent and received with thanks
- v Gives blessings, invokes Christian God and calls for beneficial things to occur

Status tabua *presentations*

This model sequence was illustrated during a major *veiqaravi vakavanua* 'state reception' offered to the paramount chief of Lau at the meeting of the Lau Provincial Council at Naikeleyaga village, Kabara, on 5 May 1980. The paramount chief, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, bearer of the titles Tui Nayau, Sau ni Vanua and Tui Lau, was chairman of the Lau Provincial Council and at that time Prime Minister of Fiji. Tui Nayau was his senior title, the one used by Lauans, so will henceforth be used here.

Before the business of the meeting began a series of offerings was made, lasting over an hour, involving the presentation by Kabarans of a coconut-leaf mat (*tabakau*), some coconuts on a stalk (*ivono*), a sequence of *tabua* presentations (see below), a *yaqona* root (*isevusevu*), some *yaqona* specially made and served to Tui Nayau (*yaqona vakaturaga*), and finally a feast (*iwase ni yaqona*) of cooked pork and root vegetables. Tui Nayau responded with speeches when he received each *tabua* and at the end of the presentations he made a longer speech called *vakatatabu* 'sacred pronouncement'. In his *vakatatabu* he expressed positive sentiments about the Kabaran hosts, gave benedictions, invoked God's blessing, called for prosperity and appealed for wise discussions during the meeting. The ritual sequence was closed with a short appreciative speech by a Kabaran, called *ulivi ni vakatatabu*.[6]

The four *tabua* presentations made during the state reception were called *cavu ikelekele* 'pulling up the anchor' (in fact done the previous night on board ship), *qalovi* 'swimming' (out to invite the guest to land), *luva ni tawake* 'lowering of the pennant' and *vakamamaca* 'drying'. These were the same four *tabua* presentations (though not the same whale teeth) that had been made to the Queen three years previously in Suva.

These *tabua* presentations, and others described below, are classified by me as "status", as distinct from "kinship", because the speeches made reference not to blood and kinship, but to the reciprocal status relations between Kabara and the paramount chief, the political and diplomatic character of which was affirmed by pledges of allegiance. In this context any existing kinship relations were a secondary consideration. What was desired from the paramount chief was the conferring of blessings on the polity.[7]

Although each of Kabara's four villages has chiefly clans in the context of village ritual activities, the villages of Naikeleyaga and Tokalau each have two clans who are considered to be descended from famous immigrant chiefs who arrived in antiquity, settled in various parts of Fiji, married women of the autochthonous population and produced descendants who today comprise the great chiefly houses of Fiji. The clan of the paramount chief of Lau and the four chiefly clans on Kabara all trace descent from these original immigrant chiefs. During the 1980 state reception, senior men of the four Kabara chiefly clans each presented a *tabua*.

To illustrate the kind of sentiments expressed, I give an abridged version of the *iqalovi* 'swimming' *tabua.* This appears to be, and to have been in the past, the main presentation epitomising allegiance. It was made by Kevueli Bulu of Naivotavota clan, the effective chief of Kabara and its elected representative on the Lau Provincial Council. Bulu was eligible by birth in a chiefly clan to be installed in the senior title Tui Kabara, but because of rival claims in other chiefly clans and a lack of agreement, the leaders of the Kabara landspeople (*vanua*) had not installed a Tui Kabara for several generations.[8]

After the initial presentations of the mat and the coconuts, a call of "*A, oi, oi*" went up from the Kabarans, which was echoed by Tui Nayau's two heralds. Then Bulu stood up, strode forward and knelt in front of Tui Nayau, a large dark-coloured *tabua* in his left hand, its coir cord in his right. His voice firm, Bulu began, "In the chiefly manner, sirs, to my Big House", to which Tui Nayau's two heralds responded by calling out, "*A, oi, oi, a tabua levu ea* ['a big tabua'], *wooo*", the last word delivered in a crescendo. The call "*A, oi, oi*" was explained as a form of *tama* or acclamation, an honorific call made when approaching a chief, used when a *tabua* appears for presentation on a celebratory occasion. Chiefs and *tabua* are thereby accorded the same respect. Bulu continued with a forceful speech which followed the structure outlined in I above. Although respectful, he spoke in a manner that could be described as *yalo qaqa* 'bold-spirited' because Kabara holds the honoured status of *bati* 'warriors, border' to the Tui Nayau.

> You followed, sir, the pathway here with the noble chiefs of Lau. You are now secure, sir, on your crag of rock [*ucu ni vatu*—honorific self-deprecating term], and we now present the *iqalovi*, sir, to you this morning. The *kamunaga* is here as the *iqalovi* for you…. We usually say, sir, that Kabara is poor, but we are now wealthy, sir, on account of your decision [to hold the Provincial Council on Kabara].... You behold, sir, the *kamunaga*. If it be small, let it be forgiven. If the speech concerning it sounds badly, let that be forgiven. Too long, sir, is the speech of the *kamunaga*, offered up today, that it may be correct, sir, and accepted.

When he had finished, Bulu stood up and placed the *tabua* in the hands of Tui Nayau, who replied (Fig. 3):

> I take hold of the *kamunaga*, the chiefly *kamunaga*, the *kamunaga* according to the customs of the land. A *kamunaga* here, offered up by you our people of Kabara, from the Tui Kabara and from you the barkcloths [title holders] of the land who attend at our reception today. It is offered up to the Chairman of the Council, to the gentlemen, the chiefly representatives [elected members] of the Province who have arrived here today, the representatives from the Government [*Matanitu*], the Land [*Vanua*] and the Church [*Lotu*]. *Kamunaga*

> of life, *kamunaga* of permanence; may our gathering be blessed, be well made its decisions, and may our Land of Kabara be prosperous forever. Effective, be it true.

Tui Nayau then passed the *tabua* to his herald, Peni Vakaruarua, holder of the title Mata ki Cicia, who amplified Tui Nayau's sentiments.

When discussing the event afterwards with Kabarans, it was felt that the whole *veiqaravi*, which had been a source of anxiety mixed with confidence beforehand, had gone off well. The speeches had been good, the honoured

Figure 3. Tui Nayau, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, receiving the *iqalovi tabua* at the state reception, Naikeleyaga village, Kabara Island, Lau, 5 May 1980. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

guests (*vulagi dokai*) had been well fed and entertained. More crucially, Tui Nayau had expressed himself well-pleased with Kabara's *gu* 'energy, commitment' in hosting the whole meeting, feeding the guests and paying them great respect. Kabara had enhanced its reputation, and the blessings and approbation of the paramount chief, elicited by the presentation of *tabua* and other marks of respect, had been received with satisfaction. A chief's words are *mana* 'effective', *mana* being an efficacy of divine origin linked to causation, so pronouncements made by a paramount chief, be they blessings or curses, will come to pass.

Status *tabua* presentations can also be on a national scale. For example, at a meeting at Somosomo in July 1986 of the Great Council of Chiefs (an administrative organisation of colonial origin, dismantled by the current regime), all 14 Fijian provinces made a major public presentation and pledge of allegiance to the Governor-General, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, Vunivalu of Bau. One *tabua* was held by the main speaker and a *vulo* (a bunch of ten *tabua*) was held by each of the 14 bearers kneeling behind him (Fig. 4). The *tabua* had been supplied by the provincial offices, and after presentation to

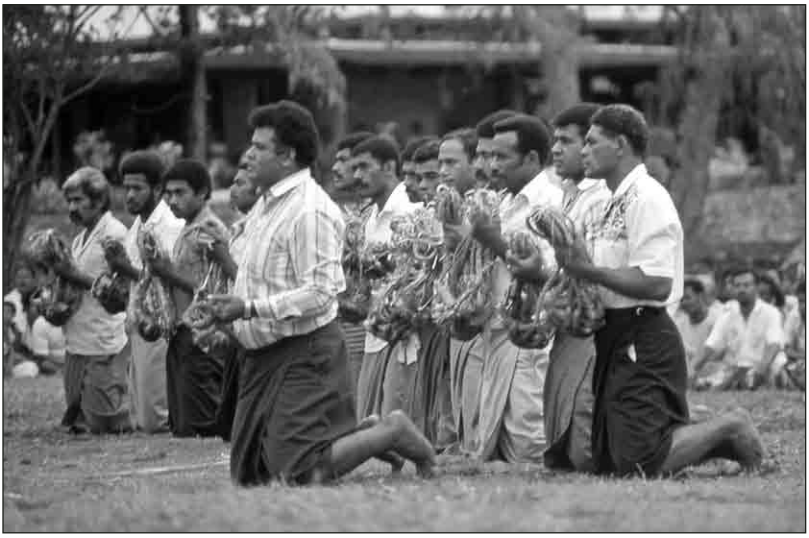

Figure 4. One *tabua*, plus 14 *vulo* (bunches of ten) being presented to the Governor-General, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, Vunivalu of Bau, at the Great Council of Chiefs meeting, Somosomo, Cakaudrove, June 1986. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

the Governor-General most were redistributed among the provinces. When ministers or other government administrators make visits beyond the capital they are likely to be respectfully received *vakavanua* 'in the manner of the land, in Fijian style' by local communities with a welcoming *tabua*.

Status relations between chiefs and people may also be predicated on ancient kinship relations, especially because in pre-Christian times polygamous paramount chiefs had many wives drawn from within and beyond their realm, establishing important affinal connections with their own sub-chiefdoms and external chiefdoms. These links through women, often expressed as 'pathways' (*wakolo*/*sala*), permitted brothers-in-law to call upon each other for mutual assistance, while the operation of *vasu* rights meant that the children of a marriage, especially a chiefly one, could have access to their mother's brother's resources. The missionary David Cargill observed in 1835 that the Tui Nayau, Roko Taliai, had many wives, 34 of whom were listed by Richard Lyth (1850-51: 61). Cargill opined that, "I fear the principal obstacle in the way of his conversion is his reluctance to part with them" (1977: 70), perhaps appreciating how those wives locked Tui Nayau into important affinal relations of a very extensive kind.

Another status-type *tabua* presentation is *isoro* 'entreaty', where a *tabua* is given by someone who has committed a misdemeanour in relation to the health of the chiefdom and who wishes to entreat forgiveness. This *tabua* can be known as *matanigasau* 'point of the arrow' or *matanimoto* 'point of the spear', names which indicate former methods of entreaty. A recent example of a (failed) *matanigasau* was an attempt in 2001 by representatives of the Great Council of Chiefs to present one to Ratu Mara, Tui Nayau and President of Fiji, who had been forced from Government House during the previous year's political crisis. When he became aware of their intentions he said he could not accept the *tabua* and the issue remained unresolved. In the past, *isoro* was an act of obeisance after defeat, when a basket of earth and a woman could also be offered to the victor with a request for life, since power over life, and prosperous life, was attributed to the victorious chief and manifested in the words of forgiveness which it was hoped would thereby be elicited.

Status *tabua* may also be presented by chiefs to their people to acknowledge special services. These *tabua* may be called *ivakatale* 'return' or *iqaravi* 'facing' (implying a reciprocal gift), and specific kinds of *iqaravi* are *iluva ni moto* 'removing (a fish) from the spear', *icula mata ni ika* 'needle from the eye of the fish' and *iseresere ni dali* 'untying the rope' (from a turtle). For example, in Lau I was told that turtles and certain large fish, such as *saqa* 'giant trevally' (*Caranx ignobilis*) and *donu* 'coral trout' (*Plectropomus leopardus*), should not be eaten privately but be taken to the chief, who should reciprocate with a *tabua* and other valuables, such as a mat or sheet of

Figure 5. Ilaitia Ledua of Udu village, Kabara, presenting a *tabua* as a thanksgiving (*vakavinavinaka*) on behalf of the Kabara delegation at the Methodist Church conference at Tubou, Lakeba, July 1980. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

barkcloth. *Tabua* are also given by chiefs on other occasions in recognition of services, including *iluva ni vesa* 'removing of dance ornaments' after a major dance performance, *ivodoki ni waqa* 'boarding of the canoe' when a canoe is completed and *iqusi ni loaloa* 'wiping off black paint' to those returning from a *solevu* 'ceremonial exchange' (instead of as in the past to a successful

returning war party). I witnessed a *iqusi ni loaloa* in May 1980 when the Kabara delegation returned from a major ceremonial exchange at Rewa.

House-building, like canoe-building, is also an occasion for *tabua* presentation. On 7 July 1977 the newly built Methodist church in Tokalau village, Kabara, was formally handed over to the village by the master builder, a man from Vitilevu. Separate from his cash salary, the builder received a *tabua* as *idola ni vale* 'opening of the house', plus many other valuables and a feast from the chiefs and people of Tokalau in recognition of his great labour, which had taken over two years.

Methodist Church meetings are also occasions for *tabua* presentation because these gatherings involve visits by guest delegates. Appropriate respectful behaviour is expected between hosts and guests and towards senior church members, who are treated as chiefs whether they have that status by birth or not. In July 1980 representatives of the Kabara Methodist Church travelled to Tubou, Lakeba, for the annual regional meeting and choir-singing competition. Kabarans made a variety of *tabua* presentations during the trip, including to church officials as *vakavinavinaka* 'thanksgiving' for hosting the meeting (Fig. 5). *Tabua* were also given to relatives as *rai ibulubulu* 'seeing the grave', in honour of clan members who had passed away recently and for whom it had not yet been possible to present condolence *tabua* (*ireguregu*).

Other *tabua* presentations by chiefs, or representatives of polities, be they chiefdoms or villages, include *butabuta*, an initiating gift to specialist carpenters to begin work on a canoe or a house, and *ikerei* 'requesting' of some other enterprise or service, which in the past including *ikerei ni ivalu* 'requesting of assistance in war'. Inter-chiefdom *tabua* transactions can also be occasioned by dynastic marriages and alliances through women. This is an area where "status" *tabua* presentations overlap with "kinship" ones.

Kinship tabua *presentations*

Nowadays kinship (*veiwekani*) and rites of passage provide the most frequent occasions when *tabua* are brought out from their secure storage in the private upper part of a house. Relations with affines are regarded as particularly important and 'heavy' (*bibi*), sentiments expressed repeatedly during formal speeches and in everyday talk. Young people are regularly reminded that *wakolo vakaveiwekani* 'pathways of kinship' are foundational to social and cultural life and are neglected at the clan's peril. Geographical and climatic conditions in island groups such as Fiji, especially in remote islands, can still make populations periodically vulnerable to drought and food shortages, so even though Fiji has a cash economy, there remains a strong ethos that survival, physical and cultural, is primarily dependent on the maintenance of active and productive kin relations.

As seen earlier with the condolence speeches after a death, kinship *tabua* presentations can be intensely emotional. The same applies to those connected to marriage, when the emotions are of a different order. A marriage involves two key *tabua* presentations, though additional *tabua* may be used as 'decoration' (*iukuuku*) for other exchanges that take place if families with ample resources are involved. However, essential to Fijian marriage rites in present-day Lau are the *ilakovi* or *ilave ni tikina* 'proposal' for the hand of the woman, presented by the man's side, and the *itatauvaki* 'farewelling' of the bride presented by the woman's side. Isireli Rarawa, of Tokalau village, Kabara, discussing the marriage of his son in 1978, explained the importance of both *tabua*.

> This thing, the 'proposal' *tabua*, is a very important valuable for the father of the man. The proper procedure for us is that the most important valuable, the best, be taken as the proposal for the woman. This is the reason. The woman is a person and she lives with her father and mother, and this means that the best things should be taken, so that she may come here and be married to my son. The father and mother of the woman will see this and they will know that I am sincere about them giving away their child.… The 'farewelling' of the woman, this is the most important thing. The life of the woman is thereby farewelled/entrusted to the man's people. The meaning of it is for them to look after her, love her, attend to her and give her the things she needs. The woman is leaving her father; the life/welfare of the woman becomes the responsibility of the man's relatives.

Shortly after this discussion a wedding took place in Tokalau. The bride came from Udu village and two sides (*taba*) were formed, that of the bride and the groom, by members of Udu and Tokalau villages respectively. A series of exchanges took place throughout the day, during which the bride and groom were repeatedly robed and disrobed in new barkcloth and escorted back and forth between the houses used as their respective headquarters. The women of each side used them literally as vehicles to facilitate inter-clan exchanges. The climax was when the bride was brought for the last time to the groom's house and the farewelling *tabua* was presented. Her father, her mother and all her village relatives would make their way back down the coast to Udu, but she would remain. The groom's side were waiting in their house when a whisper came from one of the ladies who had a clear view out of the lower door. "They're coming." Backs were straightened, cigarettes put out and the bride's party entered, led by their herald, the chief of Udu and the bride's father. The bride, Tagi, in finely stencilled barkcloth and glistening with scented coconut oil, was led up to be seated next to the groom on a dais of decorated mats and barkcloth provided by ladies of both sides. When all

were settled, crowding the house, the chief of Udu, Ilaitia Ledua, then eased forward onto his knees and held out a fine large *tabua*, cradling it in his left hand and lifting it occasionally as if assessing its weight. He spoke firmly but with emotion, moistening the eyes of many present. After the preliminary references to titles, he continued:

> Firstly, sirs, I hold before you a *kamunaga*. The *kamunaga* here, sirs, you know, firmly established in present times, is not a new *kamunaga*, it is an ancient *kamunaga*. It has been presented many times since the time of our forefathers who have passed away, and it is their path that we follow here. It is held here before you again this evening. We are not dispirited. We rejoice, for we know that we are bringing here an end of a cord that our chiefs who have fallen [died] have kept tied together between Valelevu and Vanuamasi [names of house foundations of the two sides]. Secondly, Tagi is here presented to you.... Thirdly, her life is here. I know that when a child is brought up in a household, no-one can tell where she will eventually be settled. This evening, sirs, we rejoice, we give thanks, for we know that Tagi will be protected and cared for and that our ancient kinship bonds will remain tied…. Here is the proper valuable, in the proper manner. Weighty, sirs, is the speech of the valuable which is offered by the elders of her clan. I speak on behalf of Udu village in the belief and confidence that everything will be carried out, as we know it will. I know that my words will be heeded and, as the presentation is carried out, so it is witnessed. Too lengthy, sirs, is the speech of the *kamunaga*, offered up in the chiefly manner to Valelevu, that it may be correct and accepted….

The senior man on the groom's side, Isireli Buli, received the tooth with:

> I take into my hands the *kamunaga*, a *kamunaga* acceptable to us, a magnificent *kamunaga*, a *kamunaga* which has reopened the door to Valelevu. May thick be the blood of kinship. May Christianity prosper and may all those who come to Valelevu be cared for in all future times. Effective, be it true.

All present called out the last words (*mana, e dina*) in unison, and Isireli Buli passed the *tabua* to his herald, Isireli Rarawa, who clapped softly before he took it, brought it up to his nose in a sniffing gesture, and spoke:

> I take up the *kamunaga*, the *kamunaga* released in the chiefly manner from you the chiefs of Udu, from the chief Tui Udu, from the chief's assistants of the clan of Muanaicake [bride's clan], from the sacred house foundations, the great house foundation, from her parents, from her brothers, from her grandmothers, indeed from everyone at the chiefly village of Udu. A *kamunaga* is brought up to Tokalau, to the chiefs of Tokalau, brought up to the house foundation Valelevu, the house foundation occupied by the chiefs linked by the blood of kinship with Udu…. This tooth is a weighty tooth. The reason, sirs, is that a child from within a chiefly village is being farewelled thereby. We know well, sirs, that

> our chiefs are tied with those who come from Udu and have come to Valelevu. We also know the new path that follows the old path. Women have gone to you, they have been counted as belonging to Udu. The children of Valelevu, sirs, are bound together with the blood from Udu. It is as if the pathway had become overgrown, but now it is being re-established…. *Kamunaga* of life, that we may live. *Kamunaga* of firmness, that firmly established may be your chiefly blood of kinship at Udu, and at Tokalau, at the house foundation Valelevu. *Kamunaga* also of honour, that honourable may be our chiefly kinship relations, that we may go to one another in accordance with the customs of our forefathers. I pray to heaven that blessings may descend on us, that our lives be firm, that God on high be just and that the children of Udu be successful gardeners in all future times. Effective, be it true.

The last words, *Mana*, *e dina*, were repeated by all present. The sentiments expressed in these speeches need little amplification. The value of the bonds of kinship between clans and villages, forged by women who marry out and bear children, is expressed through a vivid imagery of connecting pathways, binding ties and uniting bloods. More powerful still, complementing the verbal imagery, is the *tabua* itself, silent bearer of all these potent sentiments, passing from hand to hand, and clan to clan.

I have seen numerous similar *tabua* presentations at weddings, funerals, first birthdays of firstborn and affinal visits, such as one between Udu village and Moce Island in 1978. The Udu people needed planting material, which could be obtained from affinal relatives on the fertile island of Moce, some 35 miles distant by canoe. The Udu delegation took several *tabua* and wooden kava bowls, which on arrival were presented as *rai ibulubulu* 'seeing the grave' in respect of relatives on Moce who had passed away since the last visit. After a few days the Moce relatives responded with baskets of planting material for the Udu visitors. Although everyone knew a need for crops had triggered the expedition, it was always referred to as a visit to *rai ibulubulu*.

Elopement (*veitubaitaki*) is another occasion that demands the deployment of *tabua* if honour is to be satisfied. Elopement is regarded as a very serious matter by the family of the girl, and there is only one appropriate method by which the family of the boy can resolve the crisis and make reparation—presentation of *tabua* as 'the burying' (*ibulubulu*), which is in effect a type of *isoro*. *Tabua* can be great coolers of anger and on these occasions are best brought into action without delay. In Kabara an elopement took place in Udu village. After late night confusion (retrospectively hilarious) during which the couple ran away to the boy's house, the boy's parents assessed the situation, established that the teenagers intended to get married, and decided to approach the girl's parents, who were near neighbours and affinal kin. A few days later the boy's father told me the story:

> So I said to my wife, "Mere, please bring the *tabua* that are in that box, so we can go to Jone [girl's father] to do the 'burying' and carry out the customary procedure." Mere took two *tabua*—we only had two *tabua* in our house. I said, "With these *tabua* I shall go and do the 'burying' and also present the 'proposal' in the customary manner." So we went together. Yes, it was late at night, but we didn't wait till next day. With this sort of problem you want to take the swiftest route possible to sort it out, because, if you delay, her father or brothers or someone else will hear, and it will cause—if no customary procedure is done to set things right—it will cause some trouble. Because, according to Fijian standards in the old days, this was an insulting act. According to Fijian standards, elopement is considered disrespectful. Yes. After this, we went straight away and we entered the girl's house together.… Jone looked at us and realised that Una was at our house and that we were going to him for a particular reason. I said straight away to Jone, "Jone, our formal visit faces you" [standard words preliminary to a presentation]. When Jone heard 'our formal visit' he knew straight away that Una was with us. Up spoke Jone, "Will you wait please, let us talk first…." However, even after this talk, my mind was not at ease, because I wanted the customary procedure to be done, and the reason is that she is a special child to her parents, and in the morning it would be heard about if we only discussed that the young people be married, and no customary procedure was done. There are some in the village, and some in the chiefdom, who will be inclined to criticise us, and so I want to abide by the customary procedures of the old days that are usually done in these circumstances. If it happens that a couple get up and run away together, then the customary procedure should be done. So I then presented our *tabua* to Jone, reckoning them as 'burying' and 'proposal'. If I had had ten *tabua* I would have taken all ten, because I know that people are greater than *tabua*, people are important. But we had only two *tabua*, so we presented them together as our 'burying' and our 'proposal' After that Jone took hold of them and received them. Having completed that properly, Jone then brought out another *tabua* and presented it to us as our reciprocal gift (*iqaravi*) on account of our formal visit. But, as far as I can judge, it wasn't correct for Jone to present another *tabua*. There are types of customary procedure that when completed should be reciprocated, and there are customary presentations that when completed are finished—a discussion concludes the matter. To me, for the customary procedure that we went to perform, it was not correct for it to have been reciprocated. Anyway, we were reciprocated and we respected that, we received the *tabua*, and when that was finished we had a discussion about the marriage arrangements.

This account has been given at length because of the insights provided into the significance of *tabua* for a family of non-chiefly status living in a remote village. *Tabua* are regarded as essential to the effective functioning of cultural life; they have a potency that is capable of bringing about desired effects.

To move from the microcosm to the macrocosm, the final examples to be provided of contemporary *tabua* use in a kinship context relate to large ceremonial exchanges (*solevu*) connected to the paramount chief of Lau. The first relates to his children's relationship to their mother's people, the second concerns his own mortuary ritual.

In May 1980, shortly after the Provincial Council meeting on Kabara, several hundred Lauans travelled to Rewa, where they were joined by hundreds more who were resident on Vitilevu. They and their clans and villages had all produced valuables and food to take to Rewa to participate in a large-scale ceremonial exchange called 'the taking of children' (*kau mata ni gone*). This is a ritual carried out at clan or chiefdom level when the children of a marriage, who are normally resident at the father's place, are taken formally to their mother's natal clan, or chiefdom, and presented together with valuables to their mother's brothers, with whom they have the special *vasu* relationship. Until this ritual is done it is not considered appropriate for children of a marriage to exercise their *vasu* privilege, which allows them to take property and in other ways take advantage of their maternal kin, especially the mother's brothers. At the 1980 event the eight children (in their teens and twenties) of Ratu Mara, paramount chief of Lau, and Ro Lala, paramount chief of Rewa, were being taken to Rewa to be presented formally to their mother's people. Given the high status of the parents, and the extensive reach of the chiefdoms which they led, the resources they could count on were substantial. The whole of Lau participated with enthusiasm because despite the work involved in making valuables such as canoes, kava bowls, mats, barkcloth, coir cord and scented coconut oil—all things classified as *iyau*—a *solevu* is an exciting time when people travel to meet up with relatives, catch up on news, stay up all night dancing and drinking *yaqona*, and generally have a memorable time that contrasts strongly with the usual rhythm of village life. In my experience of this event, it had the character of an exciting three-day festival during which the resources of both chiefdoms were mobilised in a highly public way, and for which large quantities of food and useful objects were created and exchanged. Vitilevu-based Lauans, with limited access to village resources, contributed cash to buy modern valuables such as kerosene, washing soap and bolts of cotton cloth, and to pay for transport.

Space does not allow a comprehensive treatment of this event, but the role of *tabua* will be briefly highlighted. At the core was a simple ritual, the participants forming two sides as they do at a wedding. The father's side present the children to their mother's side with *tabua* and other valuables (*iyau*). The mother's side act as hosts and reciprocate the valuables with a feast (*magiti*). After the exchange the children return to their natal home,

their links with their mother's clan having been publicly acknowledged and celebrated. However, when both father and mother are paramount chiefs, 'the taking of the children' is an occasion that prompts chiefdom-wide participation in a *solevu*, and what Kevueli Bulu of Kabara described to me as a 'battle of abundance' (*ivalu sautu*). On such occasions members of neither chiefdom wish to be defeated (*druka*)—reputations are at stake. Accordingly, everything is done on a grand scale, and at Rewa in 1980 as the eight children were led across the ceremonial ground on a barkcloth pathway, each holding a fine *tabua*, they were followed by 19 men each holding a *vulo*, 'a bunch of ten *tabua*' (Fig. 6). After this vanguard came bearers of vast quantities of decorated mats, several enormous 80-metre-long barkcloths, thousands of metres of cotton cloth, hundreds of bottles of scented coconut oil, dozens of drums of kerosene, over 170 wooden kava bowls, several wooden gongs and three fully-equipped sailing canoes with their sails up (Fig. 6). Everything was presented with a speech to the waiting Rewans by Tevita Loga, a senior title holder of Lau, holding a large deep honey-coloured *tabua* of obvious great age. The *tabua* was received with a speech by the Vunivalu of Rewa,

Figure 6. The eight Lauan 'children', elaborately dressed and holding *tabua*, are escorted across the ceremonial ground (*rara*) on a long barkcloth pathway on the occasion of the 'taking of the children' (*kau mata ni gone*) to Rewa. Numerous valuables, including barkcloths, wooden bowls and three canoes with their sails up are ready to be carried behind them. Nailililli, Rewa, May 1980. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

who then passed it to his herald for the usual longer speech.[9] In the afternoon the Rewans reciprocated not only with the expected feast, consisting of vast quantities of root crops and pigs, turtles and cows, but also with large quantities of valuables, including 30 *tabua*, mats, barkcloth, cotton cloth and three launches, one with an outboard engine, to match the three Lauan canoes. Each side subsequently divided its spoils among all those sub-chiefdoms who had contributed, and the *tabua* were likewise mostly redistributed and dispersed among those who had attended, with the chiefly families keeping the finest examples. *Tabua* in these quantities are rarely seen, though as will be apparent shortly, such numbers were also amassed in the 19th century.

Large numbers of *tabua* were again seen in May 2005 at Tubou, Lakeba, when the final mortuary ritual (*vakataraisulu*) was carried out for Ratu Mara, paramount chief of Lau, who had passed away the previous year. *Vakataraisulu* means the 'allowing of (normal) clothes (after mourning)' and is an exchange that can be held for anyone whose surviving relatives wish to undertake it and thereby honour their deceased relative. This can be at the village level, involving limited numbers of people and modest

Figure 7. The eight Lauan 'children' stand before their mother's relatives as *tabua* are presented on the occasion of the 'taking of the children' (*kau mata ni gone*). Lauan valuables, including barkcloth, drums of kerosene and wooden bowls are piled behind them. Nailililli, Rewa, May 1980. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

quantities of valuables, or, when done at the chiefdom level, it can involve the whole chiefdom and other chiefdoms who wish to express kinship (as well as political) solidarity. Ratu Mara, born in 1920, was the most eminent Fijian of the second half of the 20th century. Paramount chief of Lau since his installation in 1969, he had also been a member of the colonial Legislative Council, and then Prime Minister and President of independent Fiji. At his final mortuary ritual, besides a delegation from Tonga headed by Princess Pilolevu, 38 delegations from all over Fiji came to present *tabua* and large quantities of valuables, similar to those presented at Rewa in 1980. The valuables were brought onto the ceremonial ground and piled up before a large cylindrical memorial image (*lawanimate*) made of many thousands of metres of coir cord wound round a wood post made by the people of Cicia Island. The image was dressed in barkcloth in chiefly fashion, with a turban of smoked barkcloth (*masi kuvui*), and was the focal point of the presentations; dozens of *tabua* eventually accumulated around its base (Fig. 8).

Figure 8. Lead mourners, each with a *tabua*, stand before the memorial image (*lawanimate*) of Tui Nayau, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, as their relatives pile up large barkcloths and other valuables at the *vakataraisulu* (allowing normal clothes) final mourning ceremony for the deceased chief, May 2005. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

Figure 9. The heap of *tabua*, prior to the presentation and distribution of all valuables to participants at the *vakataraisulu* (allowing normal clothes) final mourning ritual for Tui Nayau, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, May 2005. (Photo: © Steven Hooper.)

Once all the presentations had been made to the image and to the host clan (of the deceased chief), everything was put away for redistribution the following day, when all the valuables, including the *tabua*, were assembled on the ceremonial ground and presented by the hosts to the guests (Fig. 9). They were then sorted into numerous piles allocated to the contributing delegations, care being taken to avoid the same items being returned to those who brought them and to distribute island valuables to urban participants, and *vice versa*.

Tabua*: quality, quantity and change*

The foregoing has demonstrated that *tabua* are used in Fiji on a wide range of occasions for a variety of purposes, but it should be emphasised that the names of the *tabua* refer to the occasion or the ritual procedure, rather than to the *tabua* itself. Another type of valuable can be presented on these occasions if a *tabua* is not available. Obviously, all *tabua* are not the same. They differ in size, shape and colour, depending on the age and sex of the sperm whale from which they came, the position of the tooth in the jaw and the degree to

which they have been worked, smoked, oiled and polished. It is generally stated that if a *tabua* is needed, then one will suffice, but on some occasions more than one, and even hundreds, are presented at the same time. In theory, size, colour and quality do not matter; in an emergency any *tabua* will do, as was the case with the elopement at Udu. But assessments of the resources of donors are also made on the basis of the quality and quantity of *tabua* offered. Individual or group prestige is at stake when *tabua* are transacted, and people will endeavour to avoid accusations of being *dravudravua* 'poverty-stricken' or *vakaloloma* 'pitiable' by not only producing a *tabua* when required, but also by producing more than one, or a high-quality one, when circumstances permit. At the state reception for Tui Nayau at Kabara only one tooth was appropriate for each named presentation, but it needed to be a large and handsome one. Additional teeth were available, but were not considered necessary. However, when competitive exchanges take place, large numbers may be temporarily accumulated for distribution to demonstrate access to resources. Large quantities of other types of valuables and food are similarly deployed. As the "supreme" valuable, the strategic deployment of *tabua* not only brings prestige, it is also intended to elicit chiefly blessings and approbation.

Quality is also a factor in *tabua* assessment. For a natural whale's tooth to become a *tabua* appropriate for a prestigious occasion, it needs to have been scraped, polished, oiled and then smoked over a fire of sugar cane (*dovu*) and *Cordyline* roots (*masawe*, Lauan *qai*).[10] This gives the tooth a rich, dark reddish patina which can be maintained by oiling and protection from light. Teeth of this kind, especially if large (over 20 cm in length), are very highly regarded. To complete the transformation of a tooth into a *tabua* a cord, usually made from square-plaited coconut husk fibre (*magimagi*), is attached through a small hole at each end. Some examples have cords of square-plaited pandanus leaf. Many teeth in circulation now are relatively small, their shape little modified and their colour pale; some have an old piece of rope for a cord. These are not regarded as suitable for prestigious occasions because keen judgements of quality are still made about *tabua*, both in the selection for specific occasions and by observers at presentations.

During the 20th century there was an increase in the range of occasions when *tabua* could be presented. In my 1978 conversation with Tevita Soro, I observed that although I had frequently seen *tabua* presented with other things classified as valuables, such as mats (*yaba*), barkcloth (*masi*, *gatu*), scented coconut oil (*waliwali*) and cotton cloth (*isulu*), I had also seen them presented, including by Tevita himself as a non-chiefly herald, with a feast (*magiti*) of pig and root vegetables. I said that he and others had taught me that valuables and feasts (*iyau* and *magiti*) were distinct categories with

distinct ritual procedures appropriate to them, presided over by chiefs and non-chiefs respectively. So why was a *tabua*, which he had described as a chiefly valuable, presented together with a feast by a non-chief? Tevita replied that the valuables/chief and feast/non-chief division of ritual labour was true, and that when he was young (he was born around 1900) a feast would have been presented with only a coconut leaf, being a thing of the land, by a member of the *vanua* (the land, i.e., not a chief). He added that nowadays people use *tabua* as a decoration/ornament (*iukuuku*) when presenting a feast and on other occasions.

It appears that increasing availability of *tabua*, and their link to status generally, has resulted in them now being used to decorate and enhance the prestige of any occasion. Access to *tabua*, or acquisition of them, is no longer restricted to those of chiefly status, but is governed by two things—active participation in events during which *tabua* flow between groups, or resort to a pawn shop and cash payment if one cannot be borrowed from kin.

Ilaitia Ledua, an elder of Udu village, confirmed the distinction between required and optional occasions for *tabua* use, the latter now being quite frequent because *tabua* were numerous and people wished to demonstrate their ample resources. He said, "Formerly, when a feast was done, the feast alone was presented, the 'leaf-tray of the land' (*draudrau ni vanua*), a thing in the manner of the land. Only recently has a *tabua* been presented with it. It is just the decorating of it. It wasn't like that before."

So what was it like before? What are the historical conditions that have led to the high value and proliferation of *tabua*? For how long have *tabua* been deployed in Fiji, and by whom? The next section will discuss what is known of *tabua* since the arrival of Europeans in the region.

TABUA IN HISTORY

Polynesians did not hunt whales, but archaeological evidence and collections made by 18th-century voyagers in the Pacific show that islanders had access to sperm whale teeth and whale-bone from occasional strandings. Polynesians in Tonga, Hawai'i, New Zealand and elsewhere made neck pendants from whale ivory, examples of which were collected during Cook's voyages in 1768-80 (Kaeppler 1978a, 2009; Skinner 1974: 45-98). This was before ivory teeth of various sorts were imported from outside the region (see below). Although Cook called at Vatoa in southern Lau during his second voyage in 1774, no landing was made and little information was gathered. However, Cook and other crew members met Fijians in Tonga in the 1770s and acquired several distinctively Fijian types of artefacts there, including clubs, spears and bowls (Kaeppler 1978a: 226-28, 237, 239; 2009: 173-74, 179-84). In 1777, William Anderson admired the craftsmanship of things he was told were

of Fijian origin, "which have all a cast of superiority in the workmanship" (Beaglehole 1967: 959). No *tabua* were reported, but several Tongan-style items inlaid with ivory or made from it were obtained in Tonga, including figure pendants (Kaeppler 1978a: 207-8; 2009: 164, 174-75; Neich 2007).

The existence of these figures and other whale ivory items indicates that ivory had high value in Tonga (confirmed in Clunie's essay herein), and it is from Tonga that the first published reference to Fijian interest in whale teeth comes. William Mariner, a wreck survivor who lived in Tonga from 1806 to 1810, reported Tongan frustration at the difficulty of obtaining Fijian sandalwood with which to perfume their cosmetic coconut oil. He observed:

> The Fiji people, demanding a greater number of axes and chisels for a given quantity of wood, these implements are growing very scarce at the Tonga islands, and plentiful at Fiji. Before the Tonga people acquired iron implements, they usually gave whales' teeth, gnatoo [*ngatu*; barkcloth], mats for sails, and platt [coir cord]; but whales' teeth are exceedingly scarce, and the other articles are too bulky for ready exportation. The sting of the fish called stingray was also occasionally given. Another article of exchange is a particular species of shell, which they find only at Vavaoo, and is also scarce. (Martin 1818 v. 1: 322)

Here is evidence that whale teeth, acquired locally or imported from Tonga, were highly valued in Fiji. Mariner also gives two examples of whale strandings in Tonga that resulted in the extraction of the teeth for manufacture into ornaments and for burial in the foundation of a house which was to be "consecrated to some god" (Martin 1818 v. 1: 298-302).

Sandalwood and bêche-de-mer *traders*

Among the earliest written records made by people who actually interacted with Fijians in Fiji are those provided by the sandalwood traders who spent several months at a time on the coast of western Vanualevu in the early years of the 19th century. Several accounts were published by Im Thurn and Wharton (1925), including that of Richard Siddons who, referring to the period 1809-15, recounted how he tried, but failed, to save the life of a widow from strangulation by offering a whale tooth, "which I knew to be more valued there than gold" (Siddons 1925: 169). Whether the incident records Siddons' own experience or was appropriated for dramatic effect (other trader narratives give similar accounts) is immaterial; his observation on the value of whale teeth rings true, especially when set alongside other evidence, including his own. He later recorded:

> One of the most extraordinary circumstances among them is, the excessive value they set upon large teeth, such as those of the whale or sea elephant [walrus]. So that persons going to procure sandal wood from them generally take with them as many of these teeth as they can procure.
>
> The principal things they barter for are axes, knives, or razors; but they will give as much wood for one large tooth, as for five or six axes. This regard they put upon large teeth is the more extraordinary, as they do not seem to make use of them, except as ornaments.
>
> When a native, by purchase or any other means, becomes possessed of a large tooth, he hangs it up in his house, and for the first few days scarcely ceases looking upon it and admiring it. He frequently takes it down, and rubs it with a particular kind of leaf, and polishes it; some of them almost for a month continue to labour upon it.
>
> The vessels from Port Jackson [Sydney] usually carried the teeth of the whale or sea elephant; but some vessels from India carried elephants [*sic*] teeth, which they cut into pieces, and made in the shape of other teeth. These, being very large, were considered of the greatest value, and procured vast quantities of sandal wood. So great an account was set upon them, that some chiefs actually came from islands more than a hundred miles distant to see them. (Siddons 1925: 174-75)[11]

William Lockerby, a sandalwood trader resident in western Vanualevu in 1808-9, related that the local chief Tui Bua had been

> … presented [by another trader] with a brass laced hat, with a brass crown, but he would much rather have had a whale's tooth, that being the most valuable article among them. They hang them about their necks on great festivals, and give them with their daughters in marriage—as their marriage portion—in short, he who is possessed of a quantity of them, thinks himself extremely rich. (Lockerby 1925: 25)

A Lockerby manuscript in Salem entitled *Directions for Fegee Islands*, written about 1809-11, is even more emphatic concerning the value of whale teeth. He wrote:

> … the Articles of Traid to pleas the Natives are Ivory Iron Work such as Tools…. Beads they are very fond of—White Shels & Cloth… however Ivory is the Most Vallable Article Made in the form of a Whales Tooth and those of them that is possessd of any of them lays them up as graet riches as porshens for their Daughters & Making peace with their offended Supirurs etc. (Dodge 1972: 184).

Lockerby then provided a non-alphabetical "vocaboulary", for which the first item is "Ivory Tamboo", a signal of its primary importance and almost

certainly the earliest written reference to *tabua* in Fiji. Somewhat astounding, with respect to the relative values in play, is his further statement: "A piece of Ivory w^{t} [weight] about one lb [pound] is worth two tons of [sandal] wood." Later in the document Lockerby provides additional evidence that teeth were sometimes pre-cut by traders into sections: "Ivory made in the form of whale tooth… 400 lb. will make 2000 teeth for [from] 1$^{lb.}$ to 1$^{os.}$ [ounce: c. 28 gm] each." He adds that "Ivory of any Descripshin is good", including pieces of Chinese fans and ivory-handled knives (Dodge 1972: 184-87). The superordinate value of ivory to Fijians at that time can hardly be more plainly put, and it is little wonder that traders were cutting up teeth, perhaps literally into smaller denominations, given the colossal value of a single tooth (which from an adult whale can weigh 1-2 pounds). As trade increased, and supplies of teeth were relatively easily obtained by traders from whalers calling at Port Jackson (Sydney) and Rotuma, it is likely that whole teeth were more generally traded. At this time Samoan and Tongan canoe-building specialists living in Fiji began to cut them into sections for use as breastplates and other regalia (see below). By 1809 whole teeth were clearly in great demand and Lockerby records his frustrations at a chief refusing to accept "ironwork" for sandalwood, demanding for it a large tooth that Lockerby did not possess. Given the usefulness of metal tools for canoe- and house-building, this suggests that northern and eastern Fiji must by then have been flooded with sufficient quantities of "ironwork", whereas whole whale teeth were still relatively scarce.

Early traders were nothing if not sensitive to local trading conditions. *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, no. 272, for 19 March 1809 contains an entry that shows how quickly they had realised the significance of whale's teeth for the success of their enterprise: "[S]ame day (15th) arrived the brig 'Fox', Captain Cox, with between 13 and 14,000 skins and 190 whale's teeth, which are of considerable importance in our trade to the Feejees" (Im Thurn and Wharton 1925: 200). Evidence that large numbers of whale teeth continued to be taken to Fiji by trading ships is provided by William Cary in his account of the wreck of the *bêche-de-mer* ship *Glide* at Macuata in 1831, when about 80 teeth were lost after a Fijian tried unsuccessfully to get them ashore in a blanket (Cary 1928: 69). By this time teeth were spreading throughout eastern Fiji. After being wrecked in the whaler *Oeno* at Vatoa in 1825, Cary spent time at Lakeba under the protection of Tui Nayau, whose muskets he cleaned and repaired. He accompanied Tui Nayau on an expedition to Bau, recalling that messengers "were dispatched to every part of the island [Lakeba] to inform the different chiefs that the king was going to Ambow, and that they must send all the coconut oil, tappah [barkcloth], and whales' teeth they could produce for presents to the king of Ambow" (Cary

1928: 26). A little later, William Endicott, who was also aboard the *Glide*, wrote that in 1829 at Bua Bay in Vanualevu, the "principal articles of trade were muskets, ammunition, whales' teeth, iron tools, beads and ornaments" (Endicott 1923: 25).

Sailors who became beachcombers quickly understood the place of whale teeth in local value systems. John Twyning, who was shipwrecked in 1829 on the Minerva Reef and managed to get to Lakeba, wrote an informative account of his time in Fiji. He related how on one occasion he closely avoided serious trouble after he reneged on the exchange of a large whale tooth with Tui Nayau. Only the intercession of another chief saved his life (Twyning 1850: 46-47). Later, more sensitive to local protocols, he describes how he and a fellow sailor decided to build a boat. "We went to the king and presenting him with a musket and a whale's tooth, asked his permission to build a Schooner. He gave his consent freely, and promised to supply us with provisions during its construction" (Twyning 1850: 52). This arrangement seems to correspond to that which Tui Nayau made with Tongans who wanted to build canoes from the fine *vesi* wood (*Intsia bijuga*) of Kabara (where Twyning built his schooner) and on other Lau islands. Twyning wrote:

> The king of Lakembo derives considerable advantage from this timber, in permitting the inhabitants of the Friendly and other islands to build canoes in his dominions. He supplies the persons building them with provisions during the time they are constructing, and receives in return muskets, hatchets, whale's teeth, kava roots, and other such articles as are either useful or desirable to him. (Twyning 1850: 96)

Twyning provides us with perhaps the first eye-witness account of what Fijians actually did with these "Most Vallable" teeth, and how they used *tabua* in important rituals. He was present during a visit to Lakeba (c. 1832-33) by Tanoa Visawaqa, exiled Vunivalu of Bau, in a fleet of 21 war canoes. The visit appears to have involved Tanoa's installation as Tui Levuka (Twyning erroneously writes Tui Lakeba), a title in the gift of the Levuka people resident on Lakeba who were former inhabitants of Bau. On this occasion, Tanoa was

> … attended by two priests who were to conduct the ceremony. Baskets were placed near him, filled with rolls of tapper [tapa] cloth, sennett [sennit/coir cordage] balls, and whale's teeth, which were to be presented to him. The whale's teeth, were by the priests hung on all parts of his body; on his neck and arms, and in such profusion, that he staggered under the weight of them.… He soon freed himself from the burden, and let the teeth fall from his arms into the baskets, and at the end of the ceremony, he distributed these riches amongst his chiefs and warriors. (Twyning 1850: 55)[12]

Twyning was in Lau for more than two years, and he later wrote that whale teeth were "important articles among the natives of the Feejee Islands, who not only use them as money, but pay them a kind of religious homage" (Twyning 1850: 46). This is one of the rare insights among early visitors to Fiji of the ritual and religious significance of *tabua*. For most Europeans *tabua* were "ornaments" and a kind of money—for traders the only logical explanation for the value attributed to them. Twyning, however, was an astute observer, realising that there was more to the lading of the Vunivalu's body with *tabua* than a monetary transaction.

Missionary sources

Critical reading of first-hand observations contained in missionary journals (separate from their often disapproving generalisations), can provide insights into pre-Christian Fijian practices and concerns. The first European missionaries to live in Fiji were the Methodists William Cross and David Cargill, who arrived in Lakeba from Tonga in 1835 (two Tahitians had preceded them). Over the following 20 years they were joined by several others who settled in or near the main chiefly centres of eastern Fiji, surmising that if they could convert the chiefs the people would follow *en masse*. They became fluent in Fijian and some of them, including Thomas Williams, John Hunt and Richard Lyth, took an active interest in what would now be termed Fijian culture. They were certainly intent on discrediting behaviour of which they disapproved, but they also possessed a genuine spirit of enquiry. The edited 1840-53 journals of Thomas Williams (1931) were, with other sources, the basis for his influential book *Fiji and the Fijians* (1858). These journals provide a rich source of information on Fiji at that time, including the use of *tabua*. Other published and unpublished missionary sources amplify these accounts.[13]

The missionaries not only observed the use of whale teeth among Fijians, they were also obliged to deploy them in their relations with Fijians as a means of achieving their evangelical aims, influencing chiefly politics and obtaining food supplies and other assistance. The quarterly stock accounts of Cross and Cargill on Lakeba show they had difficulty in keeping a supply, while other trade items remained in surplus. For 1837-38 there are the following entries, "September 1837: Received 48; Expended 38. December 1837: On hand 13; Expended 13. March 1838: On hand 15; Expended 15. June and September 1838: On hand—none; Expended—none" (Account books 1835--). Thomas Williams and his wife arrived at Lakeba on 11 July 1840 and one of his first duties was to pay his respects to the paramount chief. "It was late in the evening before we could spare time to visit Tuinayau the King; but it was evident that a razor, and especially a large whale's tooth, presented to him, rendered us welcome visitors" (Williams 1931: 8). The following year

Williams and his fellow missionary James Calvert attempted unsuccessfully to persuade Tui Nayau not to take a Christian woman from Ono-i-Lau in a polygamous marriage. On 23 March 1841 he wrote,

> The property which we presented on the 19th or thereabouts to redeem Jemaima Tovo was returned today. Bro. C. [Calvert] and myself supplied 19 whales' teeth, deal [timber planks], 1 large cedar box and a new fowling piece; to this the Ono [Christian] people added a good roll of cynet [coir cord], three fine mats and four whales' teeth.... The Ono property was detained. (Williams 1931: 24-25)

The fact that 23 teeth, a gun and other valuables were refused probably indicates the great importance to Tui Nayau of this marriage, and also perhaps the plentiful availability of whale teeth by 1841. The use of *tabua*, with varying success, when petitioning chiefs to spare the lives of widows or to rescue Christian women from polygamous marriages was regularly reported by the missionaries. At Somosomo on 25 September 1844 Williams successfully entreated Tanoa Visawaqa, Vunivalu of Bau, to spare a woman from strangulation after the death of her husband (1931: 291), but *tabua* proved less effective on 22 September 1849 when he accompanied Richard Lyth to Bau "to present a large six gallon pot, and three whales' teeth to Tanoa with a request that he allow Mary, a daughter of Ratu Mele who lately lived with Mr Lyth, to remain in Vewa [Viwa].... His suit was unsuccessful" (1931: 500).

These episodes show that *tabua*, although powerful, were not irresistible, and other factors such as existing alliances or commitments, temporary plentiful supply and the exigencies of politics could weigh more heavily in the deliberations of a chiefly recipient. An unsuccessful petition could lead to the return of *tabua*, though not always, as in the case of the Ono Christians who may have been regarded as impertinent by Tui Nayau. Nowadays Fijians describe the refusal of a petition, once a *tabua* has been accepted, as requiring the return of another *tabua* as *idiriki* (breaking), in effect returning matters to the *status quo ante*. This may be a matter of courtesy, because it is clear that if chiefs are angry (*cudru*; in honorific language *toka wale* 'sitting idle') then they may either refuse to receive a *tabua* or not return it once presented. In the past a *tabua* could be offered by a rival party to *bika* 'press down' or 'crush' one already presented, and thus neutralise the earlier request. Whether a *tabua* was presented from a position of weakness or strength could also influence the outcome. So, aside from the missionaries having mixed fortunes in their *tabua* offerings to chiefs, for Fijians such matters also could be in the lap of the gods.

With this in mind, the missionaries give regular accounts of *tabua* being offered by Fijians to petition divine assistance in temporal matters. John Hunt witnessed a propitiatory ritual in 1840 at the temple in Somosomo on Taveuni at which the executive chief Tui'ila'ila presented coconuts and a

tabua to the priest to discover the prospects for an impending war against Vuna, a chiefdom at the southern end of the island. Prospects were declared good, and the war was indeed won, leading to submission by the Tui Vuna and the presentation of a *tabua* and a basket of earth to Tui'ila'ila as *isoro* 'entreaty', begging clemency, which was granted in terms of lives, if not of property (Williams 1931: 223-27). On 6 November 1845 Williams noted that "a quantity of food and two whales' teeth were presented to Mai natavasara [the principal god of Somosomo] to ensure success in an anticipated descent upon a town in the Natewa district" (1931: 328).

The persuasive power of *tabua* was not lost on the missionaries who, perhaps out of necessity, turned a blind eye to the explicitly religious use of them by Fijians who enthusiastically embraced their use in their own, adapted, religious practices. Williams recounts (1931: 520) how, at the dedication of the new chapel at Tiliva in Bua on 24 April 1850, "My dear little Jane with her brothers Will and Ben accompanied by Mr Moore's little boy, took each a large whale's tooth, and presented them to Ra Esekaia as the subscriptions of Mrs Williams and themselves." At a ceremony, which clearly took the form of a *solevu*, with hosts and guests, converts and heathens alike making offerings, *tabua* were transferred back and forth, culminating when

> Ra Esekaia… took the teeth presented by my children and Mrs Williams adding six or eight smaller ones, and rose to answer Ra Jioje [who had just presented several *tabua*], which he did with spirit, welcoming him and all our friends; thanking God for His ministers, for the chapel and for what they saw that day.

It very much seems as if the Fijians involved were adapting indigenous practice to the performance of the new religion.

Fijian chiefs could be presented with *tabua* on more private occasions. On 15 November 1845 Williams was in Tui'ila'ila's house in Somosomo when a young woman was brought to him by her relatives, prior to her being sent to Bau as part of Tui'ila'ila's ongoing attempts to enlist Bau's support for his war with Natewa.

> She was oiled and had on a new *liku* [skirt], and her neck was adorned with a necklace of whales' teeth. She had two whales' teeth in her hands. These she gave to the King on approaching him. The King received her... and, as she sat at his feet, he ran over a list of their gods, and finished by praying that 'the girl might live and bring forth male children.' He then called for a musket which he presented to two male relatives of the young female requesting them not to think hardly of his having taken their child: it was connected with the good of the land in which their interest as well as his was involved.... Tuilaila next proceeded to take the necklace from her neck. (Williams 1931: 329)

Here is a reference to whale teeth that have been modified into "ornaments", though this term inadequately encompasses the role and power of teeth that have been transformed into visually stunning body adornments. Given they usually adorned chiefs' bodies, "regalia" might be a better term. On the occasion described above, the girl's body was used as a vehicle for the transfer to Tui'ila'ila of *tabua* and a necklace, equivalent valuables which, along with her, were destined for Bau. It is notable that Tui'ila'ila made a speech similar in form to those made by Tui Nayau in 1980, referring to titles ("a list of their gods") and finishing by calling for positive things to occur.

The following year Tui'ila'ila's efforts in relation to Bau bore fruit, though he got more than he bargained for in terms of the depredations of 3,000 lingering Bauan visitors. Ultimately his strategy did not produce the longed-for crushing of Natewa, and his own resources were substantially depleted, not only by his obligations as host, but also by several years of sending inducements to Bau in the form of canoes, coir cord, barkcloth, women and "hundreds of whales' teeth" (Williams 1931: 347). Thomas Williams, who witnessed the Bau visit, wrote an exceptional account of the state reception given by Tui'ila'ila for Cakobau in June 1846, which was not dissimilar in its fundamental elements from the 1977 and 1980 state receptions described earlier. Williams recorded:

> On the 19th [June] Tuilaila and about 40 of his head men went on board a canoe and sailed to Vuna to perform the ceremony of taking up the anchors (*cavu elieli* [*cavu ikelekele*]) which is only a euphemism for taking property to the Bau people. He and his men... presented a large bale of cloth and 50 whales' teeth. Thakombau spent the Sabbath at Vuna, and on the 22nd came up to Somosomo. The fleet consisted of 66 double canoes and 16 single.... They had but little time on shore before the *galove* [*qalovi:* 'swimming out to invite guests to land'] was performed. This was done by formally presenting the Bau people with 100 large *masis* [barkcloths], a number of small ones and 20 whales' teeth. (Williams 1931: 347)

Williams attended the major reception that Tui'ila'ila put on for Cakobau the following day. After a grand military parade by the visitors, "Tuilaila took about 100 whales' teeth on his shoulders towards Thakombau; stooped, kneeled and made his speech". Later Cakobau presented Tui'ila'ila with a single *tabua*, offering assurances of help against Natewa (Williams 1931: 349-50).

These accounts are sufficient to demonstrate how *tabua* played a major role in facilitating strategic relationships between chiefdoms in Fiji, and how chiefs deployed them not only in propitiating gods but in propitiating fellow chiefs, who were equivalent to and embodiments of the ancestral gods on

whose behalf the *tabua* were received. *Tabua* also were deployed alongside other valuables such as barkcloth and mats, canoes and coir cord, and women in establishing and maintaining affinal relationships. As Sahlins (1983, 2004: 221-44) has comprehensively argued, relations through women were vital to strategic alliances, if sometimes problematic through the enthusiastic exercise of *vasu* privileges. Tanoa's favourite wife, Adi Talatoka, was from Somosomo (Cakobau's mother was from Bau), and it was at Somosomo that Tanoa took refuge during his exile from Bau in the 1830s, as well as at Rewa, where he was *vasu*. Tanoa also had strong interests in Lau, regarded as a source of great valuables, especially canoes, and in February 1843 Williams recorded how Tui Nayau sent to Bau an "immense new canoe, 15 large packages of native cloth (some marked) and a great quantity of mosquito screens (about 150), 7 large balls of cynet [coir cord], 10 whales' teeth of from 1½ lb. to 4 lb. weight and the favourite daughter of the King". In May of the same year, Tanoa's son, Cakobau, in quest of another massive canoe still unfinished on Kabara, paid Tui Nayau a visit, presenting quantities of barkcloth, spears, clubs, an immense root of *yaqona* and 20 whale's teeth, these presentations accompanied by a dance that "had quite a warlike character". This was a menacing gift, and the following day Tui Nayau presented Cakobau with quantities of barkcloth, *yaqona*, a feast and a *tabua* as an entreaty (*isoro*), with a speech which begged forgiveness for the slow progress on the canoe and promised its completion (Williams 1931: 145, 163-65). In July 1851 Cakobau was back again on Lakeba, when Richard Lyth (1850-51: 85-89) witnessed a three-speech sequence that parallels exactly the A-C structure outlined above.

> Tui Nayau arose and approached Tui Viti [Cakobau] with a string of whale's teeth (10 in number on this occasion). Holding these in his hand he made the following speech [Lyth gives it in Fijian: it is a *isoro*, that they might live and Cakobau be patient, etc.]. Tui Viti then stood and received the teeth at Tui Nayau's hand [Lyth gives it in Fijian: Cakobau expressed wishes that the Lauans might live, their land be firm, and that anyone who moved against them should die, finishing with "Mana"]. His retinue add ei dina and clap their hands. Tui Viti's mata-ni-vanua then stands forth to take the bundle of teeth and makes the following prayer to the gods [Lyth gives this longer speech in Fijian, which invoked names of gods, called for life and a fair wind for the return to Bau].

Lyth finishes his account with the observation that the barkcloth that was presented with the *tabua* was afterwards divided up by Cakobau's chiefs: "[T]he chief does this not the matanivanua—his work is to distribute or apportion food." Here is clear evidence for the ritual division of labour,

mentioned above, in which chiefs are responsible for presenting and dividing up valuables and landspeople are responsible for presenting and dividing up feasts.

As well as occasions of state involving eminent chiefs, the missionaries also mention the frequent use of *tabua* by chiefs for kinship purposes. David Cargill witnessed a *vakamasi* initiation ceremony at Nasaqalau village on Lakeba in 1835 when a young classificatory son of Tui Nayau was circumcised and clothed in special barkcloth. Preparations for the feast had been going on for two weeks and "[w]hales' teeth were in great requisition" (Cargill 1977: 70-71). In October 1839, after Cargill had transferred to Rewa, he attended the death of one of the king's brothers and witnessed a sequence of *ireguregu* condolence *tabua* presentations which, although the speeches are clearly abridged, is strikingly similar to those described above for Kabara in 1978.

> Each tribe presents a whale's tooth to the deceased. This tooth is suspended by a string, and whilst the chief or principal spokesman of the tribe is holding it in his hand, he pronounces the following oration: [Fijian text] 'This is our offering to the dead; we are poor, and cannot find riches; this is the length of my speech.' All the persons present return thanks by clapping their hands and then the king or a chief of rank replies,—'Ai mumudui ai mate'—'the end of death', the people simultaneously respond, Mana,—edina:—'let it be so;—it is true.' (Cargill 1977: 151)

Cargill's "this is the length of my speech" is his translation of the self-deprecatory "*a balabalavu noqu vosa*" (too long is my speech), an expression still heard today.

Many other examples of *tabua* use could be provided from missionary sources. However, for the present it is sufficient to note that, besides their own direct participation in the ritual economy of *tabua*, the missionaries provide ample evidence for the circulation of large numbers of whale teeth during the 1830s to 1850s, referring both to their religious character and, when transformed into regalia, their use as adornments for chiefly bodies.

Other 19th and 20th century sources

Voyagers, travellers, colonial administrators and researchers, Fijian and European, have also left valuable accounts of *tabua* use in the 19th and 20th centuries. These reports corroborate and extend the accounts provided by traders and missionaries.

Charles Wilkes, commander of the United States Exploring Expedition that visited Fiji in 1840, well understood the value of *tabua*, though, having seen sperm whales in the Koro Sea, he could less understand why Fijians, "who value whales' teeth so highly, should have devised no means of taking the animal that yields them, although it frequents their seas for three or four

months in the year" (Wilkes 1845 v. 3: 194). On first meeting Tui Levuka, Wilkes wrote: "As is customary, I at once gave him a present of two whale's teeth and two fathoms of red cotton cloth, with which he was well satisfied, clapping his hands several times, which is their mode of expressing thanks" (p. 47). Teeth were also given to Tanoa and to Tui Cakau (pp. 58, 299). Wilkes noted that whalers had been calling at Kadavu, providing additional supplies of teeth. In 1838 the notorious Rewa chief Veidovi obtained 50 whale teeth by ransom from the captain of the whale-ship *Nimrod* (p. 138; Derrick 1950: 70-71). Wilkes's observation, "A whale's tooth is about the price of a human life" (p. 103), will inform later discussion.

Lieutenant Walter Pollard of HMS *Bramble* was witness to the ongoing drama of the relationship between Cakaudrove (Somosomo) and Bau. In July 1850 he was at Bau when a visit was paid by 500-600 "Somo-Somo people", accompanied by Ma'afu and over 100 Tongans in a large double canoe. The hosts provided vast quantities of food, to which the visitors responded with enormous quantities of valuables, especially barkcloth. As a finale, "The old chief [Tui'ila'ila] then walked up to the Bau people with a bundle of whales' teeth, I should think from eighty to a hundred pounds weight, and apparently as much as he could carry with both hands, and delivered them to the orator, who received and made an oration over them, which I was told was presenting them to the gods" (Erskine 1853: 297).

Tabua could also be used in less public, more stealthy ways, for instance to procure a murder. In the 18th century the first Tui Nayau, Niumataiwalu, was killed at Ono-i-Lau, a black stone *tabua* having been supplied by Bau for the purpose (Brewster 1937: 43-49, Hennings 1918, Reid 1990: 10; *tabua* made of materials other than whale ivory will be discussed below). In 1867 a *tabua* went ahead of the Reverend Thomas Baker, sealing his death at Nabutautau in the interior of Vitilevu (Brewster 1922: 25-31). This kind of contract killing was also responsible for the death of the Bauan labour recruiter Koroi i Latikau in Ra in 1873, and Kaplan's analysis of Navosavakadua's resistance movement in Ra—his "war over religion" against Bauan and British/Christian colonial interference—shows how Navosavakadua, though of priestly rather than chiefly descent, tapped into the power of *tabua*. A reliable source in 1885 reported that he amassed and presented 400 whale's teeth at a *solevu* at his village of Valelebo (Kaplan 1995: 19-22, 87).

Numerous further instances of *tabua* presentation could be given (Hocart 1929: 70-75; Nayacakalou 1975: 54-55; Spencer 1941: 13, 26; von Hügel 1990: 70; Wallis 1851: *passim*), but they follow patterns similar to those already described. They all deal with whale teeth that are transactable, whose power lies in their distribution not in their retention and whose effectiveness is activated by their deployment in strategic situations. These *tabua* do not

nowadays carry with them a specific identity, name or transaction history, nor is such information provided in presentation speeches. For example, when I was present at Lakeba in May 1978 during preparations for the state reception of the Governor-General of Fiji, Ratu George Cakobau, Vunivalu of Bau, Tui Nayau called forth a large Tongan-style basket which contained several large honey-coloured *tabua*. As he drew them from the basket, he and his principal heralds, Mata ki Cicia, Mata ki Bau and Tui Tubou, discussed their relative merits in terms of size and colour. At no stage was reference made to their particular histories—only their visual qualities and their suitability for the four major presentations in prospect. Thomas (1991: 67) insisted that "past transactions are not remembered and in no way [bore] upon the 'weight' of a *tabua*. These articles have no histories."

However, this is unlikely to have always been the case and the analysis of *tabua* cannot be restricted to the transactable examples alone, however numerous and frequent their use. Indeed, there is a highly important category of *tabua* that does not, or should not, move. These are named and their histories are vital to their value and to the people who possess them. Quain (1948) called them "heirloom" *tabua* (I am unaware of a specific Fijian term for them), and they may be characterised as inalienable (Weiner 1992). In any case, they provide a major clue to the source of the value and power of those that are transacted.

Heirloom whale's teeth

Because heirloom *tabua* are seldom seen and kept closely guarded they have largely escaped notice, but some 19th century sources and the 1930s research of Buell Quain, in particular, provide substantial evidence for their existence and importance. It is likely that in pre-Christian times they were widespread, but with the arrival of Christianity many may have "leaked out" into the flow of transactable *tabua* or into ethnographic collections and become dissociated from their specific histories. One occasion when this may have happened was recorded by Baron Anatole von Hügel on 4 December 1875, when he was staying in Nadroga and well stocked with "trade".

> A good red *tabua* came in from Nadi today. It was some time before the owner, an old man, let out what he had come about. After a long rambling conversation he produced from the folds of his *isulu* [skirt-like cloth wrap] the *tabua*, most carefully wrapped in *masi* [barkcloth]. He did not at all approve of my hanging it up on the wall with my other treasures and evidently wishes to keep dark his having parted with it. No doubt it has a history… what that history may be I have not much chance of finding out. (von Hügel 1990: 224)

An early reference to non-circulating heirloom teeth is found in the papers of Reverend James Royce. From Kadavu Island on 6 December 1859, he wrote:

> This morning the Kadavu god was brought to me. It had been kept secret till the present time; the god is no more or less than a fine whale's tooth, and by appearance and report a venerable fellow. Its name is Takei, from takelo, crooked, being curved like the new moon; it is said to have been the god of food, and always to dwell in the land of plenty. (Royce 1855-62: 277)[14]

The following year, in August 1860, Berthold Seemann was shown what he referred to as the "crown jewels" at Namosi, Vitilevu.

> They were kept in a wooden box, and carefully wrapt up in soft pieces of native cloth and cocoa-nut fibre. There were among them a large whale's tooth, highly polished, and quite brown from repeated greasing, a necklace made of pieces of whales' teeth, the first that ever came to these mountains, and a fine cannibal fork in the shape of a club. (Seemann 1862: 187).

Other *tabua* have been noted on Vitilevu, including a large composite example from Naitasiri (see Fig. 3 in Clunie's essay), and two bearing the titles Adi Waimaro and Tui Waimaro, which take the form of figures; the Adi Waimaro figure was constructed from several sections of whale ivory (Larsson 1960: 29-32, Parke 1997). With respect to these two figures, Larsson (1960: 116) noted that they held "in themselves the welfare of the group of people whose *vu* [ancestors] they were and this concerned the high-born line of this kin group". These, and the double-figure hook image from Nadi, named Nalilavatu, "the double wife of… the Chief God of Nadi" (Larsson 1960: 27), are carved in Tongan style, suggesting an ultimate origin in Tonga (Fig. 10). An elephant tusk *tabua* with the title Tui Nasavusavu has already been mentioned (note 11 below).

The evidence for heirloom teeth, and a Tongan connection, is even stronger in Vanualevu. Buell Quain provided the most comprehensive account of heirloom *tabua*, based on his 1935-36 research in Lekutu, inland Vanualevu. The chiefly title-holder was custodian of the ancestral tooth Tu Lekutu ("King Forest" in Quain's translation), that "contained within itself the right of kingly authority", and furthermore, to "maintain proper rapport with the ancestors who controlled the region's fertility, the kingly office had to be held by a hereditary member of the chiefly caste" (Quain 1948: 190). Chiefly leaders of other villages also held hereditary titled teeth, and Quain distinguished hereditary teeth, such as "King Forest", which "embodied the power" of Lekutu's greatest ancestors (1948: 223), from anonymous *tabua* of the transactable kind, the exchange of which he described frequently in

his excellent study. Transactable teeth were expected to flow inwards and outwards as indices of prosperity, both for the transactors and the chiefdom generally, whereas heirloom teeth, closely connected to the fertility of the land and embodying divine ancestors, could only be transferred to new custodianship within the chiefly clan.

Figure 10. Double-figure hook, carved from a sperm whale tooth, known as Nalilavatu; height 12.2 cm. Found in Nadi, western Vitilevu and acquired by Sir Arthur Gordon in 1876 (see Larsson 1960: 27-28, Herle and Carreau 2013: 55-56); MAA 1955.247. (Photo: © Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

Heirloom teeth have titles and are in effect embodiments of ancestral gods, passed down to successive holders of chiefly titles who themselves embody divine ancestors. Also on Vanualevu, Hocart (1952b: 238) noted a title in Wainunu, Buli Muanaicake, associated with a tooth called "The Land" (Na Vanua), presented to the title-holder on installation. In this way whale teeth and the bodies of chiefs were rendered equivalent. It is probable that the transactable teeth which became so plentiful in the 19th century were treated as distributable versions of heirloom teeth, participating in a ritual economy of sacrifice where substitutes for the core body were deployed in chief-to-chief, and thus god-to-god, exchanges.

Quain and Hocart noted the influence of Tonga in many parts of Vanualevu and eastern Fiji, and parallels for teeth-as-gods can be found in Tonga, as Clunie asserts (herein). One reference will suffice to make the point. Visiting Tonga in 1850, Reverend Walter Lawry triumphantly recorded:

> [O]n the day that Tungi *lotued* [converted to Christianity], all the gods that could be found were secured.… Of these gods the first in rank and power is Feaki [Fekai], the fountain-head of all the minor gods. This is a large *whale's tooth*, which has not fallen under the gaze of mortal men from time immemorial. (Lawry 1851: 35)

On the role of Tonga and teeth supply, the beachcomber William Diaper (alias John Jackson or "Cannibal Jack"), author of a narrative of his long sojourn in Fiji, gave a plausible observation on the origin of "red" teeth or "tambua-damu". He wrote:

> [They] are used as money, though not exactly as our money, there being no certain value put on them; but in that country [Fiji] they are invaluable, as life and death depend on the circulation of these teeth, and especially the red ones. I used to consider the difference between the white and the red teeth the same as between our shillings and sovereigns, estimating the number of white whales' teeth throughout the Feejees to be twenty times as many as the red ones. The red teeth, which have become red by frequent handling and oiling for a number of years, they always told me were brought to the Feejees by the Tongans, by whom they were first introduced, and from whom also they learned the art of building the large double canoes. (Jackson 1853: 439)

This insight may indicate a distinction between an older supply of teeth from Tonga, worked to be symmetrical in shape (called *tabuabuli* by Tatawaqa [1914: 2] and Clunie [herein]), subject to intense smoking and oiling, versus the bulk supplies of raw teeth that began to be obtained from traders at the beginning of the 19th century. It is likely that in the 18th century or earlier, impressive large "red teeth", sourced from Tonga, became, like the outsider

chiefs who held them, the embodiment of ancestor gods in most of the polities of the Koro Sea and eastern Fiji (see Sahlins 1981 and further discussion below). These were kept in *kato ni tu* 'foundation baskets', likely to be Tongan *kato mosikaka* or *kato* '*alu*, similar to the one I saw at Lakeba in 1978. Though Tongan involvement with whale teeth waned after the mid-19th century, King George of Tonga still saw fit to present Cakobau with a large tooth in a *kato mosikaka*, both of which were later presented by Sir Everard im Thurn, a Governor of Fiji, to the British Museum (Fig. 11).

Figure 11. Presentation whale tooth (*tabua*/*tapua*) and bag (*kato mosikaka*), presented by the King of Tonga, George Tupou, to Ratu Seru Cakobau, Vunivalu of Bau, probably 1850s-1870s; length 21.0 cm (tooth). Acquired by Sir Everard im Thurn, Governor of Fiji 1904-10; British Museum, Oc1920.0322.33 and Oc1920.0322.34. (Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.)

Myth, etymology and previous incarnations

The occurrence of whale teeth in myth is surprisingly limited. Myth is a problematic area because in most cases myths were not recorded until after Christian evangelism had introduced biblical and other elements, including knowledge of global geography, with which indigenous accounts became mixed. Two myths featuring *tabua* have survived. The first, written in English and recorded in the 1870s, has been analysed by Sahlins (1983: 72-78) and Thomas (1991: 69-75).[15] In brief, a stranger called Tabua appears from overseas on the Nadroga coast and succeeds in obtaining the daughters of

the land through a miraculous ruse involving the substitution of whale teeth (the value of which he knew, but which were unknown locally) for four of his own teeth, which he said he had planted and had grown. The teeth, called *tabua*, are given as brideprice. The myth is entitled "How Fijians First Became Cannibals", since the story closes with a statement about shipwrecked voyagers being eaten, but it encapsulates many other foundational issues to do with stranger/local, sea/land, male/female and valuables/food, with an underlying emphasis on the importance of the exchange of categorically different things. It is notable that exchange, through a ruse, also is a theme of the second myth involving whale teeth, recorded by Brewster in highland Vitilevu (Roth 1953: 96-97). In this story, the ancestor of the Nadrau people, Tui Taladrau, meets a man carrying a basket of *tabua* and, by a trick, switches it with his own basket of food and makes off with it. The use of a trick as an exchange mechanism is a widespread theme in Fijian myth, and here the valuables-for-food exchange is clearly central.

Roth (1953: 97-99) undertook a review of the etymology of *tabua*, citing Hazlewood's suggested link to the collar bone (1850: 131-32) and favouring, as did Hocart (1929: 99), an association with *tabu* 'sacred, marked, restricted'. Roth notes Brewster's information about examples previously made of *bua* wood (*Fagraea berteriana*), leading to contentious rationalisations such as *bua-ta* (*bua*-'cut', hence *tabua*). However, the Vitilevu use of *bua* wood for *tabua* is supported by Emosi Tatawaqa (1914: 1), and there is a polished dark brown (and therefore "red") wooden *tabua* in the Fiji Museum that does not look of recent manufacture (see Clunie Fig. 6 herein).

With respect to alternative materials used for *tabua* in the past, I have already mentioned the stone *tabua* used to obtain the murder of Niumataiwalu. In addition, early sources record that a *tabua* named *vatu ni balawa*, 'stone of the pandanus', was buried with chiefs, to be thrown at a pandanus tree *en route* to the other world (Hazlewood 1850: 170). The term *vatu*, for an ivory *tabua*, is still heard occasionally in presentation speeches.

Certain shells are also recorded as having been used as *tabua* in the past. Emosi Tatawaqa (1914: 2) stated:

> Those near to the sea or living on the coast used as 'tabua' a certain sea-shell called the 'cava:' this is a sea-shell which is the same as the 'Aivaoqo' or the shell called the 'Mua-ni-waqa.' When one of these shells was found, it was well sunned, that the outer skin might fall off; when the skin had fallen away, the surface of it was a bright red, like, perhaps, the appearance of a red tooth of a whale.

Deve Toganivalu (1918: 8) added:

> It is said that there was a sea-shell which was their property in ancient times before whales' teeth reached here; and it was used as the tabua for women, for war, for feasts, etc. The name of that shell in some places is the Sauwaqa; the name at Bau is Cava.

In a letter to the colonial administrator Kenneth Allardyce, Toganivalu (1913) also observed:

> Their former *tabua* was a species of shell, named *sauwaqa*, a long shell and pointed at the end, some are very long, about a span in length [c. 20-25 cm] and the body is coloured red and yellow. This was their prized valuable in the old days, as a 'proposal' for a girl, a 'condolence' for the dead and as a means of turning enemy villages [into allies]. However, when whale's teeth were brought to Fiji they discarded the shell and used whale's teeth in its place. Some of the old house foundations at Bau were levelled in Ratu Cakobau's time, about 1874, and some *sauwaqa* were found there and the elders said, 'These are the prized valuables of former times by which villages were turned and people were killed.'

There appears to be some confusion in the literature about the species identity of *sauwaqa* and *cava* shells, if indeed those terms applied to a single species.[16] Nevertheless, it is clear that certain shells were highly valued, especially ones classified as red, including the *sovui* (*Spondylus*) and the *bulikula* (golden cowry, *Cypraea aurantium*; see Clunie 1986: 158-59). Clunie explains below that other shells such as *bulileka* and *civa* (pearl shell) were also highly valued, and Hazlewood (1850: 133) records a saying "A tabua e taka emuri, a bulileka na kamunaga levu" (the whale tooth arose later, the *bulileka* was the great valuable [before]). So, for eastern Fiji a picture emerges of materials associated with the sea being formerly deployed as powerful valuables, alongside items made from land products, including woods such as *vesi (Intsia bijuga*) and probably *bua* (*Fagraea berteriana*).

Later developments

By the early 19th century, skilled canoe-builders of Samoan and Tongan ancestry were already settled in eastern Fiji, working in the service of chiefs of the Koro Sea chiefdoms, especially Tui Nayau in Lau, who, as detailed above, was obliged through a combination of inducements and threats to supply Bau and Cakaudrove with large double canoes. These craftsmen had metal tools of European origin, including axes, saws, chisels and fine drills, which allowed them to create composite forms of ivory regalia based on simpler pre-metal types. Space does not permit discussion of this dynamic development, but in effect chiefs sponsored the production of what might be regarded as super-*tabua* in the form of breastplates and necklaces, both for public display on

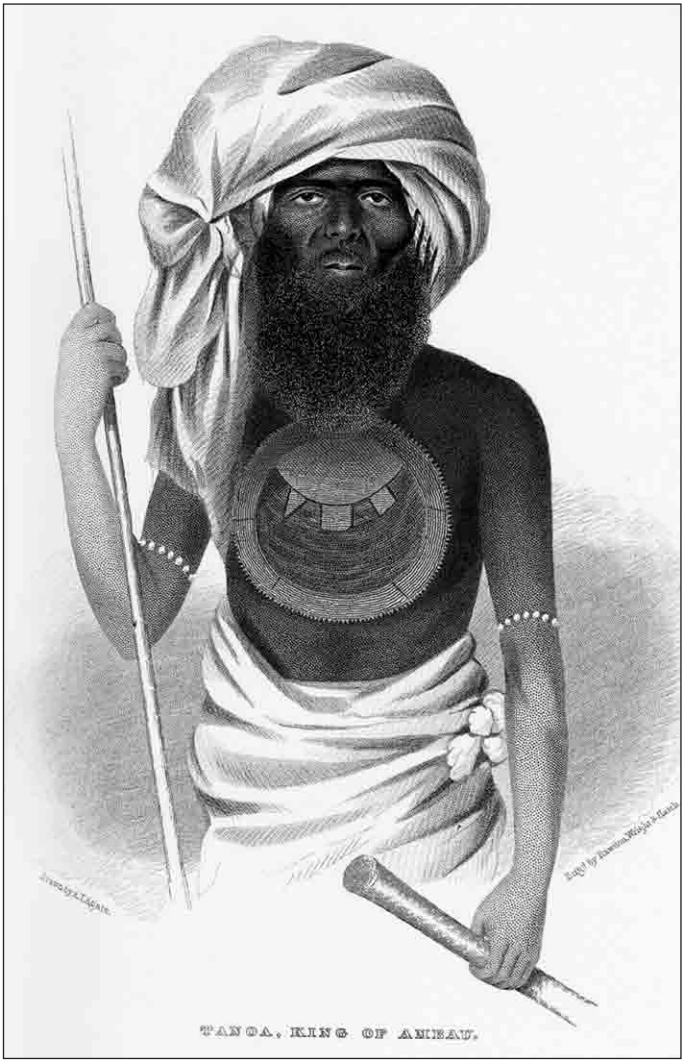

Figure 12. Ratu Tanoa Visawaqa, Vunivalu of Bau, wearing a composite breastplate (*civa vonovono*) made of whale ivory and pearl shell. Engraving by Rawdon, Wright and Hatch after a drawing by Alfred Agate of the United States Exploring Expedition, 1840. (Wilkes 1845 v. 3: fp 56.)

their bodies and as barely resistible offerings to allies. Tanoa, determined to make a big impression when first visiting the American commander Wilkes at Levuka in 1840, arrived in a 100-foot canoe of "magnificent appearance… ornamented with a great number (two thousand five hundred) of the Cypraea ovula shells; its velocity was almost inconceivable" (Wilkes 1845 v. 3: 54). The following day he went aboard the *Vincennes*, wearing a large turban of white gauzy barkcloth and "on his breast, hanging from his neck, he wore an ornament made of mother-of-pearl, tortoise-shell, and ivory, not [*sic* – transcription error?] very neatly put together, and as large as a dinner-plate, (called diva ndina); on his arms he had shell armlets, (called *ygato*,) made of the trochus-shell by grinding them down to the form of rings" (Wilkes 1845 v. 3: 56, punctuation as in source). It is hard to imagine a more vivid expression of sea-related power than that conveyed through the embellishment of Tanoa's canoe and his own body. The artist Agate made a sketch of Tanoa (Fig. 12) which enabled Clunie (1983) to identify the breastplate as that later acquired by the first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon (Fig. 13). It was almost

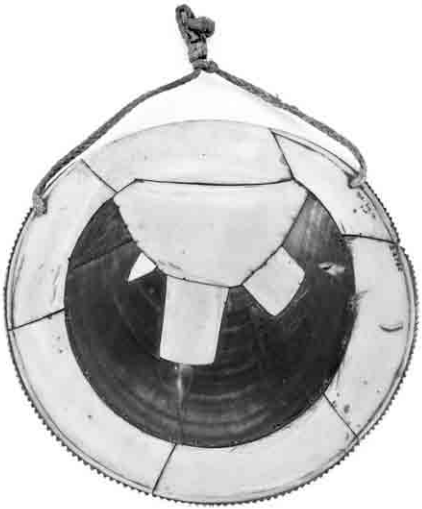

Figure 13. Composite breastplate (*civa vonovono*) of whale ivory and pearl shell (the triangular segment that resembles turtle shell is actually dark pearl shell); width 28.0 cm. Acquired by Sir Arthur Gordon in 1875-80, probably from Ratu Seru Cakobau, Vunivalu of Bau the son of Ratu Tanoa Visawaqa (Clunie 1983); MAA Z2730. (Photo: © Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

certainly received from Tanoa's son, Cakobau, possibly as an offering through Gordon to Queen Victoria, who, from a Fijian point of view, was then the most powerful chief on earth. Wilkes would almost certainly have liked to acquire it in 1840, as he collected much else, but items made of ivory seem not to have been acquirable at that time.

At Somosomo in December 1842 Thomas Williams had seen Tui Cakau wearing a "large whale's-tooth-mounted breastplate hung round his neck", while three years later, when Tui Cakau's body was being prepared for burial, his head was "turbaned in a scarlet handkerchief secured by a chaplet of small white *cyprœa* [*bulileka*], a shell highly valued in Feejee. Of the same kind of shell were his armlets, and his neck was adorned with a whale's tooth necklace, radiated and slightly curved so as to give its points an inclination upwards (Williams 1931: 134, 313). This type of "split-tooth" whale ivory necklace with curving points is possibly what was called *wasekaseka* by Toganivalu (1918: 8)—"whales' teeth which the Tongan carpenters sawed into small pieces, and then strung them together for necklets" (Fig. 14). The

Figure 14. Necklace (*wasekaseka*) of polished split whale tooth sections on a plaited coir neck cord; width 32.0 cm. Acquired by Alfred Maudslay 1875-80; MAA 1931.203. (© Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

association of ivory necklaces with chiefly bodies, in life and in death, is confirmed by Williams (1931: 200), who saw one on a corpse at a chiefly burial at Somosomo in October 1843, and by a reference to displays in the Fiji Museum where two ivory necklaces are listed:

> These were fashioned from whales' teeth, and were buried with Ratu Tanoa (father of Ratu Cakobau) at Bau. During the digging of a new grave in 1930, the necklaces were discovered and handed over to the Museum by the late Ratu Pope Seniloli, Ratu Cakobau's grandson. (Anon 1946: 15)

Items of regalia constructed of whale ivory, sometimes in combination with shell, were finding their way all over Fiji by the mid-19th century, as chiefs of the Koro Sea attempted to extend their networks by making alliances and waging war. The Fiji Museum has a breastplate that was presented by Cakobau to the Rokotui Waimaro as a *ka ni bula*, a gift made for sparing Cakobau's life following a defeat in one of the Nasorovakawalu wars, probably in the early 1850s (Clunie 1986: 164-65).

In the 1860s and 1870s a subtle yet profound shift appears to have taken place in the deployment of *tabua* and regalia made from whale ivory. Before this time, the supply of teeth had been almost exclusively one way, from Tongans and Europeans into Fiji, supplemented by occasional local sources from stranded whales. Few items made of whale ivory were acquired by European collectors before the 1860s, indicating reluctance on the part of Fijians to part with them. The virtual absence of whale ivory in the collections in Salem (from early traders before 1850), Paris (from Dumont d'Urville 1820s-30s) and the Smithsonian Institution (from Wilkes 1840) bears this out. However, a concatenation of circumstances appears to have influenced a shift in practices and attitudes on both sides in the second half of the 19th century. With increased European settlement in the 1860s and, especially, the arrival of colonial administrators in the 1870s, Fijians began to deploy *tabua* and whale ivory regalia in relation to these new government chiefs, who seemed amenable to their charms. This deployment was by formal presentation or via the operations of a nascent curio market based in Levuka, partly prompted by an introduced tax regime. The Europeans, led by Governor Gordon and stimulated by the presence of the avid young collector Baron Anatole von Hügel, became obsessive and competitive purchasers of Fijian ethnological material of all kinds, including that made of whale ivory. Government House at Nasova, Levuka, resembled a museum, and much of that material is now in Cambridge thanks to von Hügel becoming the founding curator of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology there in 1884, and persuading his Government House associates and their descendants to donate material (Herle and Carreau 2013: 98-105). Gordon relished his participation in "*tabua*

culture", receiving propitiatory offerings, including a 'swimming' *tabua* (*iqalovi*) at Bau in December 1879 (Gordon 1912: 138), and distributing new insignia in the form of "staves of office—very long *poles* of *vesi* headed and ornamented with whale's-tooth ivory" to newly appointed Roko, who were key (and chiefly) Fijian administrators in his system of indirect rule (Gordon 1897: 209). These staves appeared to echo the appearance of high-status staffs and clubs, liberally inlaid with segments of whale ivory, which Fijian chiefs distributed as diplomatic gifts—including to the Governor (see Hooper 2006: 269 for a splendid ivory-inlaid club given by Cakobau to Gordon).

For the first time *tabua* and many other objects made of whale ivory began to flow out of Fiji. This situation was compounded by the widespread conversion of Fijians to Christianity, which rendered problematic the possession of objects that had heathen associations, and by the cessation of warfare, which reduced the need for diplomatic gifts to secure alliances. Europeans, previously the source of supply, now became recipients of teeth in the course of their administrative duties and in their quest to collect "traditional" artefacts. Museum store-rooms around the world now hold evidence of Europeans acting, from the 1870s, not as suppliers of *tabua*, but as recipients.

This outflow of *tabua*, probably combined with increasing use of them by non-chiefly Fijians throughout the country, led to an actual or perceived drain on supplies during the first half of the 20th century, accentuated by gifts to American servicemen stationed in Fiji towards the end of the Second World War. The colonial officer and ethnographer Kingsley Roth considered they were becoming scarce in the 1930s (1953: 106) and to help remedy this perceived shortage, the British administration imported about 400 sperm whale teeth in the mid-1950s from Scotland—a legacy of the whaling industry. Adi Lady Maraia Sukuna described the process of scraping, smoking and oiling she and other ladies used to transform these raw teeth into *tabua*. They were then put into circulation throughout Fiji via the Provincial offices (Roth n.d.).

TABUA IN CULTURE

What might be gleaned from this accumulation of information, ancient and recent, heaped up like so many *tabua* before the reader? So far, I have resisted analysis in order to allow the material to be assembled, but I am now ready to try to answer the question, "Why whale teeth?" What is it that motivates a villager to reach for *tabua* when a relative dies or his son runs off with someone else's daughter? What is it that drove chiefs to stagger under their weight in major public rituals, and why were certain teeth preserved as foundational to the welfare of the polity? It will now be apparent that part of the answer is that they were originally considered to embody ancestral divine power and were used as an effective mechanism for managing and channelling divine

power for human purposes. With the arrival of Christianity and acceptance of Jehovah as the superordinate god, the ancestral power embodied in *tabua*, and for which they were a *waqa* 'vehicle', has become muted—implicit rather than explicit—though still culturally significant. But how does this power work and what are its origins and associations? Here I address these issues by invoking the importance of equivalence and substitution, and by emphasising the role of sacrificial exchange—offerings for blessings—that underlies cultural/religious practice not only in Fiji but globally.

Whale teeth, chiefs and gods

Certain themes have emerged, among the strongest being the explicit association, in testimony and in practice, between *tabua* and chiefs. As Tevita Soro explained, "The *tabua* is a chiefly thing. It is exclusively their valuable, the chiefs" (*A tabua a ka vakaturaga. Odratou iyau ga a turaga*). And by "chiefs" he meant the chiefly clans that hold senior titles in many parts of Fiji. But who are the chiefs? What are their characteristics? I have discussed this matter in detail in an earlier essay (Hooper 1996). Here, as a supplement to the "stranger-king" analysis of Marshall Sahlins (1981), I provide an account given me by Ilaitia Ledua of Udu village on Kabara in 1978, when he explained that the current form of Lauan society was based on the incorporation of immigrant 'chiefs' (*turaga*) by autochthonous 'landspeople' (*vanua*).

> When there is a land and they have their chief, or customary leader, if a greater chief comes along, he will lead them. The thing that will be done—the chief will marry a woman of the land. In their marriage, when they have offspring, he will be chief in the land. Formerly the ladies, the first-born ladies, were the ones who married the chief…. If a lady is married to a chief who has arrived, gardening land will be given to the chief…. It is possible for the chief [leader] of the land to give all the gardening land to the chief who has come by sea…. Everything is his. The first fruits can be done—then will come the first fruits of the earth to the chief and the lady, because their child, when their child is born, will be the great chief in this land. Because: the mother—the land; the father—the chief…. So the things which come from the sea the chief will bring, the valuables of the chief.

Tevita Soro was even clearer about this chiefs/landspeople distinction in ritual procedure, signalled and embodied in specific things of sea and land origin. He said:

> At the distribution of valuables, it is not possible for us the landspeople to go and distribute them. The chiefs, they will distribute the valuables. The feast is ours, a thing of the landspeople. Formerly… if a feast was taken and placed before the chiefs, we would just take along a coconut leaf, or the leaf of some

> tree we would take along in our arms. Yes, that was our customary thing. We would not be able to take a *tabua*. If there was no *yaqona* we would just bear in our arms a leaf…. Only the chiefs, they would hold out a *tabua* for us. This is the proper ancient procedure…. Yes, the *tabua* we didn't present, the landspeople. It is their valuable the chiefs.

Space will not allow a full analysis of what Sahlins (1978:1) has called a "system of objects" as "the concrete dimension of a system of offerings: to the gods or, what is the same, to priests whom the gods temporarily inhabit, and above all to chiefs, who are by descent successors and instantiations of gods". However, it can be emphasised that, certainly in the Koro Sea chiefdoms, *tabua*, and probably *sauwaqa*, *bulileka* and other shells, suitably red or reddened, played a key role in this system as the prime embodiment of chiefs/gods in portable form.

Tabua and chiefs may be regarded as equivalent, the former metonymically standing for the latter, and possibly vice-versa, since both are culturally constructed artefacts of external origin that embody or enshrine ancestral gods and can be deployed to ensure prosperity. It is clear that whale teeth are quintessentially "sea" things of foreign origin, from Tonga or, latterly, from Europeans. Coastal people knew they came from a colossal leviathan of the seas that, like turtle and human, breathes air. Teeth are not made, they arrive, like the chiefs in the foundation myth of society. And not only is the honorific term for the chief's body *kuli ni tabua* 'skin of the whale tooth', both body and tooth are culturally treated in equivalent ways. Considering first the heirloom teeth, they are smoked, oiled and kept wrapped in barkcloth, usually within special containers. This is much as the chief's body is treated, when at installation and on other ritual occasions the chief wears a turban, body wrappings and ties of red smoked barkcloth (*masi kuvui*), and is liberally oiled with scented coconut oil. The chief's dwelling is a special house which, as with chiefly canoes and with temples, is elaborately decorated with cowry shells—valued items from the sea. Transactable teeth, also smoked, oiled and tied with a "red" coir cord, derive their potency from being equivalent to heirloom teeth and chiefs' bodies, but in a form that can serve as sacrificial offerings. They are portable, are handled by chiefs and can be laden in quantity on chiefs' bodies and adapted as body ornaments. The evidence for the *tabua*/chief association is compelling, as is the evidence for the chief/sea association. It may be seen in the distribution of ritual tasks and on chiefly *mausolea*, crowded with conch-shell trumpets that were blown during the initial mourning period—human wailing being *tabu*. This sea origin of *tabua*, besides their desirable visual characteristics, provides the logic of their appropriateness to fulfil their important cosmological work as chief/god equivalents in sacrificial rituals.

With respect to the relationship between chiefs (*turaga*) and gods (*kalou*), Hocart and others, including the missionaries, referred to their equivalence. Thomas Williams wrote (1858: 233), "there is very little difference between a Chief of high rank and one of the second order of deities. The former regards himself very much as a god, and is often spoken of as such by his people, and, on some occasions, claims for himself publicly the right of divinity". Hocart considered that a chief, consecrated through installation, was equivalent to a god, observing (1952b: 26): "If reverence and devotion are required, as a well as a belief in the supernatural, to make up religion, then the true religion of the Fijians is the service of the chief." The comprehensive review and analysis of the chief/god relationship by Sahlins (1978:13-22, 1983:77-79), taken in combination with the other sources, leaves little room for doubt about the equivalence of *turaga* and *kalou*. But if a chief is an embodiment of a god, what is a god? What are the attributes which determine this designation?

Gods are personages, usually ancestral, who through the operation of *mana* or *sau*—power of divine, not human, origin—are attributed with the ability to bring about effects in the world. These effects can be wonderful or terrible, and the work of religion as a cultural practice is to manage divine power for human benefit. Humans have created artefacts and procedures through which to channel and manipulate this ineffable power and, in the Fiji case, among the principal artefacts created for ritual deployment are chiefs and *tabua*. Specific techniques are used to transform appropriate raw "bodies" into cultural artefacts, embodying divinity in material form, through which exchange relationships can be established with gods to tap into divine power. Worship, materialised through offerings of time, skill and things, such as valuables and feasts (which are sacrificial substitutes for the sacrifier), is in essence an exchange relationship between humans and gods in which offerings are made in return for blessings. The closing communal chanting of "*mana, e dina*" at presentations, uttered by participants who embody their titled divine ancestors, ensures the efficacy of the procedure. Numerous examples have been cited of *tabua* being offered as a means of eliciting chiefly blessings for life and prosperity. Religion, in Hocart's terms "the quest for life", is at a fundamental level, beneath the extraordinary cultural elaborations that are manifested globally, a profoundly practical matter. For Fijians, as others, crops need to grow, sickness needs to be overcome and the land needs to be prosperous—the Fijian word for which is *sautu*, lit. 'power/chief standing/established'. If the chief is active, dispensing *mana* blessings, abundance will follow.

A crucial mechanism for achieving *sautu* is sacrifice, and Fijian sacrificial substitution takes three forms. Men produce and present feast foods, notably root crops, women produce and present soft valuables (barkcloth, mats and scented coconut oil), and chiefs and their associated specialists of foreign

origin produce and present great valuables, notably *tabua*, canoes and *yaqona* bowls. In the past, as Sahlins (1983) has shown, substitutes were not always used, and "cooked men" and "raw women" took their place in sacrificial rituals, but the life-giving potency of the chief/god seems usually to have been embodied in a substitute artefact such as a *tabua*—sometimes in many of them. Thomas (1991: 71) considered that *tabua* "can be substituted for women because of the divine power they embody", which is a legitimate reading of their role in affinal exchanges, but the *tabua*/woman association seems not to be primary. They are comparable but different embodiments of power, and the primary substitute artefacts of women's reproductive power are the core valuables barkcloth and mats, made by them, regarded as equivalent to their bodies and used to capture and control external chiefly potency (see Sahlins 1981: 116-19).

How does equivalence and substitution work in ritual practice? For Hawai'i, Valerio Valeri (1985: 301) proposed that certain things—trees, birds, feathers, *'ie'ie* vines—could be "particularisations" of divinity, material manifestations of divine potency that were amenable to human action, notably in the manufacture of great valuables such as cloaks which performed key roles in sacrificial rites. The mechanism by which such equivalence can work has been theorised by Alfred Gell (1998) in his discussion of the agency of art (for which read valuables), where he proposes that art objects are substitutes for persons, and they derive their power and value, and their agency, from this consubstantial association with significant persons, whether gods, kings or artists. Maurice Godelier dedicates a whole chapter of *The Enigma of the Gift* (1999) to the topic of "Substitute Objects for Humans and Gods", in which he argues for the crucial role of substitution in explaining the logic of valuables, both those that move and those that do not. After listing several examples of circulating valuables, he writes, "these articles are all to a varying degree substitutes for human beings", but he goes on to consider "sacred things, which, far from being simple substitutions for persons, are themselves seen as persons, but superhuman ones" (Godelier 1999: 100). Aside from the issue of what a "simple" substitution is, and what a "superhuman" person is, his analysis probes perceptively at the nature of the gift/sacrifice and its relationship to sacred objects, persons and gods.

For Fiji, there is a comparable network of associative equivalences and substitutions involving gods, chiefs, heirloom valuables and transactable valuables, notably *tabua*, which bear on these theoretical propositions. But such ontological issues are not how Fijians usually express their thinking about *tabua* nowadays. For Fijians, *tabua* are linked, through long customary use, to appropriate and effective ways of doing things *vakavanua* 'in the manner of the land', in a way that shows respect to one's kin and one's seniors.

The fact that *tabua* could be characterised as portable "god particles", deriving their intrinsic potency from being materialisations of divinity, is not relevant when someone has died or a misdemeanour needs to be resolved. What is relevant in these circumstances today is that there is a culturally approved and familiar way to deal with such events that is effective and enhances or repairs the reputation of the actors involved. *Tabua*, as embodiments of respect, perform this role.

This state of affairs is likely to remain the case for a very long time. Berthold Seemann, at Namosi in 1860, wrote that the chief, Kuruduadua, "on seeing us handling some money, expressed his astonishment that we should prefer coins to whale's teeth. We told him not many years would elapse before he would change that opinion, but he thought that time would probably never come" (Seemann 1862: 188). They were probably both right, because however much Fiji is locked into the global cash economy, it seems unlikely that *tabua* will ever be discarded. *Mana, e dina*.

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NOTES

1. The research upon which this paper is based has been conducted since 1977. I have spent over three years in Fiji, mostly in Lau, eastern Fiji, and particularly on Kabara Island. Because of this emphasis on research in eastern and coastal Fiji, I am aware of the hazards of making general statements about the whole country when writing about matters "Fijian". Fiji was, and is, linguistically and culturally diverse, notably between east and west, and between coastal and interior regions of the two main islands (which is *not* best expressed as a Melanesian-Polynesian distinction). This paper refers mainly to what Arthur Hocart (1952b: 8) called the "Koro Sea" chiefdoms of eastern Fiji, notably Bau, Rewa, Lau and Cakaudrove, so generalisations made here about "Fiji" need to take this into account, because some general statements may not apply to western and other parts of the country.

2. The presentation called *ireguregu* can be translated literally as 'sniffing'. Touching with the nose and sniffing, whether a chief's hand, or when receiving a *tabua*, or on the cheek when greeting, is a highly respectful gesture still practised today in Fiji and elsewhere in Polynesia.
3. *Mana* has been discussed widely in Oceanic literature, for example by Firth (1967) and Shore (1989). In Fiji it implies an efficacious power of divine origin that can bring about effects in the world (Hooper 1996: 254-60). *Dina* means true or genuine, and *e dina* means 'it is true' or 'it is confirmed', hence the translation here as 'Effective, be it true', to convey the invocation that the blessings uttered should come to pass. *Amuduo* and *duo* are respectful acclamations, the latter used in Bau as the *tama*, the respectful call when approaching a chief.
4. For discussion of these statuses and categorical distinctions, see Hooper (1996: 243-46). In Fiji there is also an important distinction between guests and hosts (*vulagi* and *itaukei*). This influences behaviour and responsibilities at events and is also applied to distinguish chiefs from landspeople, the former regarded as of foreign origin (with sea and sky associations) and the latter autochthonous (with land associations).
5. For example, the condolence *tabua* speech for Paea from the Tokalau delegation was made by Isireli Rarawa, who belonged to the *bete* 'priest' clan at Tokalau, and not to one of the two chiefly clans there. Because of the urgency of the occasion, and a member of a chiefly clan not being available or well enough to make the nocturnal journey, Isireli undertook the task because he was a gifted speaker who normally acted as a herald.
6. *Vakatatabu* means 'speech' in chiefly honorific language. See Hooper (1982:112-22) for a full account of this state reception for Tui Nayau, which included an additional *tabua* presentation called *rova* 'race'. *Rova* in Lau is a race by young men of the visiting party, who pursue local women waving barkcloth, one of whom hides a *tabua*. Whoever finds the *tabua* is feted as victor and keeps the *tabua* and barkcloth. On this occasion the race was not run because the visitors arrived after dark, so a *tabua* was presented at the state reception. The race was run at Rewa when the Lauan children were taken there later that month (see below), a young Lauan man from Moce Island getting the *tabua* from the Rewa ladies in mock flight across the ceremonial ground.
7. There is no clearly expressed indigenous division between *tabua* presentations that are occasioned by status relations or by kin relations, but there is what might be regarded as a continuum, with "state" presentations at one end, such as those performed for the paramount chief at Kabara (where the status relationship between the parties was made explicit), and "kinship" presentations at the other, such as those at weddings, deaths and other rites of passage (where affinal/kin relations are made explicit).
8. Installation into Fijian chiefly titles involves a selection process from eligible candidates (belonging to chiefly clans) by leaders of non-chiefly clans, who also are responsible for organising the installation ritual. This varies from place to place, but core procedures are offering a cup of *yaqona*, tying on barkcloth and giving a forthright speech on the duties of chiefship. *Tabua* may be presented

in some instances, as noted shortly in the installation of Tui Levuka. There is a general sense that a chiefdom is healthier and has more solidarity if it has an installed chief, although uninstalled strong leaders, such as Kevueli Bulu on Kabara, may temporarily remedy the situation, being a focus for, and generator of, the productive capacities of the chiefdom. At the moment in Fiji two of the major chiefdoms, Bau and Lau, have been without an installed paramount chief for a number of years.

9. Tevita Loga held the non-chiefly title Vaka, but he was a well-known broadcaster on Radio Fiji and a skilled orator (see Note 5). Because the paramount chief of Rewa, the Roko Tui Dreketi, was the mother of the children, the role of senior male on the mother's side was taken by the second major title-holder of Rewa, the Vunivalu.
10. Clunie (1986: 178) described the process with these ingredients, as did Adi Lady Maraia Sukuna, who supervised the smoking of *tabua* in the 1950s (Hooper 1982: 90). Hocart (1929: 99) mentions the use of turmeric. Some teeth in use today have an orange-coloured glaze which may be commercial varnish or kauri pine resin (*makadre*) of the kind applied to clay pots. Whatever the ingredients used, the intention was always to render the tooth *damudamu* 'red', a term which applies to the colour spectrum from pink to dark brown.
11. Roth (1953: 100) mentions a deep-coloured elephant tusk *tabua* with the title Tui Nasavusavu he saw and photographed in Namosi, probably in the 1930s (Herle and Carreau 2013: fig 4.3). *Tabua* made of elephant and walrus ivory are occasionally found in collections (Roth 1938: pl. XV) and, if cut, can be identified because of the distinctive internal patterns.
12. The procedure described by Twyning is validated by an account provided around 1910 to Hocart (1929: 69-70) of the installation of Cakobau as Tui Levuka (probably about 1860). Four-hundred *tabua* were said to have been presented to him by two Levukans, successively hung in bunches on his outstretched arms.
13. The State Library of New South Wales (Mitchell Library) in Sydney holds extensive Methodist missionary archives, notable among them the writings of Williams, Lyth, Hunt, Cross, Cargill, Calvert, Jaggar, Malvern and Hazlewood. French Catholic missionaries arrived in Fiji in the 1840s, and they too have left extensive records.
14. Matthew Tomlinson (2012: 215), to whom I am indebted for this reference, goes on to analyse the implications of the surrender of this tooth for the local people.
15. The original is in the Stanmore papers in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge. As Thomas notes (1991: 224) the status of this myth is not entirely satisfactory because there is no Fijian version and the place and circumstances of its transmission are uncertain.
16. Hazlewood's dictionary identifies *sauwaqa* as "the Javan murex, highly prized on the north-east coast of Vanua Levu" (1850: 321), while Hocart (1952b: 201) was told in Macuata, Vanualevu, that before whale teeth were introduced Fijians "used a shell called *sauwangga*, which is like a cowry, only pointed at both ends, like a conch, but smaller." Capell's dictionary (1941: 187), citing the French missionary Neyret as a source, gives *sauwaqa* as "a shell-fish of a fine

red colour, a smaller kind of *yaga*. It was an offering to the *kalou* [god] next in value to a *tabua*." For *yaga* is given *Pterocera* and *Lambis* species of shellfish (p. 285), which are types of spider conch, and for *cava* is given "a shell fish Conus marmoreus, used formerly as a *tabua*." (p. 27). For *mua-ni-waqa* Capell, citing the Methodist missionary Heighway, gives "a shell-fish, Murex tenuispina" (p. 150). Roth (1953: 98) considered that *sauwaqa* were *Terebra* shells, probably based on Toganivalu's description, and he also mentions *Trochus* shells. It is a confusing picture, worthy of further research.

ABSTRACT

This article draws on recent ethnographic research and on records and observations from the early 19th century onwards to demonstrate the great importance of transactable *tabua* 'modified whale teeth' in Fijian cultural life. It argues for a distinction between these post-contact transactable *tabua* and heirloom *tabua* of greater antiquity, but suggests that the role of the latter as embodiments of pre-Christian gods partly accounts for the high value still accorded to transactable *tabua* and their close association with chiefs.

Keywords: Whale teeth/*tabua*, Fiji, chiefship, ritual presentation, exchange

TAPUA: "POLISHED IVORY SHRINES" OF TONGAN GODS

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Thanks to John Thomas and his fellow missionaries it is known "whales' teeth" or "polished ivory shrines" were associated with Tongan gods. They failed to elaborate on their form or say how they worked, however, while those they sent "home" have largely lost their identities so no doubt mostly lie in unmarked graves in Fijian collections. In Tonga, meanwhile, because they were kept so closely secluded few but their assigned keepers, priests and makers saw them, knowledge of them has been lost. These anonymous, effectively nondescript objects or *tapua* have attracted little scholarly attention. That is no longer so, however, for a smoke-stained whale-bone crescent dedicated to a Tongan god has established that they are indistinguishable from symmetrically crescentic *tabuabuli*, historically the most esteemed form of Fijian *tabua*. This realisation led to the central issue addressed here: that of a close spiritual and historical relationship between Fijian *tabuabuli* and Tongan *tapua*.

Because the evidence is so scattered, and the way in which it accrues so diagnostic of the character of the *tapua*, I will follow its spoor forward from European contact, taking and assessing contributions as they come. Initially,

Figure 1. *Tabua* shaped into crescentic form were termed *tabuabuli* (*buli*: 'formed') to distinguish them from Fijian-made *tabua*, which retain the natural form of the whale tooth. Fijian *tabuabuli* are indistinguishable from Tongan *tapua*. Collected in Fiji by Baron von Hügel, 1875-77. MAA Z3026. (© Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

this will entail reviewing indirect 18th century evidence. Next, as *tapua* surface in the early 1800s their funerary role will be linked to that of *tabua* in Fijian chiefly burials. The export of *tapua* from Tonga to Fiji will then be reviewed. Subsequent to the onslaught on the Ha'apai gods by Taufa'ahau (the future King George) in 1829, the *tapua*'s role as a godly embodiment will be explored and related to evidence suggesting certain *pule* cowries formed a female counterpart. Examination of traditional evidence that *tapua* were introduced to Fiji from Tonga, and sometimes made of *pua* wood, will then lead to a comparison of its role to that of wooden ancestor-images in Tonga, and the conclusion that the crescentic form of the *tapua/tabuabuli* was more fundamental than the material it was made from. Ultimately, linkage of its crescentic shape to the quartering moon and a namesake plantain will lead to the conclusion that the *tapua* was ancestral to the Fijian *tabua*, and the prospect that it anciently originated as a token first-fruits offering, and so became the supreme form of material embodiment for gods who, in receiving the first-fruits, underpinned fertility and social prosperity in both Tonga and Fiji.

Having established this article's trajectory, before getting underway I will briefly review the core spiritual, dynastic and historical parameters *tapua* worked within.

GODS, CHIEFS AND POLITICS

To understand Tongan gods, their *tapua* and their descendant chiefs, it needs to be appreciated how the Tongan pantheon divided into two orders, members of both of which could be similarly invoked provided the proper agents, offerings, and material and human embodiments were in place.[1]

The superior order was supposed to be restricted to a finite number of immortal *tupu'i 'otua* (*tupu'i*: 'dating from the beginning'; *'otua*: 'god'). With delegated exceptions—most notably Hikule'o at Pulotu—these immortals mostly resided in the Langi or "*solid* sky" (Martin 1818 v. II: 98). This was not a heaven in a biblical sense, but a layered series of islands, grounded in the Langi 'Sky' and ruled by Tangaloa, most ancient of Polynesian gods and the *Tui Lagi* 'Sky King' of Fijian traditions. As gods without antecedence each *tupu'i 'otua* had the supposedly unique privilege of embodying itself in a *vaka* 'embodiment' (Fijian: *waqa*)—a particular bird, fish, reptile, insect, octopus or other animal which was *tapu* to its worshippers. The *vaka* of Hikule'o, for instance, was the *tukuhali* 'banded sea-krait' and that of deified Tu'i Tonga a *tavake* 'tropicbird'.

Far from being fixed, the lower order consisted of innumerable *'otua fakapulotu* 'Pulotu-type-gods': ancestor-gods whose existence depended upon the conviction that on death the *laumalie* 'immortal essence' of chiefs and their *matapule* henchmen repaired to the island paradise of Pulotu, believed

to lie off to the northwest beyond Fiji, but probably an ancestral Fijian island (Geraghty 1993). Crucially, Pulotu was ruled by that most formidable of *tupu'i 'otua*, Hikule'o, under whose jurisdiction the souls of new arrivals were deified, reunited with their predecessors, and went on living much as they had in Tonga, but on a much more rarefied and infallible level.

On the basis of traditions preserving the dynastic succession of the paramount Tu'i Tonga, it is understood this double-tiered pantheon originated with the founding of that semi-divine lineage in the 10th century. This supposedly happened when Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a, son of Tangaloa, descended from the Langi to mate with a mortal Tongan woman. 'Aho'eitu, the hybrid *'otua tangata* 'god-man' spawned by their union became the first Tu'i Tonga, and spiritual and temporal power seemingly remained vested in the unbroken succession of his semi-divine Fatafehi dynasty until the late 15th century.[2]

As ancestor-gods, *'otua fakapulotu* were invoked through the medium of a dedicated priest or *taula 'otua* 'god-anchor'. Offerings were presented to the god/goddess—who had taken spiritual possession of its priest/priestess and was seated within him/her—on behalf of its supplicants by a *moihu* 'intercessor' (usually a *matapule* 'spokeman') who advocated their cause to the god in the same way as this god would hopefully intercede on their behalf with the lofty *tupu'i 'otua*, who decided spiritual issues. Because of his direct descent from Tangaloa, however, the Tu'i Tonga had the privilege of invoking not just his own deified forebears but his particular tutelary god and spiritual guardian, Hikule'o, the *tupu'i 'otua* with the greatest power over life and death, and interceding directly with him.[3]

The prosperity of chiefly Tonga thus depended on the inviolable semi-divinity of the Tu'i Tonga and his unique relationship with Hikule'o. The spiritual supremacy of the Tu'i Tonga was, moreover, further enhanced by the residence of his deified Fatafehi forebears in the Langi. That may raise eyebrows, some assuming his soul repaired to Pulotu like those of other chiefs. But because the Tu'i Tonga's head, funeral and tomb were all uniquely termed *langi* (Rabone 1845: 147), his mourning rituals differed from those of other chiefs, and his principal widows were strangled and entombed with him in the *langi*. It seems their souls repaired to the Langi with his. With Hikule'o controlling the ancestor-gods for him, and his deified forebears directly lobbying the *tupu'i 'otua* on his behalf, the Tu'i Tonga accordingly held the keys to both godly kingdoms, so stood central to the maintenance of amicable relationships between gods and chiefs, which was all that counted, only chiefs and *matapule* having immortal souls (Martin 1818 v. II: 99).

Translating mythology into history, the founding of the Fatafehi dynasty reflects the invasion of Tonga from Samoa by Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a in the 10th century. His coupling with a chiefly Tongan woman established their

son ʻAhoʻeitu as Tuʻi Tonga, a hybrid god-man, who was *fahu* ʻprivileged sister's son' to his mother's brothers. The Samoan origins of this lineage and all other chiefly lineages in Tonga are confirmed by chiefly language addressed to the Tuʻi Tonga and other high chiefs and continuing ties with Samoa (Mahina 1990). Also there is the reality that Hikuleʻo was Siʻuleo, godly ruler of Samoan Pulotu, in Tongan guise, he having sprouted legs but kept the tail of the *siʻuleo* ʻmoray eel' (Craig 1989: 243, Krämer 1999: 51). Finally, there is Taufaʻahau's plain speaking on the subject in 1843:

> The relationship of the Tonga and Samoa people has been of old. From thence sprang our progenitors, the governing families of Tonga, as the family of Tui-Tonga, and Tui Kanokubolu, the latter being the family of Tubou, King of Tonga, and of George, King of Vavau and Haabai, which is the same with the chief, Mumui. They are still as their children, and one with them. (As recorded by Farmer 1855: 285)

Relationships between gods and chiefs were complicated in the 15th-16th centuries by chiefly rivalry and rebellion, overseas adventurism by the Tuʻi Tonga, and the rise of a powerful offshoot lineage that relieved him of temporal authority. The social forces driving this phenomenon—which reverberated throughout Western Polynesia—have been identified by Aswani and Graves (1998) and Gunson (1979); Herda (1995) and Campbell (2001) have reviewed the traditional evidence. Apart from being spiced with a fresh Fijian twist, key factors will thus only be mentioned in passing here.

During the early to mid-15th century the authority of the Tuʻi Tonga was so determinedly challenged that two were assassinated. Rebellion overreached itself however, when Takalaua—successor to the second victim—was also murdered. Leaving the home front guarded by his younger brother Moʻungamotuʻa, acting as *hau* ʻruler', Takalaua's successor, Kauʻulufonuafekai, countered by driving the instigators from Tonga and harrying them across Fiji and Western Polynesia until finally cornering them on ʻUvea. After Kauʻulufonuafekai returned, however, his brother was installed as the first Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua and established as a permanent pan-Tongan *hau*. The Tuʻi Tonga accordingly was relieved of executive authority. This development seems to have been accomplished more by coup than compact, for the Tuʻi Tonga left to live abroad for several generations (Campbell 2001: 40). During this absence, which essentially spanned the 16th century, it has tended to be assumed the Tuʻi Tonga settled in Samoa. But as Herda (1995) sensed, and as is now being revealed by matching archaeology to Samoan, Tongan and Fijian traditional evidence, successive Tuʻi Tonga—backed by a powerful, sporadically reinforced Tongan-Samoan following—evidently set about forging a fresh power base in Fiji, spawning

hybrid lineages, becoming variously deified and disseminating *tapua*, which changed the face of Fijian society in a process that only ended when Tapu‘osi I returned to Tonga in the early 17th century (Clunie in prep.).

What happened on the Tongan spiritual front during that period is unclear; ancestor-gods of the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalau conceivably were elevated to de facto *tupu‘i ‘otua* status to receive the first-fruits and legitimise his rule. Whether or not that happened then, however, it certainly did so in the wake of Tapu‘osi I’s return, when the lineages of the Tu‘i Tonga and Hau became progressively interlocked by marriage. Ultimately, the dynastic cum godly compromises this entailed were enshrined in a convention whereby the Tu‘i Tonga took a daughter of the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua as his chief wife, who in turn became formally instituted as *Moheofo* and co-intercessor to the *Fa‘ahitonga* ‘gods of the Tu’i Tonga lineage’, who now included de facto *tupu‘i ‘otua* drawn from her ancestral line. The spiritual ascendancy of the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua was, moreover, further assured by installing the first-born daughter of the Tu‘i Tonga and Moheofo as *Tu‘i Tonga Fefine* ‘Female Tu‘i Tonga’ and ensuring she always married a chief of a newly created Falefisi ‘Fiji House’, packed with Tongo-Fijian descendants of the Tu‘i Tonga’s Fijian sojourn (see Bott 1981, 1982).

This convoluted spiritual and temporal reformation accounts for the dynastic complexity that so baffled Cook in the 1770s, by which time the spiritually elevated Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua had themselves been supplanted as *hau* by the offshoot Tu‘i Kanokupolu lineage, and the dynastic situation was so fraught that Tonga was ripe for eruption should anything tilt the godly balance. Which—despite the safety valve provided by Fiji adventuring—is what happened when Hikule‘o and the *tupu‘i ‘otua* came to be challenged by the British God, with all the diseases of the world at his fingertips. Against that turgid backdrop, and with Cook sowing the seeds of godly, social and dynastic disruption, we can begin tracking the *tapua* and its ties to the gods and chiefs it served.

HIDDEN PRESENCE: 18TH CENTURY *TAPUA*

The fleeting visit of the *Eendracht* to the Niuas in 1616 produced no mention of *tapua*. Nor did that of Tasman’s *Heemskerk* and *Zeehaan* to Tongatapu and Nomuka in 1643. Indeed, despite numerous calls by British, French and Spanish shipping in the wake of HMS *Dolphin* touching at Tafahi and Niuatoputapu in 1767, and Cook’s visits to Tonga in the 1770s, with the exception of one tenuously provenanced Cook voyage specimen in the Pitt Rivers Museum (Fig. 2), *tapua* were evidently not encountered by 18th-century visitors. Insofar as negative evidence convinces, this is telling, because Cook and his contemporaries paid particular attention to god-houses built atop *fa‘itoka* ‘chiefly burial-mounds’.

Figure 2. This sperm whale tooth *tapua* with twisted hibiscus bast cord was initially attributed to New Zealand and bore a Cook voyage provenance when transferred from the Ashmolean Museum to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1886. The provenance remains unproven, however. PRM:1886.1.1539. (© Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.)

Although *tapua* escaped comment, however, their presence is reflected in *fono* 'pieces' (Fijian: *vono*)—ivory ornaments that conform to the size of offcuts generated when transforming whale teeth into *tapua*. To appreciate their significance, recall that while they naturally, even suggestively curve, the teeth ranging round the lower jaw of a sperm whale vary in size and form depending upon position, wear, age, size and sex, bulls having much larger teeth. Consequently, while some lend themselves to being transformed into the balanced crescent of a *tapua*, teeth that fan into broad flattened butts, penetrated by deeply slotted basal cavities, can only be made to conform by reducing them in size, producing sizeable offcuts in the process.

Surviving 18th century ivory *fono* include human images, pigeons, headrests, cowries, suspension hooks, turtles, fish and less identifiable subjects, all pierced for suspension, as well as rods used as *hau* 'earlobe ornaments' (Fijian: *sau*). Segments of ivory cut into moons, suns, stars, stylised pigeons and even human images were also inlaid into fly-whisk handles, clubs and headrests.[4] These items materially confirm descriptions by J.R. Forster in 1774 (Forster 1982: 545), Anderson and Samwell in 1777 (Beaglehole 1967: 941, 1039), Morrison (2010: 33) in 1789 and Labillardière (1800: 334, 374) in 1792.

While sparse, their observations are unique for being made when ivory supply was entirely dependent upon sperm whales that had died natural deaths. *Lei* 'ivory' was thus in such scarce supply that whale-bone was often substituted, besides being used for larger objects like war clubs (Labillardière 1800: 335) and breastplates. These last may seem remote from *tapua*. Not so, however. The word *tapua/tabua* was first recorded in association with gigantic whale-bone *sifa* breastplates encountered on Tongatapu in 1774 and 'Eua in 1777 (Beaglehole 1967: 964, Forster 1982: 386, Forster 2000: 249). Their size—two the Forsters collected are expansive enough to shield the chiefly chest from a Fijian arrow while another in the British Museum covers the entire torso—tends to mask that they are overgrown extrapolations of *sifa* (Fijian: *civa*), the polished mother-of-pearl shell breastplates that were so widely worn by Tongan and Fijian chiefs as to be mentioned by virtually every visitor. Indeed, most surviving whale-bone *sifa* fall within the size range of the pearlshell (*Pinctada margaritifera*).[5] That being true, Anderson's observation that a massive whale-bone breastplate he saw on 'Eua was "of the manufacture of Feejee" (Beaglehole 1967: 964) is illuminating because the Fijian for such is *civatabua*, which translates back into Tongan as *sifatapua—tabua/tapua* being a qualifier in both cases. It thus seems only the qualifier was noted when "Tabùā" was listed by Forster/Anderson as meaning "Bone breast plate" (see Lanyon-Orgill 1979: 63).

That the Tongan informant did not apply the normal term for the raw material—*hui tofua'a* 'whale-bone'—but used the honorific *tapua* is instructive; it not only spiritually connects the whale-bone *sifatapua* to the *tapua* proper, but links the *tapua* to the shell *sifa*. This is significant because sun-like pearlshell breastplates closely akin to *sifa* were worn as symbols of divine descent by chiefs across Polynesia, including Archaic period New Zealand, where, in the absence of pearl shell, they were made from serpentine (Prickett 1999). *Sifa* are clearly ancient Polynesian symbols, and stars, serrated suns and full or crescent moons feature prominently among *fono* inlays. Both suggest that the quartering moon-like form of the *tapua*, if not the object itself, traces, like the *sifa* breastplate, back to the Langi, and indeed may well have come down from Samoa with Hikule'o in the 10th century.

For all their apparent antiquity, however, the 18th century closed without further mention of *tapua*, although the first missionaries evidently came close to some during the funeral of Tu'i Kanokupolu Mumui in 1797. To recognise them in the following, accept that (as will be substantiated) *tapua* were tended by a female custodian and kept enwrapped within bag-like *mosikaka* baskets akin to those presented just after the body of Mumui and his strangled widows were laid in the tomb, when a:

> … file of females, nineteen in number, brought each a bag of their most valuable articles; and twenty-one more had each a fine mat in their hands, all of which they deposited in the tomb, being, as they call it, a present for the dead; and immediately after came a present from Tōogahowe [Tukuʻaho, Mumui's son] consisting of thirty-five bales of cloth, each bale carried by four men on a frame. (Wilson 1799: 243)

Given Rabone (1845: 147) defined *lafo kie* as "The practice of throwing good mats into the tombs of chiefs when buried", that Churchward (1959: 277) confirmed it was the "duty of certain relatives" to "present fine mats… when a chief dies", and that *tapua* were entombed with the Tuʻi Tonga, Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua and Tuʻi Kanokupolu, it is reasonable to suppose some of those "most valuable objects" were *tapua* representative of the tutelary gods of the *haʻa* 'chiefly lineages' the "females" represented.[6]

The mission collapsed in 1799 with the assassination of Tukuʻaho, Mumui's successor, and the consequent outbreak of dynastic and religious warfare left Tonga without the centralising authority of an overall Hau until after Taufaʻahau Tupou was installed as Tuʻi Kanokupolu in the mid-1800s. What is often underappreciated is how much had already changed by the time missionaries arrived in 1797. The New South Wales colony had brought Tonga within the range of shipping and ship-borne diseases were rampant. The British God had long since landed and was even being actively supplicated by the Tuʻi Kanokupolu at a god-house dedicated "to the God of Prētane [Britannia]" (Wilson 1799: 102). With the Hau turning to the very God the missionaries had come to introduce, the Tongan cosmos was in turmoil. But it was left to the coming century and William Mariner to notice *tapua* and begin setting them in godly context.

THE EMERGENCE OF *TAPUA*

Mariner, who survived the cutting off of the *Port au Prince* in 1806, was adopted by Finau ʻUlukalala who, in league with the Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua and Tupou Moheofo, had engineered the assassination of Tukuʻaho and since established himself as *hau* of Haʻapai and Vavaʻu, where the Tuʻi Tonga lived under his "double-edged" protection.

Whalers were now working the "South Sea" and—crucially—the Fiji sandalwood trade was underway. Knowing *tabua* were esteemed in Fiji, the traders brought ivory and, as they generally called at Tonga for pigs, yams and plantains en route, Tongan chiefs tended to get first pick. Most of the imported ivory consisted of raw whale teeth, but India-based traders stocked elephant tusks, and others "sea-horse teeth" (walrus tusks), this last Mariner numbered among Finau's treasures (Martin 1818 v. I: 237). They also brought steel-edged blades, saws and armourer's drills which, as the supply of ivory

grew, enabled the development of more complex forms of prestige object, including *sifatapua* breastplates composed of closely fitted *fono* 'pieces', *sifafonofono* (Fijian: *civavonovono*) composed of an ivory-inlaid pearlshell core bounded by ivory plates, and even massive composite *tapua*, one of which found its way from Tonga to a god-house in Naitasiri in SE Vitilevu, whence it (Fig. 3) eventually progressed to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Roth 1937, 1984; Toganivalu MS: Ch. 8).[7]

Windfall strandings meanwhile continued, and when Mariner went with Finau to secure the teeth of "a large dead spermaceti whale" the circumstances reminded Finau of an earlier event when a dead whale drifted to an island occupied by an old couple. The teeth had disappeared before Finau arrived, so when charm and duress could only produce four he had the old people clubbed. Finau, however recounted that:

> The remainder of these teeth were discovered long afterwards, by the peculiar intervention (as the natives will have it) of the gods. A few years had elapsed, when there being occasion to build and consecrate a house to some god, on the Island of Lefooga [Lifuka], it was taken into consideration what valuable article should be deposited beneath its foundation, according to the custom on such occasions. They were about to get ready a large bale of gnatoo [*ngatu*: bark cloth] for this purpose, when the inspired priest of the god declared it

Figure 3. This massive composite *tapua* was made in Tonga but ended its life as a *tabuabuli* in a god-house in Naitasiri, Vitilevu. Collected by Sir John B. Thurston, c. 1885. MAA 1936.380. (© Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

> to be the wish of the divinity to have some whale's teeth; and that there were several buried together on the small island just spoken of, in such a particular spot: which place being referred to and dug up, the teeth were found in a perfect state. (Martin 1818 v. I: 30)

The significance of Finau's revelation that "whale's teeth"—surely *tapua* rather than raw teeth—were "deposited" beneath god-houses when they were consecrated becomes apparent when it is realised their interment created an artificial tomb, mimicking the way in which *tapua*, fine mats and barkcloth were entombed with, as Mariner describes, the Tu'i Tonga:

> When he is dead, his body is washed with oil and water, as usual; his widows come to mourn over him, &c.; and, according to the former custom, his chief widow should be strangled, but whether on the day of his death or of his burial, Mr. Mariner does not know. His fytoca [*fa'itoka*], or burial-place, is of the same form as that of the other chiefs. The day after his death (which is the day of his burial), every individual at every island, man, woman and child, has his head closely shaved. This is a peculiarity, and so is the custom of depositing some of his most valuable property along with the body in the grave, such as beads, whales' teeth, fine Hamoa mats, &c.; so that his family burying-place, where all his ancestors lie, must have become very rich; for no native would dare to commit the sacrilege of plundering it. (Martin 1818 v. II: 214)

Mariner, who witnessed the *langi* 'entombment' of Tu'i Tonga Fatafehi Fuanunuiava in 1810, had assisted at the burial of Finau 'Ulukalala, so knew the body of a high chief—like, as shall be seen, a *tapua*—was anointed with sandalwood-scented oil before being enwrapped in fine *kie* or *ngafingafi* mats and *ngatu* barkcloth and lowered into the tomb (Martin 1818 v. 1: 388). He had not, however, attended a Tu'i Kanokupolu or Tu'i Ha'atakalaua funeral, so was unaware offerings of "whales' teeth, fine Hamoa mats, &c." were likewise entombed with them.

Mariner having raised it, the question of widow strangulation and its association with *tapua* and with *tabua* in Fiji demands attention. As mentioned earlier, widow-strangulation makes sense in the Tu'i Tonga's case by enabling their souls to accompany his to the Langi. The same cannot be said, however, for the widows of the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua and Tu'i Kanokupolu unless their tutelary deities had been artificially elevated to the Langi as de facto *tupu'i 'otua* and they themselves accorded de facto god-man status. This, coupled with the fact that the ghastly sacrifice of *foa'ulu*—whereby mourners hacked themselves with clubs, shells or stones, stuck arrows or spears through arms, legs or cheeks, set fire to their oiled hair, and so forth—was still "exercised with the utmost readiness and enthusiasm" at the Hau's funeral but had never formed part of

Tu‘i Tonga mourning rituals (Martin 1818 v. II: 213), implies the privilege of widow-strangulation had only latterly been accorded them. Whenever it was sanctioned, however, there is no doubt the Hau’s chief widows were being sacrificed by the 18th century, traditional knowledge (Filihia 1999: 15) being confirmed by this account of Tu‘i Kanokupolu Mumui’s funeral in 1797:

> … the body of the deceased king was carried past our house…. Behind the corpse was a multitude of people of both sexes. A female chief called Fefene Duatonga [Tu‘i Tonga Fefine], who is very corpulent, was carried on a kind of frame made of two long bamboos, between which she sat on a piece of matting, and was borne by four men. Near her Futtafāihe [Tu‘i Tonga Fatafehi] walked; and next them two women, who were devoted to be strangled at the funeral: one was weeping, but the other appeared little concerned; they both were wives of the deceased. (Wilson 1799: 240)

The strangulation of the chief widows of the Tu‘i Tonga, Tu‘i Kanokupolu, and Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua is significant because it corresponds to *tabua*-related practices at the funerals of Fijian chiefs claiming descent from Nakauvadra, whence the souls of deceased chiefs repaired for admission by Degei—the Fijian Hikule‘o—to godly Bulu. The parallels are remarkable: the chiefly Fijian corpse was enwrapped in barkcloth and mats and interred in a stone-faced, often tiered mound that was not only reminiscent of a Tu‘i Tonga *langi*, but likewise topped by a god-house. A Fijian chief was, moreover, also interred with *tabua*, one sometimes pillowing his head (Thompson 1940: 99), another ready to cast at a ghostly wild pandanus tree (*balawa*, *vadra*, Tongan: *fa*, *Pandanus tectorius*) to ensure his widows were strangled to release their souls to accompany his to Bulu. Whether this latter *tabua* was the one presented by a chiefly bride’s family to her husband’s family on marriage is unknown, but certainly the deceased chief’s family presented a *tabua* to his widow’s senior male relative so that he might execute her strangulation. Certainly too, chiefs allied to the deceased presented *tabua* as spiritually binding tokens of their intention to remain bound to his successor and his god, though these were not usually entombed with him, unlike *tapua* presented at the entombment of the Tu‘i Tonga and Hau.

Just how closely these chiefly Fijian burial practices parallel those of the Tu‘i Tonga is unknown, partly because *tapua* were shrouded in secrecy, partly because only the *matapule* undertaker who placed the offerings in the *langi* knew, he being “the only living person to come out of the tomb alive” (Gifford 1929: 321). It is plain, however, that parallel principles were at work. Apart from suggesting chiefly widow strangulation may have been transferred to Fiji by the Tu‘i Tonga in the 16th century, this suggests that

just as R.B. Lyth described *tabua* as "the Feejeean passport to eternity", so the *tapua* served as a "Tonguese" passport to the Langi for the Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, Tu'i Kanokupolu, and their strangled widows (Lyth MS. Journal I, 1836-40, 6 July 1840).

IVORY WORKING AND TRAFFICKING OF *TAPUA* TO FIJI

In the 1770s Cook voyage observers reported active traffic between Fiji and Tonga, which imported godly "red feathers" [*kula*], "earthen pots", "variegated matts", "Striped and chequered Cloth... very curiously & prettily painted", "clubs and spears… carv'd in a very masterly manner", and "some other things which had all a cast of superiority in the workmanship" (Beaglehole 1967). They apparently overlooked sandalwood, but Labillardière (1800: 379) corrected that. This traffic has archaeological traces from the 10th century, but expanded markedly from the 16th onward (Best 1984, 2002; Marshall *et al*. 2000). To understand the part *tapua* played in it, it needs to be appreciated that, although Anderson understood a *sifatapua* breastplate he saw on 'Eua was made in Fiji, the production of worked whale-bone and ivory prestige objects and quality weaponry in Tonga and Fiji was the prerogative of specialists belonging to clans of canoe-builders attached to the service of powerful maritime chiefs, and that these craftsmen were of Tongan, Samoan or Tongo-Samoan extraction. In Fiji, they essentially fell into two categories: long-established *mataisau* canoe-builders of mixed "*Toga-Viti*" descent, and plank-building *mataitoga* who had either settled since the mid-18th century or were there temporarily to build canoes for Tongan overlords (Martin 1818 v. II: 88; see also, Calvert 1858: 4; Clunie 1986: 15, 144; 1988: 11-16; 2001; Fison 1907: 19-26; Gifford 1952: 340; Heffernan in Stanmore MS. Fiji Museum; Waterhouse 1866: 391).[8]

The 18th century observers were fixated upon imports from Fiji, but Mariner recorded what went in the opposite direction:

> Before the Tonga people acquired iron implements, they usually gave whales' teeth, ngatoo [*ngatu* barkcloth], mats for sails, and platt [plaited cordage]; but whales' teeth are exceedingly scarce, and the other articles are too bulky for ready exportation. The *sting* of the fish called stingray was also occasionally given, but these *stings*, which they use for the points of spears, are by no means plentiful. The fish is found in the greatest quantity at an island called Ooea ['Uvea], which lies about mid-way between Vavaoo [Vava'u] and Hamoa Another article of exchange is a peculiar species of shell which they find only at Vavaoo, and is also scarce. (Martin 1818 v. I: 322)

This traffic—borne on Tongan canoes—is fundamental to understanding cultural overlaps between Tonga, Samoa and Fiji. It is therefore fortunate that

Thomas Williams noted how Tongans exchanged "fine mats of the Samoans" for scarlet Fijian *kula* feathers, and confirmed that even in the mid-19th century:

> The inhabitants of the Friendly Islands still depend on Fiji for their canoes, spars, sail-mats, pottery, and [barkcloth] mosquito curtains. They also consume large quantities of Fijian sinnet [coir cordage] and food, bringing in exchange whales' teeth, the same made into necklaces, inlaid clubs, small white cowries, Tonga cloth, axes, muskets together with the loan of their canoes and crews, and, too often, their services in war. (Williams 1858: 94)

Besides mentioning similarly esteemed *pule'oto*—Mariner's "peculiar species of shell" and Williams' "small white cowries"—both notably stressed the movement of *tapua* and other worked ivory from Tonga to Fiji. Nor were they alone in describing a continuing traffic in *tapua*; Taufa'ahau Tupou forwarded a batch on the *John Wesley* in 1850.

> We are all busy to-day in preparing for our voyage to Feejee: the brethren finishing their letters, the Captain filling up his water-casks, and Methuselah taking his yams, mats, and native cloth on board. Joel [Joeli Mafileo] also is shipping his whales' teeth and other riches, as presents from the King to the Feejee Chiefs. Joel is charged with the important message that all the Tonga people are to come away from Feejee, where they have been misbehaving, or the King will cast them off and let them be governed by the man-eating Chiefs of Feejee. At the King's request, we take this ambassador and his people with us… Joel being one of our best friends, and a Local Preacher at Habai [Ha'apai]. (Lawry 1851: 116)

TAPUA EMBODY HIKULE'O AND OTHER *FA'AHITONGA* GODS

The Wesleyan Mission was founded in 1822, yet nothing is heard of *tapua* between Mariner's departure in 1810 and 1829, when Taufa'ahau, Tu'i Ha'apai, dragged them into the open by launching a crusade against the gods of Ha'apai. According to Pita Vi (Gifford 1929: 347)—his Wesleyan adviser—Taufa'ahau began on Foa, murdering the priestess of Haehaetahi, whom he approached wearing a flowery garland instead of the requisite wreath of *ifi* leaves, and clubbed her in the throat, notably with a plantain trunk, while she was spiritually-possessed, quaffing *kava* on behalf of the god within her. He then set about systematically desecrating god-houses and pillaging their sacred relics, Vi relating how:

> Taufaahau persevered in his treatment of the sacred things of the gods at Haapai: the clubs, the kava bowls, and the whale's teeth. The god houses that would burn were burnt, and the things that could be cut were cut, and the things that could be smashed were smashed. (Gifford 1929: 348)

Although upstaged by wooden goddess-images Taufa'ahau hung at Lifuka in 1830 (Neich 2007), *tapua* thus came to the attention of the Wesleyans, who called them "shrines" but did not elaborate further. John Thomas, however, eventually revealed that the Fa'ahitonga clan of gods served and accessed by the Tu'i Tonga and Moheofo were mostly represented by:

> … polished ivory shrines—called Fakafaaga [*fakafa'anga*] which were oiled and carefully wrapped first in fine mats, and then in native cloth, and were laid up aloft in the sacred house, which house was Olotele at Mua [Mu'a], and in charge of a female called Feao [*fe'ao*], or companion of the gods, but the oversight of the whole was left to the Tuitonga, and his lady the Moheofo, both viewed as the Tauhi [*tauhi* 'guardian'], or servants of the gods. This was their high office. (Thomas in Larsson 1960: 66)

Thomas subsequently confirmed the "polished ivory shrines" were "whales' teeth", so left no doubt the great Fa'ahitonga gods—whom he identified as "Hikule'o", "Tuipulotufekai", "Eikitubu", "Laufilitonga", "Tuihihifo", "Fatafehi", "Sinaitakala", "Finatauiku" and a goddess called "Nau'aa" or "Ngaua'a", the "intercessor, by whom the gods were addressed" and "Fahu, or privileged intercessor" of Hikule'o—were mostly represented by *tapua*. Of the gods listed: Hikule'o, Tu'i Pulotufekai and Fatafehi are synonymous, 'Eikitupu was particularly associated with the Tamaha, and Laufilitonga, Sinaitakala and Nau'aa/Ngaua'a likewise relate to the Tu'i Tonga. Finautauiku, however, was tutelary god to the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua (Gifford 1929: 319), and Tu'i Hihifo presumably to Ngata, the first Tu'i Kanokupolu.

Once coupled with Rabone's (1845: 185) definition of "Tabua, *s*. A term of reverence to a chief when speaking meaning of himself", the manner in which Fa'ahitonga *tapua* were oiled and wrapped in fine mats and barkcloth before being sequestered is instructive because it parallels the way in which the bodies of the Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Ha'atakalaua and Tu'i Kanokupolu were readied for entombment. This indicates that just as Hikule'o and other great gods were embodied in *tapua*, so the Tu'i Tonga and other great chiefs were not only addressed but buried as *tapua*. *Tapua*, in other words, lay embedded at the heart of the Tongan religion as an embodiment of Hikule'o and other great gods, whose high chiefly descendants were accordingly known and entombed as *tapua*, which explains why an artificial tomb packed with *tapua*, *ngatu* and fine mats was sunk beneath the floor of a new god-house dedicated to a powerful god. The *tapua*, then, was an archaic, supremely *tapu* embodiment of Tongan godliness rather than a secondary import from Fiji, where a related usage of *tapua* occurs in the Lau islands, where *kulinitabua* 'skin of the *tabua*' not only refers in honorific speech to the body of a chief

(Hocart 1929: 47), but also to the barkcloth barrier that isolates the corpse as it is readied for burial (Gatty 2009: 124).

Thomas' information that *tapua* representing different ancestor-gods were housed collectively in the great Olotele god-house of Hikuleʻo at Lapaha, rather than each residing in the *lokitapu* 'sanctum' of its own discrete god-house, reflects Hikuleʻo's unique status as ruler of Pulotu. Similarly fundamental is his revelation that the "Feʻao or companion" who tended godly *tapua* was "a female" because—coupled with the custodial role of the Moheofo and the "females" who presented "each a bag of their most valuable articles" for entombment with Tuʻi Kanokupolu Mumui—it indicates that particular chiefly women were dedicated to the care of *tapua* and suchlike godly embodiments. This concurs with female stewardship of spiritually charged fine mats in Samoa and the exalted status still accorded to heirloom *kie hingoa* 'named fine mats' in Tonga, which "are usually controlled by women who look after them, know their histories and know at what events they should appear" (Kaeppler 1999a: 219).

TAPUA EMBODY THE GODS OF THE *HAU*

Stepping down from the Faʻahitonga, Thomas turned to the god-houses of the Faʻahihau, or gods of the Tuʻi Kanokupolu and Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua:

> In some, if not all these houses were shrines of the god, chiefly polished ivory shrines, or whales' teeth called fakafaaga [*fakafaʻanga*] (or something tangible) which were carefully kept, wrapped up as the other [Faʻahitonga] gods hidden from the eyes of all except the companion or keeper of the god and other sacred things: these shrines were the residences [*fale*] of the god and took his name. It may perhaps be noticed here, as one reason for ivory being made choice of to represent the god, that it was to Tongans a most precious and scarce article. They had nothing more valuable, hence they gave it to the god, who was considered entitled to the best of all they had. Besides this many of the gods had what was called the hala [*hala*], or way [path], which was a carved club—most sacred, by which the god was supposed to enter the priest. The gods we have noticed were called the gods of the Houeiki [*houʻeiki*], including the Royal [Tuʻi Kanokupolu] family and its branches of nobility upwards to the Tuitonga, they were not sought to by other chiefs. (Thomas in Larsson 1960: 66-67)

In writing thus, Thomas particularly concentrated upon Taliai Tupou, who had a dozen or more god-houses spread through Tongatapu, Haʻapai and Vavaʻu, so was served by multiple *tapua*. As tutelary god of the Tuʻi Kanokupolu, Taliai Tupou's power and prestige are unquestionable. Although standing foremost among Mariner's "original hotooas" and high among Anderson's "residents of the heavens" (Beaglehole 1967: 949, Martin 1818 v.

II: 105-9), however, his ancestry not only establishes him as a classic example of an elevated ancestor-god, but demonstrates just how deeply Tonga was embroiled in Fijian affairs in the 16th century.

In 1840 Horatio Hale (1846: 183) learned that "Tupou" derived from Tubou, Lakeba, in eastern Fiji. Taliai Tupou's origins are, however, better revealed in a saga of Taliai Tupou—not the god but his aged Tui Nayau namesake—related to Lorimer Fison (1907: 49-57) at Tubou in the 1860s. This conflates traditions concerning the godly origins and history of the Tu'i Tonga and Fijian ones about Degei into the person of Tui Lakeba, a terrible god-man, who—after descending from the 'Sky' and campaigning in Fiji, "smiting the gods in every place, and forcing them all to make peace-offerings to him"—settled at Lakeba, which he likewise subdued and ruled until Taliai Tupou, his son by Degei's "daughter", was competent to govern as *sau*. Tui Lakeba then returned to Tonga, reduced it to order, and rejoined his father, Tui Lagi, in the 'Sky'. There is no room here to detail traditions linking Tui Lakeba, the great Lakeban war-god, with "Tuitoga" and Degei in Fiji, so those must await subsequent analysis (Clunie in prep.). But from a Tongan viewpoint it is electrifying that until Tui Lakeba crushed it and established himself at Tubou, Lakeba was dominated by Waciwaci. From there, three generations after Tapu'osi I returned to Tonga, a 'Fijian' Tapuosi came to marry Sinaitakala, the first Tu'i Tonga Fefine, and be installed as Tu'i Lakepa, thereby spawning the Fale Fisi.

Quite how Taliai Tupou came to be Tu'i 'Ahau in Ha'apai remains obscure. But it can only have happened in the 17th century, Fijian tradition establishing this and it being Mataeleha'amea, fourth Tu'i Kanokupolu, who adopted him as his tutelary war-god (Gunson 1979: 39). It is thus fortuitous that Thomas linked Taliai Tupou to *tapua*, because while Tu'i 'Ahau is known to have embodied himself in "a large black volcanic pebble, roughly oval in shape", his *tapua* are otherwise forgotten (Collocott 1921b: 230, Gifford 1929: 319-20).

Thanks to Thomas, then, it is clear that, although they originally may well have been restricted to embodying Hikule'o and other *tupu'i 'otua*, *tapua* eventually came to embody ancestor-gods of the Hau, and, as will emerge, lesser chiefs.

TAPUA AS *FALE* AND *FAKAFA'ANGA*

Thomas's revelation that *tapua* were classed as *fakafa'anga*—"something tangible"—is remarkable for its equivalence to the Fijian classification of *tabua* as *ivakadinadina* 'tangible proofs', regardless of whether they, as godly embodiments, provided hard evidence of a chief's divine ancestry and entitlement to receive first-fruits, or were being transferred from one

chiefly lineage to another as a spiritually binding earnest of good faith. It needs stressing, however, that while Thomas restricted the term to *tapua* and suchlike godly *fale*, *fakafa'anga* also included their wrappings, which were sanctified by contact with them. This is clarified by Gifford, who pointed out that each chiefly lineage had:

> … a deity with a presiding priest who had in charge the *fakafaanga* or precious and sacred possessions of its god. Part of the *fakafaanga* were fine mats…. One mat in particular was kept folded and on the occasion of the appearance of the god was spread out for him [i.e., his spiritually-possessed priest or other embodiment] to rest upon. This mat was treated virtually as a shrine. It might not be disposed of under pain of death at the hands of the god. (Gifford 1929: 317-18)

Thomas' observation that *tapua* were "hidden from the eyes of all except the companion or keeper of the god and other sacred things" helps account for how they have flown beneath the scholastic radar, for why there are next to no records of them until 1829, and, ultimately, the secrecy surrounding first-fruit presentations to Hikule'o in particular. His statement that "these shrines were the residences of the god and took its name" is, moreover, proof a god spiritually occupied its *tapua*, which consequently bore its name, as also did its priest/priestess, plus the object serving as its dedicated *hala* 'path' (Fijian: *sala*). Thomas erred, however, in claiming a "god was supposed to enter" its priest by way of its *hala*. It rather first entered its *fale* (in this case a *tapua*), where it rested. It then entered its priest/priestess. Finally, it passed through its *hala*—usually a club or throwing club, but otherwise a spear, *lali* 'slit gong', shell trumpet, or even a musket—which formed the conduit through which it *departed* at the end of the manifestation. How he confused so simple a sequence is puzzling: his fellows understood the god left via its *hala*, and he knew that in chiefly language *hala* meant the death of a Tu'i Tonga or Tamaha and their spiritual departure for the Langi via their *langi* 'tomb'; or, as Rabone (1845: 124) succinctly put it: "Hala, *s*. Demise, applied to the *Tuitoga* and *Tamaha*".[9]

Thomas' otherwise invaluable contribution is confirmed and amplified by this entry in a *List of Curiosities* R.B. Lyth collected in Ha'apai (1836-39) and Fiji (1839-50):

> No 23. Two old whales teeth—one half consumed having been burnt in a heathen temple in Tonga [Tongatapu] or Vavau. They belonged to the Tui Tonga's family—and were with a number of other whales' teeth the gods of the tribe. They were called the Fahi-Toğa [Fa'ahitonga] and were kept in the heathen temple belonging to the Tuitoğa.*

> *They belonged to one of the original gods [*tupu'i'otua*] of the Fahi Toga—to Ikuleo [Hikule'o] or Tui Hihifo or some other. Many whales teeth went to make one god, twenty in some, ten in others—they were carefully wrapped up in the Gafigafis [*ngafingafi*: a class of fine mat]—the best and most valued of which were made at Samoa—and were called Tuvua [*tupu'a*]. Disposed of in Fiji. (Lyth MS. *Tongan & Fijian Reminiscences*)

The charring may relate to Taufa'ahau's burning of god-houses at Vava'u in 1831 (Farmer 1855: 210). But Lyth's subsequent comments—particularly his revelation a "god" was composed of multiple "whale's teeth" and his use of the word *tupu'a*—merit attention.

The need for gods and great chiefs to be represented by multiple, durable, eminently portable manifestation-vessels is obvious when the mobility of Tongan chiefs is recognised. Chiefs had to maintain regular contact with their gods and *tapua*, and suchlike relics were central to their invocation. High chiefs and gods kept multiple residences on different islands, and each god-house required its own relics. Also, because Tongan chiefs and *matapule* voyaged about Western Polynesia, living and campaigning abroad and even settling in places like Fiji, the means of invoking their gods needed to move with them. So, with Taliai Tupou keeping at least a dozen god-houses, Hikule'o and the Tu'i Tonga (who also maintained god-houses in Fiji)[10] doing likewise, and Tu'i Ha'afakafanua (another Tu'i Kanokupolu god known to have embodied himself in *tapua*) maintaining them on Tongatapu, Lifuka, Fo'a and Nomuka (Gifford 1929: 295-97), Lyth was hardly exaggerating. Moreover, as floated when discussing the "bags" of valuables presented at Tu'i Kanokupolu Mumui's funeral, some *tapua* were reserved for sacrificial purposes, and evidently could—albeit more covertly than in Fiji—even be transferred as a spiritual token to another lineage, either to placate it through godly subjection, or to otherwise obligate it.

TRANSFERABLE *TAPUA*: *FUNGALEI*

In the absence of specific instances, the transference to another lineage may seem fanciful. Gifford (1929: 245), however, learned that *Fungalei* (*funga*: the 'top of something', *lei*: 'ivory') meant "a whale's tooth taken by one chief to another, when they wished to talk over the terms of peace". This conforms so closely to the presentation of *tabua* as *isoro* 'atonement offerings' when submitting and suing for peace in Fiji that it might superficially be assumed to have originated there. Tongan infiltration of Fijian chiefly lineages stretches back so far that caution is advised; however, it even crops up in the western highlands of Vitilevu where whenever circumstances dictated a Namataku chief transfer a *tabua* to another lineage:

> … the *i mandrali* [propitiatory offering of *yaqona*] should be made to his clan *vu* [*vu*: founding ancestor of a lineage] by the giver who explains that the *tabua* is being offered to another group; and a second such ceremonial offering is presented to the *vu* of the giving clan by the one receiving the gift. (Spencer 1941: 13)

This provides a mechanism for an ancestor-god to sanction the transfer of a *tabua* to another lineage through a descendant chief. And while the location may seemingly rule out any connection to *fungalei*, that is hardly so; tradition confirms that the chiefly lineages of the Namataku and neighbouring tribes in Navosa were founded by an influx of Tongo-Samoan "gods" in the early to mid-17th century (Kalou in Brewster MS. 1923). That being accepted, archaeological evidence suggests the formal *kava* or *yaqona* ritual central to the invocation of Tongan and Fijian gods reached Fiji in the 16th century (Best 1984, 2002; Marshall *et al*. 2000), the Namataku *tabua* transfer mechanism may well have been Tongan before it became Fijian.

TAPUA AS *TUPU'A*

Lyth's Note No. 23 (above) is further instructive in that, rather than follow Thomas's looser *fakafa'anga*, he classified *tapua* as *tupu'a*. This indicates that gods occasionally inhabited them, *tupua* applying to an ancestral god in the Lau islands (Hocart 1929: 188), and *tupua* or *tupu'a* meaning an ancestor-god or god-image and implying eternity throughout Western Polynesia, including Tuvalu. Indeed, the same applies as far west as Tikopia and eastward to Niue and even the Marquesas—where Crook (1998) recorded *tubúa* as meaning "an image" in 1797-98. The ancient Polynesian roots of *tupu'a/tupua* are, moreover, further reflected in implying eternity or referring to supernatural beings throughout the rest of Polynesia.

Given that *tapua* and their wrappings were both *fakafa'anga* but only *tapua* embodied *tupu'a*, this puts Tongan heirloom mats into spiritual perspective. For while "the most important and powerful objects in Tonga are 'named fine mats' made … in 'the long ago' by unknown hands" (Kaeppler 1999a: 168), this was not always so, God having kept His compliant chiefs but eliminated the godly embodiments they originally contained. Proof is provided by Kaeppler (1999a: 214, 228) who, in discussing *Hau 'o Momo* and *Laumata 'o Fainga'a*—legendary mats that once enwrapped shell plates of the godly Sangone turtle—insisted they "were not brought to Tonga [from Samoa] as bedding, but were used as the wrapping of a symbol of power [i.e., embodiments of an empowering god] of the Tu'i Tonga line". The shell plates, in other words, were *tupu'a* that, when 'housing' Sangone's spirit, *were* Sangone. In the same way as Kaeppler shows heirloom mats acquire growing prestige by absorbing

the spiritual essence of the succession of chiefs who have worn them, then, so were mats that enwrapped *tapua* and suchlike godly embodiments rendered *tapu* by touching, dressing and shrouding them. This helps explain the *tabua*-like qualities of fine mats in Tonga and Samoa. Although sanctified, named and venerated, however, these did not bear the god's name, and were no more gods incarnate than heirloom mats are living or dead chiefs.

Before leaving Note 23, Lyth's footnote that both *tupua* were "Disposed of in Fiji" reveals that—as Hooper substantiates in his companion article on *tabua*—even the Wesleyan mission sent *tapua* from Tonga to Fiji to further its purposes there. How many *tapua* were similarly "disposed of" by Tongans in the wake of Taufa'ahau's crusades, and what proportion of crescentic *tabuabuli* in Fijian collections actually trace back to Tongan god-houses, can only be guessed at.

TAPUA AND *PULE* EMBODIMENTS

Turning to Lyth's notes No. 22 and 30, which substantiate that chiefs and *matapule* who settled in Fiji did not abandon their own gods but continued to worship and invoke them there.

> No 22. Orange Cowry—a Samoan goddess named Lehalevao [Samoan: Lesalevao]—connected with which is the carved club with which the priest was wont to strike the ground or post or anything near when the god was about to take her departure, 'ko hono hala' ['her *hala*']. They belonged to Lemaki, Tuinayau's [Tui Nayau] Canoe Carpenter at Kambara [Kabara]—he had also another god called Galutoto & his club—the shrine of the god was a beautifully stained whale's tooth—these are in Mr. Malvern's possession. The club was broken by striking the post on the supposed departure of the god after being invoked by the priest.
>
> ….
>
> No 30. The 'hala' of a Samoan or Tongan deity [Lehalevao] that belonged to Lemaki—Tuinayau's carpenter of Qaliqali, Kambara. Accompanying it [i.e., the club mentioned in No. 22] was an old faded orange cowry. Lemaki embraced Xtianity about the same time [as Tui Nayau]—and at the same time gave up his idols. (Lyth MS. *Tongan & Fijian Reminiscences*)

In assessing Lyth's notes, it is useful to know Lemaki was the entitled head—and, in the Samoan tradition, priest—of a clan of canoe-builders skilled in the art of hull planking, which, at the Tu'i Tonga's behest, transferred from Manono in Samoa via Tongatapu to Kabara in southern Lau in the mid 18th century to exploit stands of *fehi/vesi* timber (*Intsia bijuga*) and attach themselves to the service of the Tui Nayau (Hooper 1982: 55-56; see also, Clunie 1986: 15, 144, 1988: 11-16, 2001; Tuimaeali'ifano 1990:

34-41). Manono, the Lemaki god-house, ceased functioning when Tui Nayau converted to Wesleyanism in 1849 and Lemaki followed suit, giving Lyth and John Malvern the opportunity to acquire his old god-relics.[11]

Lyth's information about Galutoto's *tapua* widens the field to Samoa, where they are otherwise known from a pair—thought "to have come from Fiji"—in which Mao and Uli, "war gods of a large village", embodied themselves (Turner 1884: 35). Given Geraghty's (1993) argument that Pulotu was in Fiji, that Samoan traditions indicate ancient movements between Fiji and there (Barnes and Hunt 2005, Clunie: in prep., Kramer 1999, Turner 1884), and that one even mentions Si'uleo voyaging to Samoa "from Pulotu in Fiji" (Kramer 1999: 31), these may have had deep roots.

Be that as it may, that Galutoto's *fale* was a *tapua* but Lehalevao's a *pulekula* 'orange cowry' (Fijian *bulikula; Cypraea aurantium*) is interesting because, while several gods are identified with *tapua*, this specificially ties a goddess to a *pule* shell. Insofar as I know, the record is unique, for while exhibit 131 in the *Missions Protestantes Évangéliques* section of the Exposition Universelle was listed as a "*Massue avec cowries orange, supposée être la chasse d'une déesse*"/'Club with orange cowries, supposed to be the shrine of a goddess' from Fiji (Verne 1867: 19), those were probably Lehalevao's objects.

In assessing cowry shell embodiments, it is important to recognise that *pule* also meant godly—and so chiefly—presence, power and authority throughout Western Polynesia, and that this was signified by attaching *pulevaka* 'white egg-cowries' (Fijian: *bulidina*, *Ovula ovum*) to chiefly bonito-fishing and voyaging canoes (*vaka*), god-houses and other sanctified property. While *pulevaka* proclaimed godly sanction of temporal authority, *pulekula* 'orange cowry' and *pule'oto* 'small white egg-cowries' (Fijian: *bulileka*, *Ovula costellata*) spiritually outranked them.

In contrast to *tapua*—which, like Fijian *tabua*, were not worn as ornaments—identical *pulekula/bulikula* and *pule'oto/bulileka* pendants, and ivory extrapolations of them, were worn by chiefs of both sexes in Tonga and Fiji. Those were hardly fully-fledged godly embodiments, but were nevertheless reflective of, if not precursory to them. Judging by surviving specimens, the shells were mostly fastened to finely plaited, beaded strings, and worn singly or in pairs as throat pendants. Intriguingly, however, while all were originally perforated and strung as whole shells, it is clear that the tops of some were later deliberately broken, leaving only the cleft aperature of the shell—which in Tonga certainly symbolised a vagina—intact. With the broken edges smoothed, these "vaginas" were either restrung as pendants or strung through the cleft in sequence to form what were distinguished in Fiji as *ituivocovoco/ituivorovoro* 'necklaces'. Whether or not Tongan *fuifui pule'oto*

'necklaces' (Collocott 1925: 163) correspond to them, or were composed of whole shells, is currently unclear to me. But armlets and frontlets strung with whole *pule'oto/bulileka* shells were certainly worn in both Tonga and Fiji.

Remarkably, although worn by chiefs of both sexes it is clear that *pule/buli* cowries were female symbols. According to Tongan traditional notions:

> The puleoto is a shell used for the necklaces of chiefs and is a valued ornament of chiefly virgins. To wear this shell is a mark of virginity, for if a girl who is not a virgin wears one suspended from her neck the shell will not lie properly upon her bosom, but will turn over. (Collocott 1928: 139)

In turning over, in other words, the telltale *pule'oto* gave the lie by indecorously exposing her symbolic vagina. Physically, sexual symbolism is even more strongly expressed by ivory counterparts of *pule'oto* and *pulekula* shells. Many surviving specimens faithfully mimic the cowries. But others are formed into variously discrete extrapolations in which the elongated, suggestively lipped mouth of the cowry transform into vulva that often envelop the root cavity of the whale-tooth. Some have a symbolic vagina at both ends, but the most explicit examples unmistakably represent a nippled breast seated upon a vagina.[12]

Female symbolism notwithstanding, *pule* are further intriguing in that while *tapua* have been suppressed and forgotten, *pule'oto* live on in Christian Tonga as symbols of virginity and chiefly legitimacy (see Kaeppler 1999a: 197). Clearly, both forms of embodiment were spiritually related. Unfortunately, however, beyond commenting that *pulekula* and *pule'oto* were highly venerated, the missionaries said little else about them. Wheeler (1842: 592), for instance, noted that "two orange cowries" Taufa'ahau gave him in 1836 had once been "the most valuable ornaments worn by the rulers of these islands" but went no further. And Thomas was similarly reticent, complaining that "our people still put too high a value" on "Buleoto", but only commenting that they used to number among their "most valuable articles" (Wesleyan Mission-house 1839, LXXV). More detail is provided in Nathaniel Turner's exultant description of the desecration of a god-house on Vava'u in 1831, but although it most usefully confirms that other types of embodiment were kept as closely shrouded and secluded as *tapua*, it fails to adequately identify the shell involved when a rampaging Taufa'ahau:

> … went into the house, brought out the god, wrapped in a bundle of native cloth and fine mats; and to the astonishment and dread of some began to disrobe the god, fold after fold was taken off until the great god was seen in the form of a small spotted shell, which fell to the ground, …. (Turner in Latukefu 1970: 64)

Happily, in confirming their shared origin and equating *pule'oto/bulileka* "necklaces" to *tabua*, the Fijian evidence is more forthcoming. David Hazlewood (1850: 133) noted "a small white cowry is of more value than a whale's tooth". Thomas Williams (MS. Sketchbook) rated the ivory *wasekaseka* "the most valuable necklace known in Feejee except perhaps the [ivory] Bulileka, which is of Tonguese manufacture". William Lockerby advised sandalwood trading captains to obtain "[a]s many as you can get" while passing through Tonga (Dodge 1972: 184, 187). Warren Osborn (MS. 1833-36) commented, "Of their own property, they consider a small white shell called by them Butchan a Boolahs is the most valuable." And others observed that, prior to the influx of imported ivory in the 1800s, strung *bulileka* were presented in the manner that later came to be exclusively associated with *tabua*, most tellingly by a bride's lineage to the one she was marrying into.

Although Joseph Waterhouse mistakenly assumed *tabua* only originated after European traders began supplying Fijians with ivory in the early 1800s, he did make clear that previously:

> … atonement was made by the small white cowry-shell. Indeed, in ancient times the Fijian currency consisted of this *buli-leka* shell, to which reference is so frequently made in the traditions. These shells were then used as offerings to the gods, just as whales'-teeth have been since. They were also employed for the purposes of war, marriage, and treaties. (Waterhouse 1866: 341)

Once coupled with the female symbolism of the *pule'oto/bulileka*, the reality that such "atonement" often entailed the transfer of a chiefly virgin (Sahlins 1983) has interesting implications which are amplified by Tatawaqa, who, in the following excerpt, refers to *vocovoco/vorovoro—bulileka* with their tops broken in, leaving only the slotted symbolic vagina intact.

> Another shell which they used as a 'tabua' was called the 'vocovoco'. This was also a sea shell, and was round and flat.… In preparing it, it was strung, as fish teeth, and was then worn as a necklace by a young [chiefly] girl when going to the house of her husband to don the skirt-dress [*liku* of a married woman]; this was a 'tabua' or valuable property in Fiji in ancient times. (Tatawaqa 1914: 2)

Once coupled with surviving *ituivocovoco/ituivorovoro* necklaces, Tatawaqa's "round and flat" description confirms that he was referring to broken-in *bulileka*, rather than to small, inter-tidal *vocovoco* (*Melampus flavus*) snail shells, which were and are strung into commonplace necklaces. With that potential confusion eliminated, he is strongly supported by Baron von Hügel (1990: 436), who, in ogling "pretty girls with white bead *bulileka* necklaces"

in 1876, noticed the cowries had been "cut and the mouth part then strung to a bead necklace". Their combined evidence implies that whole *pule'oto/bulileka* shells were worn as symbols of virginity prior to marriage, but that following bridal defloration their tops were removed and their symbolic vaginas retained and worn as "tangible proofs" of their wearer's virtue.

Taken together, the female character of cowry shells and Lehalevao's embodiment in a *pulekula* would suggest that *pulekula* and *pule'oto*, and ivory extrapolations of both, were used to embody goddesses and *tapua* gods. A single emergent record specifically identifying a *tapua* with a goddess would explode its apparent masculinity, however; and without further instances tying known deities to cowry shells, caution is needed, not least because chiefs of both sexes wore *pule* shell ornaments. Bearing that in mind, given that most *pule* were pierced for suspension more or less amidships, it is notable that not all *tapua/tabuabuli* were bored close to each tip, some being pierced at top-centre. The rarity of such centrally suspended *tapua/tabuabuli* in collections might suggest *tapua* were originally suspended top amidships. If true, this would visually have linked them more closely to *pule*, making their relationship more obvious.

Figure 4. The original suspension holes of this small *tapua*/*tabuabuli* are located at middle top. Unlike the later attachment holes at the tips they were bored using a traditional drill point. The two-toned cord is of dyed hibiscus bast. Collected in Fiji by Rev. John S. Fordham in the 1850s or early 1860s. BM7057. (© The Trustees of the British Museum.)

HIKULE‘O AND *TAPUA*

Besides Thomas and Lyth, other missionaries specifically related Hikule‘o and other great gods of the Tu‘i Tonga and Tu‘i Kanokupolu to *tapua*. Charles Tucker wrote of “a god, a whale’s tooth” surrendered by the Tamaha, who “called it her Kui” (Lawry 1852: 443). *Kui* ‘forebear’ fails to define sex; but otherwise this Tamaha *tapua* evidently resolves the character of three mysterious Tongan “idols” exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in 1867. These were catalogued (Verne 1867: 23) as:

> 210. Idole de Tonga: Tui-hadjakafonna. Adorée autrefois par la famille du *Haw,* chef civil des îles des Amis.
> 211. *Faabi Fonga*. Idole adorée autrefois par le chef sacré, appelé Tui-Tonga.
> 212. *Erki Tubu*. Idole adorée par le chef sacré, la Taminaha et sa famille.[13]

Because they assumed them to be human images, Larsson (1960) and Neich (2007) failed to resolve their character. Once viewed through *tapua*-tinted spectacles, however, it seems evident they were *tapua*. In *Idole* 210’s case, Tu‘i Ha‘afakafanua was a god of the Hau (Tu‘i Kanokupolu) lineage who embodied himself in *tapua* (Gifford 1929: 297). *Idole* 211 belonged to the Fa‘ahitonga ‘gods of the Tu‘i Tonga lineage’, who mostly embodied themselves in *tapua*. And in embodying ‘Eikitupu, a god of the Tamaha, *Idole* 212 was probably the “Kui” she gave Tucker, which was a *tapua*.

In 1840 the missionaries at Nuku‘alofa—“exceedingly intelligent” Jane Tucker and her husband Charles—showed Charles Wilkes (1845 v. III: 22-23) “some large whale’s teeth that were prettily carved, which had been found in the temple lately destroyed by the Christian party”. These were from Hikule‘o’s god-house at Olotele, Lapaha. Wilkes linked them to “Bulotu” and a “spirit-temple where all their valuable presents to the gods are deposited”.

How many Fa‘ahitonga *tapua* Taufa‘ahau captured in that raid is unknown. Ten years later, however, a *tapua* representing Hikule‘o himself was surrendered by Tungi when he “cast away his sins and his idols together” (Lawry 1851: 31). Lawry—who was soliciting “curiosities” to sell to fund a new Methodist chapel in Auckland—was delighted to receive it in a basket packed with other cast-off “idols” (1851: 32), and further gratified by the presentation of a “*mea ofa* [*me‘a‘ofa*] (or ‘thank-offering’) of shells, clubs, gods, &c”:

> Among the articles given to help our missions were several *gods*, which have not been viewed by any mortal eye for several generations. Most of them were whales’ teeth, or parts thereof. One of them has hung up for ages in their god-house, to allow a place for the spirit to perch upon when he happens to visit it. Another was an ivory necklace, wrapped up in native cloth, stuck full of small red feathers. But all were filthy and vile, senseless and useless.

> Some of the heathen came to see me, who [as chiefs] once ranked, they said, among the gods; and they wished to see this extraordinary being. I went to my god-basket, and, taking up some of their idols, said, 'These are the things you *worshipped*; but me your fathers threatened to kill. Our God has at last triumphed over your ignorance and superstition, and here are your gods in my basket. Would you like to see them?' said I, advancing quickly towards them: but they fled with precipitancy, and then looked back, confounded and ashamed. (Lawry 1851: 34)

In noting most of the "gods" were "whale's teeth, or parts thereof", Lawry revealed that while some were *tapua*, one representing Finautauiku, tutelary god of the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, was "a large necklace made of whale's teeth", while others were apparently *fono* ornaments. Most crucially, however, by noting one had "hung up for ages in their god-house, to allow a place for the spirit to perch upon when he happens to visit it", Lawry clarified the part "a large *whale's tooth*" played in invoking Hikule'o, whose identity he confirmed by stating:

> It is not unworthy of notice that, on the day that Tungi *lotued*, all the gods that could be found were secured, and are now placed in a Tonga basket, and handed over to me. Of these gods the first in rank and power is Feaki [Fekai], the fountain-head of all the minor gods. This is a large *whale's tooth*, which has not fallen under the gaze of mortal men from time immemorial. To this idol, or medium of worship, the *inachee* [*'inasi*] ('the offering of their first-fruits') was presented: and to Feaki was offered, thirteen [8] years ago, the *last child* that was sacrificed in Tonga, at the death of Fatu, Tungi's father [in 1842]. (Lawry 1851: 35-36)

Because *Fekai* was misspelt "Feaki", the identity of Hikule'o is clouded. But the mist soon clears, for "Feaki" was "the fountain-head of all the minor gods", which can only mean Hikule'o. Lawry had contracted his title, *Tu'i Pulotufekai* 'Savage King of Pulotu', just as Wilkes did with "Bulotu". Hikule'o's identity is, moreover, clinched by allusion to the "*inachee*" and the son strangled in the forlorn hope of persuading Hikule'o to revive the dying Fatu.

Lawry's linkage of this *tapua* to Hikule'o, Tu'i Pulotu, is germane, he being the chief god supplicated at the *'inasi 'ufimotu'a*, a great pan-Tongan first-fruits festival presided over by the Tu'i Tonga and staged before the *langi* of his deified Fatafehi forebears each October, just as the sacred *kahokaho* yams—which had been set in June and commended to godly protection at a smaller but nevertheless elaborate *'inasi 'ufimui* in July—matured to usher in the harvest season.[14] The implications these *'inasi* have for *tapua* will be considered in due course. But because latter day confusion about Hikule'o's sex has artificially emasculated him, falsely identified him with goddess-images

(Burley 1996, Kaeppler 1999b: 21-22, 2010: 243), and even had him feminise the Tu‘i Tonga’s *kava* bowl (James 1991: 302-3), they will now be used to help resolve his sex, it being impossible to appreciate *tapua* without him.[14]

It is accepted that Hikule‘o dominated the *‘inasi ‘ufimotu‘a*, Thomas having subsequently confirmed reports of Cook, Anderson and others who, in attending the *‘inasi ‘ufimui* in 1777, learned of a great harvest festival to be staged that October. This festival would combine a round Tongan dozen (10) of Hikule‘o’s signature human sacrifices with lavish offerings of plant and animal foods and property drawn from throughout Tonga (Beaglehole 1967: 154, 917, 1049, 1308; Douaire-Marsaudon 1998: 279; Farmer 1855: 129-30). Crucially, however, the *‘inasi ‘ufimui*—which only drew contributions from Tongatapu—was intended to secure godly protection for the coming yam planting season and all other plant and animal foods. The presentations were tokens of sacred *kahokaho* seed yams followed by other token food and property offerings. However, it was not dedicated to Hikule‘o but to Kaloafutonga, a disease-wielding weather goddess associated with the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua (Anderson in Beaglehole 1967: 948-49).[15]

How long the practice of offering token first-fruits to Kaloafutonga at the *‘inasi ‘ufimui* and substantial ones to Hikule‘o at the *‘inasi ‘ufimotu‘a* had been established is unknown. It can only have arisen, however, as part of the dynastic accommodation that arose in the 17th century following Tapu‘osi I’s return from Fiji, and been encouraged by the Moheofo’s role as co-custodian of the Fa‘ahitonga *tapua*. Anderson’s identification of Kaloafutonga as the deity supplicated at the *‘inasi ‘ufimui* is critical, for while her name is conspicuous by its absence from other chiefly lineages, a Kaloafutonga was the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua daughter who married Tu‘i Tonga Fatafehi and became mother to the first Tu‘i Tonga Fefine. And another Kaloafutonga was the daughter whose marriage to the Tu‘i Kanokupolu so strengthened his lineage that it came to supplant the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua as Hau (Bott 1982: 99, 137).

On that basis, it appears both *‘inasi* were originally dedicated to Hikule‘o, but that the *‘inasi ‘ufimotu‘a* was subsequently dedicated to Kaloafutonga to spiritually dignify the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua. However, after Mulikiha‘amea—the ambitious but last Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua—was killed early in the dynastic warfare sparked by the assassination of Tu‘i Kanokupolu Tuku‘aho in 1799, Kaloafutonga is never heard of again. The most telling thing about her abrupt plunge from the Langi into the historical and traditional abyss insofar as *tapua* and Hikule‘o’s masculinity are concerned, however, is not so much its mystery as its completeness. Kaloafutonga was so effectively expunged from the failing Tongan pantheon that recollections of her and the *‘inasi ‘ufimui* became so hazy she in due course seems have become confused and combined with Hikule‘o.

That reasonably accounts for how confusion about Hikule'o's sex arose in a Christian Tonga, and for why, by 1920, traditional opinion had become so divided Gifford (1929: 291) deemed it "not improbable… Hikuleo was bisexual", while Collocott (1921: 152)—not, as Neich (2007: 252) imagined, on the basis of accumulative missionary knowledge, but upon his own post-1911 experience—wrote: "Tradition is not quite certain as to whether Hikuleo were a god or goddess… the general suffrage seems in favour of the female sex."

While understandable from a traditional viewpoint, historically, the confusion is untenable: Hikule'o—as Neich (2007: 250) noted—was consistently projected as male by observers who knew Tonga in the 18th to mid-19th centuries, and so had the advantage of conversing with people like the Tu'i Tonga, Tamaha, Taufa'ahau and others who knew their own ancestral religion inside out. Indeed, they were seconded by Ma'afu, Taufa'ahau's cousin and the greatest Tongan interloper in 19th century Fiji, who likewise entertained no doubts about the god's masculinity (Fison 1907: 139-61). Kaloafutonga, however, was so lost in time that from the 1970s onward local confusion of her sex with that of Hikule'o generated such academic enthusiasm that, in reviewing its literature, Neich (2007: 252) only dared conclude: "In Tongan mythology according to recent scholarship, Hikule'o structurally occupies the place of eldest sister and is consistently female."

GIFFORD'S EVIDENCE: *TAPUA* IN HA'APAI

With that reversal of evidential reality exposed, Hikule'o's manhood restored, the Hikule'o Fefine hopefully destined for historiographical deconstruction, and the diversion caused by "her" creation behind us, our object is now best served by advancing to the extraordinary *tapua*-related information Gifford collected in Ha'apai in 1920-21, when descendants of priests and *fe'ao* 'companions' persecuted by Taufa'ahau chose to talk about them.

Starting—like Taufa'ahau did—at Foa and concentrating on "whale's tooth" embodiments, Mesake Lomu provided substantial information about Tu'i Ha'afakafanua, a Tu'i Kanokupolu god whose house at Faleloa contained a sanctified "basket in which was a whale's tooth and turmeric" (Gifford 1929: 297). He also spoke of Fakatoufifita, "god of the chief Niukapu in Fangaleounga, Foa", whose god-house held "a sacred basket of the god's" containing "a whale's tooth and a parcel of turmeric" (Gifford 1929: 307).

Wading across to Lifuka, but reserving the crucial account about Aloalo until later, informants at Pangai and Holopeka provided detailed information about Ngaoha'a, a god associated with Tu'i Afitu, who had a god-house at Holopeka and another on Fonoifua in southern Ha'apai. According to Ana Manu, like other Ha'apai god-houses Ngaoha'a's contained a discrete *lokitapu*

'sanctum' in which there was a basket containing "a throwing club and a whale's tooth, which were wrapped in a piece of tapa (*fetaaki*) [*feta'aki*] smeared with turmeric on the outside" (Gifford 1929: 305). Manu also spoke about 'Uluenga, whose god-house at Holopeka held *fakafa'anga* made up of "a basket containing… a whale's tooth, and a *paanga lafo* [*pa'anga lafo*: coconut-shell gaming disc]", which last were "wrapped in white tapa [*feta'aki*]… smeared with turmeric" (Gifford 1929: 306).

Besides Tu'i Ha'afakafanua—and not counting Aloalo, who occupied his own uniquely elevated niche—Gifford's informants thus identified three further gods who embodied themselves in *tapua*. Ranged alongside Lemaki's Samoan Galutoto, these establish that *tapua* came to represent ancestor-gods, so were ultimately not restricted to embodying *tupui 'otua*. This is consistent with evidence surrounding the following Ha'apai gods, who, despite apparently being ancestor-gods, had likewise acquired the supposed hallmarks of *tupu'i 'otua*, each having its own dedicated god-house independent of a burial mound (*fa'itoka*) and the privilege of manifesting itself within animal *vaka*.

Kafo'ia'atu, whose god-house was on 'Uiha, south of Lifuka, was associated with an unspecified object of "whale ivory… kept in a fine mat, and black tapa. The fine mat was placed on the black tapa [*ngatu'uli*], and then wrapped in a piece of ordinary tapa, and no one was allowed to go near the place where it was kept" (Gifford 1929: 310). This may well have been a *tapua*. This interpretation, however, seems unlikely in the case of "Foliaki of Pulotu" (*foliaki*: 'encircler')—tutelary god of the Malupo lineage and openly hostile to the Fatafehi—whose god-house on Tatafa, just off 'Uiha, contained "a basket as the shrine (*fakafa'anga*) and container of his sacred objects", namely unspecified "objects of whale ivory" (Gifford 1929: 310). Consistent with Lawry's evidence, those were presumably *fono* of unknown forms. Also pertinent is that the *fakafa'anga* of Taufa Mangumoetoto, tutelary god of Tuita Toluafetupu—whose god-house was likewise on 'Uiha—included a "*pa*" and "club", which last, like the throwing clubs mentioned earlier, was apparently its 'path' (*hala*). Gifford (1929: 310), who was using Baker's *Tongan and English Vocabulary* (1897), which follows Rabone's (1845:24) definition of *Ba*: "A Tonga fish hook; a shield", interpreted *pa* as "shield". Unless his informant specified otherwise, however, it was in all probability a composite trolling lure with whale-bone shank, mother-of-pearl shell reflector, and turtleshell hook, a highly prestigious object used as a godly embodiment in Fiji, Tonga and Manono in Samoa, where, in the mid-1940s, Leiataua showed Robert Gibbings (1948: 125) the purportedly "divine" original presented by the "Sun" to his son 'Alo'alo when he married Tuifiti's daughter.

When Gifford's Haʻapai information is aligned with the 19th century evidence, it is noticeable all specific records relate *tapua* to gods, not goddesses. That being so, whilst it is impossible to be sure how general or otherwise Thomas was being when he referred to the Faʻahitonga gods (who included goddesses) as being principally embodied in *tapua*, a consistent emergent connection between *tapua* and male gods is now further reinforced by what Gifford was told about Aloalo, the great weather god of Haʻapai and Vavaʻu.

ALOALO AND *TAPUA*

When Gifford visited the former *hufangaʻanga* 'sanctuary' of Aloalo at Pangai, Lifuka, he found the "daughter's son of the last priest Vavanga" living there and met his equally aged "son's son". This was fortuitous, for the latter provided such detailed knowledge of the workings of Aloalo's god-house as to suggest it had been directly imparted by his grandfather, who had "fled" and so "escaped the fate of the other priests and priestesses who were put to death by Taufaahau" in 1829. Sadly Gifford did not name the old man, who revealed how *tapua* and related forms of godly embodiment actually worked.

> The temple of the god was a Tongan house, one end of which was screened off with cane (*kaho*) ['reed': Fijian *gasau*, *Miscanthus floridulus*]. The god was represented by a whale's tooth (*lei*) which was kept in this compartment covered by a fine mat (*kie*). 'He stayed alone like a king and no one was with him.' People who came to consult the god waited outside the house. They brought with them presents of food which they left in the anteroom of the house just within the entrance, but away from the compartment [*lokitapu*] where the god dwelt….
>
> The 'boat' [*vaka*] of the god was the white tern (*tala*) [*Gygis alba*]. When people went shark fishing they followed the god's bird so they might be led to a good fishing ground. The bird of the god seems to have been a captive white tern with a string tied to its foot….
>
> The god manifested himself by causing the whale's tooth to move or shake. However, prior to the shaking a yellow butterfly, appearing at the front door of the god's house, indicated that the deity would shortly appear in the whale's tooth. The appearance of the yellow butterfly was to inform the priest of the god's impending visit. The people in general were apprised and would come to pray… particularly those people who had illness. It is said that the butterfly was not the god himself but merely the messenger of the god.
>
> Aloalo not only predicted the weather but he could also govern it, for example, being able to stop excessive rains when prayed to do so by the people. Aloalo's priest was called Vavanga (literally 'to know everything') ['to have insight']. He served as intermediary between the supplicants and the god. After the appearance of the yellow butterfly and the movement of the whale's tooth the god entered the priest, who would be convulsed by trembling.

> While in this state he delivered the message of the god to the people. The priest when inspired was seated, not reclining. The district in which the tract of the god was located was called Ahau [ʻAhau], a name which refers to the ruling chief. (Gifford 1929: 304)

Apart from the detail that Aloalo's *tapua*—like other Haʻapai *fakafaʻanga*—was secluded within a discrete *lokitapu* 'sanctum' rather than hung aloft like those of the Faʻahitonga at Lapaha, its treatment accords with theirs. What is unique is the stipulation that upon arrival the god entered into the "whale's tooth" *fale*—which quivered or shook like a possessed priest—and only then "entered the priest", who was likewise "convulsed by trembling".

Turning to Aloalo himself. The location of his god-house at ʻAhau, ties him to the Tuʻi Kanokupolu lineage, to which Taufaʻahau, as Tuʻi Haʻapai, belonged. This is remarkable, for Manuʻa tradition accords ʻAloʻalo a Samoan pedigree analogous to that of the Tuʻi Tonga, he being the son of "Lā, the sun god, the Tagaloa", by the mortal woman Magamagaifatua, as well as husband to Sina, daughter of Tuifiti (Fijian: Tui Viti). Tuifiti was not only numbered among "the first [Samoan] kings, Tuimanuʻa, Tuifiti, Tuitoga, Tuiatua and Tuiaana" (Krämer 1999: 53), but was deified in Tonga as Tuʻi Fisi, tutelary god of the four *matakali* (Fijian: *mataqali* 'clan') of the Haʻavakatolo branch of the Haʻangatamotuʻa of the Tuʻi Kanokupolu (Gifford 1929: 39). With that pedigree it is not surprising Aloalo was independently supplicated at the great annual first-fruits festivals of Haʻapai and Vavaʻu. Or indeed that Anderson recognised in 1777: "The same religious system does not… extend all over the cluster of isles; for the supreme god of Hapaee [Haʻapai]… is called Alo Alo, and other isles have two or three of different names… (Beaglehole 1967: 949).

It thus seems that, just as the Tuʻi Tonga was anciently imposed upon Tongatapu from Samoa, so Aloalo was imposed on Haʻapai and Vavaʻu, where Mariner learned much about him:

> AʻLO AʻLO; literally, *to fan*. God of wind and weather, rain, harvest, and vegetation in general. This god is generally invoked about once a month, if the weather is seasonable, that it may remain so; if the weather is unseasonable, or destructive on shore by excessive wind or rain, he is invoked every day. Aʻlo Aʻlo is not the god of thunder and lightning… as this phenomenon is never recollected to have done any mischief of consequence. In boisterous weather at sea, the superior god Toobo Totý [Tupoutoutai], the protector of canoes, and other sea-gods, are always invoked in place of Aʻlo Aʻlo. About the time when the yams are full grown (near the latter end of December, the ceremony of *tow tow* [*tautau lotufonua*] begins, consisting in an offering of yams, and other provisions, to the god Aʻlo Aʻlo. This ceremony is repeated every ten days, for eight times successively, as will be described under the

> head of religious rites. This god has only two houses dedicated to him, one at Vavaoo [Vava'u], and the other at Lefooga [Lifuka]; also two priests, one at each place. (Martin 1818 v. II: 108)

Mariner's extended account of the rolling *tautau lotufonua* first-fruits festival cannot be pursued here (Martin 1818 v. II: 205-8). His revelation that a young chiefly virgin sat placidly throughout as a "wife" for Aloalo needs noticing, however, for this re-enacts a scenario more familiarly associated with Degei and the founding of Fijian chiefly lineages (Sahlins 1981, 1983): the arrival of godly 'stranger-kings' from the Langi, and advent of new chiefly lineages, spawned by their coupling with mortal women.

Having found Aloalo as anciently established in Ha'apai as Hikule'o was on Tongatapu, that like Hikule'o at the '*inasi* he dominated the *tautau* and that both great founding gods were embodied in *tapua,* it is fitting one of his *tapua* should be the first to resurface, it being the small, heavily smoke-stained, whale-bone crescent dedicated to a named god in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University (Fig. 5), that gave rise to this paper. Recognition was instantaneous—an old pasted-on label reads:

> Alvalo
> God of Winds
> Friendly Is -

Figure 5. Whale-bone *tapua* embodying Aloalo, weather and crop fertility god of Ha'apai and Vava'u. Collected in Tonga by Daniel Wheeler, 1836. MAA Z5887. (© Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

Happily, the provenance of this object—which physically resolves the character of Thomas's "polished ivory shrines"—is firm. *1891* and *95* were added to the old label on acquisition, and a new one inscribed *Dr Brady 1891* was stuck to its other flank. This notation connects object *Z.5887* to the MAA catalogue and so to a cache of "South Sea Island relics" Dr George S. Brady forwarded to the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in 1891, together with correspondence affirming they were "collected by my late great-uncle Daniel Wheeler during a religious mission… to those islands, in… 1835-6" (Brady MS. 1891: 15 February).

Working outward from those records, Wheeler's published journals (1840, 1842) trace the movements of the *Henry Freeling*, a post office packet turned "temperance vessel" by the Society of Friends to carry Quaker minister Daniel Wheeler on "a visit in Gospel love to the Islands in the Pacific Ocean". Most pertinently, the *Henry Freeling* visited Vava'u, Lifuka and Nuku'alofa between 18 August and 10 November 1836, during which time Wheeler befriended the Wesleyan missionaries and their patrons: Taufa'ahau, Tu'i Ha'apai and Tu'i Vava'u, and Josiah Tupou, Tu'i Kanokupolu. Despite those connections, however, insofar as Tongan "relics" are concerned his journal is disappointing, only referring to "trifling oddments of shells", "a collection of war clubs and other implements of destruction, which we rejoiced to take out of their hands", and, as already seen, a pair of *pulekula* pendants Taufa'ahau gave him along with some spears, barkcloth and a mat. The likely circumstances of the *tapua*'s acquisition can be deduced, however, from the fact Wheeler provided free passage from Vava'u to Lifuka to missionary families attending the annual Wesleyan meeting there, for this event culminated in a *katoanga* 'festival', during which Tongan converts presented offerings in kind to the Wesleyan God and His mission:

> In October… [1836], a branch Missionary society was formed at Haabai. The list of subscriptions was very long. It contained 683 names, and in most cases a name stood for a family. Heathen gods, sacred clubs, whales' teeth, formerly objects of worship, were among the things contributed. The amount realised by the articles sold at auction was £ 23 3s. 2d. (Farmer 1855: 61)

The Aloalo *tapua* thus most likely came from the god-house Vavanga served at 'Ahau, although it could be from a second one at Holopeka (Gifford 1929: 304), or one Mariner mentioned at Vava'u. Most importantly, however, the fact Wheeler's old label introduces the *tapua* as Aloalo confirms Thomas's statement that *fale* bore their god's name, and proves it to be closely akin, if not identical, to the one Gifford heard about.

Physically, the most telling characteristics of the Aloalo *tapua* are its symmetrically crescentic shape, holes for the attachment of a suspension cord

towards each tip, and reddish-brown, smoke-stained *kili* 'skin' (Fijian: *kuli*), for these render it indistinguishable from similarly crescentic *tabuabuli* in Fiji.

Considering *tapua* were kept closely sequestered, the presence of suspension holes might seem superfluous, particularly as there is little or no cordage wear. This might suggest the *tapua* was normally kept unstrung, yet strung for some occasional purpose, which last would have been easily accomplished. Early suspension cords on surviving *tabuabuli* often are very simply attached with loops of fine cordage or even single strands of baked coir. Or—the options are not mutually exclusive—the holes could be relicts of a once vital but subsequently redundant purpose.

TAPUA vs *TABUADAMU*

Turning to the smoke-stained *kili* 'skin' of the Aloalo *tapua*, the rich reddish-brown hue of which not only calls to mind the bloody heart of the *fehi* tree—sacred to Si'uleo/Hikule'o and so the Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Fisi—but testifies to it always having been kept in the dark; the colour is fugitive when exposed to light, fading through amber to yellowish brown before finally disappearing. This finish was achieved by hanging the polished, freshly oiled *tapua* in a barkcloth tepee, and *faka'ahu* 'smoking' (Fijian: *kuvui*) it over a pit filled with smouldering embers fed with sugar cane slivers or sugary *si* (*Cordyline fructicosa*) root, generating a caramelising brown smoke that stained it to the same colour as similarly smoked *ta'ovala faka'ahu* waist mats, or, in Fiji, *masikuvui* barkcloth (Clunie 1986: 178, Roth 1934: 302-3). *Tapua/tabua* smoked to this godly hue were also highly esteemed in Fiji, where the Tongan roots of *tabuadamu* 'red *tabua*' were outlined to beachcombeWilliam Diaper in the 1840s: "The red teeth, which have become red by frequent handling and oiling for a number of years, they always told me were brought to the Feejees by the Tongans, by whom they were first introduced" (Jackson 1853: 439).

The degree to which the crescentic form of the *tapua*, coupled with this finish, was venerated in Fiji is, however, perhaps best expressed by finding that a century later, in Christian Fiji, the most esteemed *tabua* were still smoke-stained *tabuabuli*: "amber *tabua* pointed at both ends" (Geddes 1945: 165).

TAPUA vs *TABUABULI*

The superior qualities of old, crescentic, smoke-stained *tabuabuli* still stand out in collections today. Fortunately, traditional confirmation of their antiquity and relationship to *tapua* is provided by a paper read to the Fijian Society in 1913 on behalf of Pita Emosi Tatawaqa. What he had to say is diagnostic, because although he was born in 1860, so grew up Christian, in Tatawaqa's youth the collective memory of his elders reached beyond introduced ivory to a time when some *tabua* were made of wood.

> Our people, who lived right away up in the middle of the land (the hill country) [of Vitilevu] such as Navosa, and the tribes near to them, used to cut down a certain tree to be their precious property: the name of that tree was the 'bua;' they pared it down well so as to be narrow-pointed at both ends, and curved somewhat like a banana branch (or leaf stalk); after that, it was thoroughly rubbed till the surface was well polished, and then it was anointed with candlenuts to become reddish colored, and then they attached a string to it, as is done to whales' teeth, and it was then taken care of as their valuable property. It is very truly this, the name of which was the 'bua-ta' or 'ta-bua,' from which originated the name 'tabua.' The 'bua-ta' or 'ta-bua' was used by those living in the hill country for everything for which the 'tabua' (whale's tooth) is used; as the 'tabua' of war, the 'tabua' of feasts, or the 'tabua' for obtaining a girl in marriage, etc. (Tatawaqa 1914: 1)

Tatawaqa's *bua-ta* = *ta-bua* equation was trashed by philologists. But although their particular *bête noire*, G.A.F.W. Beauclerc, may have garbled an analogy to a *vudi* (Tongan: *fusi*) plantain or cooking banana into "banana branch" when translating him, Tatawaqa unmistakably described artificially reddened *tabua* which, apart from being of *bua* wood, followed the crescentic form, colour and finish of the Aloalo *tapua*. Tatawaqa was adamant, moreover, that crescentically formed whale ivory *tabuabuli* had been introduced by Tongans:

> … long ago, before white men arrived in Fiji; and on their coming as visitors to Fiji they used to bring whale's teeth 'tabua,' and the 'tabua' they brought were made thus:—They cut the 'tabua' crosswise into two parts and they pared it down to be pointed at both ends and three or four inches in length, and they shaped them exactly like a whole whale's tooth 'tabua' in appearance, and they were named 'tabua-buli:' (i.e., formed or made 'tabua'); they bartered them in Fiji as the price of their canoes, or the price of their cloth, etc.
>
> They used to bring them with head-rests inlaid with 'tabua,' which were called 'Kali-tabua' or 'kali-vonovono' (the 'whale's-tooth-inlaid head-rest,' or, the 'inlaid head-rest') and certain clubs inlaid with 'tabua' which were called on Kadavu 'Vono-tabua' (the 'whale's tooth inlaid') and inlaid pearl shells, which were worn suspended from the neck in war or at feasts. These things are said to have been imported from Tonga, and this [there] is one account, in which it was said that the first whale's tooth 'tabua,' which were in use in Fiji in olden times, were imported from Tonga. (Tatawaqa 1914: 2-3)

Tatawaqa thus understood that whale ivory *tabuabuli* had been introduced from Tonga, before the 18th century, but not so anciently as to have been forgotten. His "one account" was probably a version of the sole origin myth concerning *tabua* (Heffernan MS. in Stanmore Papers, MAA Z4155). This has been exhaustively analysed by Sahlins (1983: 72-78) and Thomas (1991:

Figure 6. This wooden *tabuabuli* substantiates Tatawaqa's traditional Fijian evidence concerning *bua* wood *tabua*. Collected at Nalawa, Ra, northeastern Vitilevu, by G.T. Barker, 1920. Fiji Museum: 86.72. (© Fiji Museum, Suva.)

69-71). I will therefore only recapitulate that it claims *tabua* were introduced by a shipwrecked foreigner called Tabua, who washed up on the southwest coast of Vitilevu and was revived by daughters of the aboriginal "first man and woman", whom he in due course married; and note that this may link to a tradition whereby:

> At Nadroga, the present king is the lineal descendant of a copper-coloured boy, who was cast ashore on that coast. The exhausted child was fed with ripe bananas, and gradually recovered his strength. So soon as he was fully restored to health he was installed as king, in opposition to a candidate of well-known rank. A certain family at Nadroga still possesses the privilege of demanding ripe bananas from the king, on certain occasions, in commemoration of the fruit given by their ancestors to his, at the period of his first appearance. (Waterhouse 1866: 335)

In terms of relating *tapua* to *tabua*, Tatawaqa's revelation that crescentic *bua*-wood *tabua* occurred in Navosa in western Vitilevu is pivotal because—as mentioned earlier—genealogical histories recorded in the 1890s establish that chiefly lineages thereabouts were founded by "Tongan" chiefs in the early to mid-17th century (Kalou in Brewster MS. 1923). Given what we now know, these interlopers surely would have brought *tapua* with them, and this seems the more likely as *tabua* are mentioned in other highland genealogies documenting infiltration by parties dispersing from Navatu, near the coastal foot of the Kauvadra range, at about that time (Brewster MS. 1923, MS. 1921-25).

Tatawaqa's linkage of *bua* wood *tabuabuli* to Navosa raises the question of whether they were made there for want of whale-bone and ivory, or brought in by interloping Tongan chiefs. The lone surviving specimen in the Fiji Museum shares the balanced form and fine craftsmanship of *tapua/tabuabuli* made by Tongan canoe-builders. Consistent with Tatawaqa, moreover, it looks to be made from *bua*: a strain crack in its belly reveals pale *bua*-like wood, and its polished surface boasting *bua*'s characteristic twisted but nevertheless workable grain.[16] That being so, wooden *tabuabuli* probably did originate as *tapua*, *bua* being *pua* (*Fagraea berteroana*), a wood widely used for godly objects in Polynesia, not least Tonga, where the range of materials used for *tapua* was also used to produce *tama*—human images embodying ancestor-gods.

TAMA: HUMAN IMAGES

The likelihood that *tama* images were mostly made from *pua* is advanced by Mariner, who, having defined *tama* as: "A boy; a young man", added "Tama-booa. A doll. (from *tama*, a boy, and *booa*, the name of the wood of which it is made)" (Martin 1818 v. II). Rabone (1845: 192), however, added that *tamapua* also meant "idol"; and Baker (1897: 184) noted *tama* was also: "An expression of familiarity in speaking of a chief." Indeed, high chiefs in Tonga and Samoa were called *tama*, just as they were *gone* 'child' in Fiji, where the *tama* was a cry of adulation uttered when approaching a god or high chief or the house of either, or on sighting the *waqa/vaka* in which a god embodied itself (Hazlewood 1850: 135, Waterhouse 1866: 337, Williams 1858: 37-38).

Calling gods and their descendant chiefs *tama* is rooted deeply in the Polynesian past for, even as far eastward as the Tuamotus, *tama* was "[a]n honorific term of address… apparently only used of gods, kings, and priests" (Stimson 1964: 495). It is notable, however, that while ancestor-images were *tamapua* at Futuna (Grézel 1878: 255) and 'Uvea—where Bataillon (1932: 355) classified them as: "*Espèces d'idoles. Figures auxquelles on rendait les honneurs divins*"—elsewhere in Western Polynesia godly embodiments were *tupua* or *tupu'a*, the term Lyth applied to *tapua*. Tellingly, in Samoa—where human images barely featured—such few as did latterly occur were included with earlier more abstract forms of embodiment as *tupua*. It thus seems *tamapua* images in Tonga may have separate roots to *tapua*, *pule*, *pa*, and suchlike embodiments.

Unfortunately, the woods of surviving goddess-images from Tonga have yet to be botanically identified, though clearly *pua* was not the only wood involved. By tradition it is established that whereas those carved from *pua* were termed *tamapua*, those carved from *tou* (*Cordia aspera*) were *tamatou* (Gifford 1929: 53; McKern 1929: 55, 133), and so forth. This in turn suggests whale-bone and whale ivory human images were probably *tamatapua*.[17]

Although he found Hikule'o to be historically male, in his landmark review of *tamapua* images, Neich (2007) was strongly influenced by "recent scholarship" projecting Hikule'o as a goddess. The speculative character of that particular view should by now be readily recognisable, however, and the historical information he so valuably marshalled more clearly seen as confirming that they embodied deified ancestors. Records of rough handling of individual *tamapua* by chiefs accompanying early visitors to *fa'itoka* suggest those particular ones represented minor deities. There is little doubt, however, that the wooden "goddesses" Taufa'ahau hung at Lifuka in 1830 were connected to powerful lineages, his own included. As such they were presumably of comparable standing to the goddess embodied in the Sakaunu image that Neich (2007: 219-21) discussed. A second named "goddess" he missed, but Samuel Harper did not. At Mumui's *fa'itoka* at Pangai, Tongatapu, in 1797, the missionary saw:

> … two [god-] houses; in one there was a quantity of spears and warlike implements, sacred to the Odooa, or spirit [of Mumui?]; in the other an image of a goddess, called Fyēgā; to whom they pray for a favourable season for making cloth. (Wilson 1799: 235)

Harper's sighting of "Fyēgā" is doubly instructive as the "goddess" was not only being actively supplicated, but cannot have been hidden or he would hardly have encountered her.[18] In striking contrast to the covert treatment of *tapua*, this is consistent with other records of *tamapua* with one exception. In fascinating parallel with the sacrificial entombment of *tapua* with the Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Kanokupolu discussed earlier, de Sainson unearthed *tamapua* from the floor of the god-house of the Tofoa *langi* at Lapaha in 1827, which, he understood, were interred "at the same time as the corpse" (Neich 2007: 230). Apart from that sacrificial category, however, it is evident *tamapua* mostly stood, lay or sat quite openly within god-houses built over chiefly graves, rather than being enshrouded and secluded. This suggests that for all that they eventually also came to be associated with ancestor-gods, while *tapua*—together with *pule*, *pa* and other abstract embodiments—may originally have been restricted to embodying immortal *tupu'i 'otua*.

Unfortunately, apart from early mention of some being worn as pendants, nothing seems to have been recorded about whale-bone and ivory human images in Tonga. There is little doubt, however, that, as in Fiji, some were dedicated to embodying deities, for although no known survivor retains its original Tongan identity, the otherwise unseemly back-to-back stance and conjoined buttocks of twinned female images collected in Fiji suggests they originally represented Topukulu and Naufanua, siamese-twinned daughters

born at ‘Eua to Tokilangafanua and his sister Hina Tuafuanga following their descent from the Langi. If indeed the twins were goddesses of the first order, this would mean that ivory images could embody powerful images, and as such rank alongside *tapua*.

STONE *TAPUA*/*TABUA*?

So far I have dealt with whale-bone, ivory, *pua* wood, but not stone *tapua/tabua*. These have yet to been found in collections, but Fijian traditions insist upon them, and, given that wooden *tabuabuli* existed, they demand consideration. The most convincingly documented is a “black hollow stone” *tabua*— “a cubit long [roughly forearm length] and more precious than a real tooth”—that was used in the late 18th century to secure the assassination of Niumataiwalu, Sau of Lakeba (Gerrish MS. 1910; Hocart 1929: 208). This re-surfaced at Vanuabalavu in 1880, when it was presented to Governor des Voeux, who took it to England, where it vanished (Brewster 1937: 43-49). Geddes (1945: 47) also mentions “an object made of stone and shaped like a *tabua*” at Komave in Nadroga. Rather than being presumed figments of Fijian imagination, stone *tapua/tabua* may thus well prove to be related to polished god-stones like that of Tu‘i ‘Ahau/Taliai Tupou, not least because the *tabua* the ghosts of Fijian chiefs cast at the ghostly pandanus tree en route to Bulu to ensure their widows would be strangled were *vatunibalawa* ‘stones of the wild pandanus’. Indeed, given that god-stones reputedly gave birth to others in Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, the advent of stone *tapua/tabua* might conceivably be reflected in the following highland Vitilevu practice, whereby polished mother-stones (*tinanitabua*) tended godly *tabua* in their otherwise lonely seclusion:

> They keep them in a special basket, and place a symmetrically shaped pebble in it. The latter is called *Tinai ni Tambua* or the mother of the whale’s teeth. They are lonely if left to themselves, and will cry, especially at night, so they are provided with a mother to hush and comfort them. These stones by continual oiling and polishing also become very pretty. (Brewster 1922: 23-24)

TAPUA, PLANTAINS, AND CROP FERTILITY

Regardless of whether or not stone *tabua* exist, the range of materials *tapua/tabuabuli* were made from—wood, whale-bone and ivory—establishes that while ivory was preferred and the germ of the *tapua* lies more in its symmetrically crescentic form than material substance. *Tapua/tabuabuli*, in other words, were not the “whales’ teeth” of entenched European presumption but *tapua/tabua*, which means they were… what?

Owing to their covert character, scholastic curiosity about *tapua* has been muted in Tonga. In Fiji, on the other hand, *tabua* were instantly recognised as *the* supreme godly cum chiefly "valuable", even though Fijians themselves could not "explain why they so greatly venerate these ancient tokens, and say that they only follow the custom of their sires" (Brewster 1937: 40). Understanding of *tabua* was denied, however, by the ivory smokescreen puffed out by the European "whale's tooth", and assumption that: "The *tambúa* is essentially a Fijian symbol. The Tongans never used it except for the purpose of getting canoes, or timber for canoes, from Fiji, and it was manifestly borrowed from the latter place" (Deane 1921: 78).

Scholarship thus failed to advance much beyond the self-evident reality: "*Tambua* are the greatest of Fijian treasures, breathing of mystery and religion, objects from beyond the time of native memory" (Brewster 1937: 40). It is notable, however, that in fumbling with the key Tatawaqa provided by relating wooden *tabuabuli* to plantains, Brewster (MS. 1931) almost broke through by deducing that they must, at bottom, be fertility symbols, and linking them to first-fruits presentations. He was diverted, however, by the "most common form", which, being "pointed at one end" with "a cavity at the other", seemingly symbolised the male and female "organ of generation", and so "the *lingam* and the *yoni* of the worship of Siva and Sakti in India, or of Baal and Ashtoreth, the ancient idolatry of Syria and Palestine, of which we read in the Bible" (Brewster 1937: 41). Given the form of these latter day *tabua*, and the female character of *pule*/*buli* cowry shells, Brewster was probably on to something, not least because marriage presentations of *pule/buli* pendants declined as the broad-butted, basally-slotted form of *tabua* arose. Certainly nobody came closer than he did. Hocart (1929: 99) suggested *tabua* somehow relate to *tabu*; and Roth (1953: 99)—unconvinced by Tatawaqa's *bua-ta* equation or Hazlewood's assumption (1850: 132) that "[f]rom the partial similarity of form to the collar bone, whales' teeth are called *tabua*"—agreed.

Brewster's crescentic fertility symbol did not quite die with him, for the concept occurred independently to Geddes (1945: 47), who proposed that "*tabua* may bear some relationship to the crescent of fertility… a form and motif which occurs in several other parts of Oceania". He was influenced by Skinner's note (1943: 136) about crescentic "amulets" atop the haft of New Zealand Māori digging sticks, which, incidentally, are remarkably like those heading Fijian *ivutu* food pounders and canoe yards (Clunie 1986: 36-37, 151-52). Skinner in turn was building on Best (1976: 80), who noted that, in symbolising a crescent moon, the Māori amulets represented Rongo, one of the great gods of all but Western Polynesia, and—like Hikule'o and Aloalo—the one most responsible for weather and crop fertility:

> The crescent symbol of Rongo was carved on the upper ends of digging sticks in New Zealand, while at Easter Island the crescent is seen incised on rocks at the place called Orongo (O Rongo), and the crescent-shaped breast ornament was worn by women. (Best 1995: 397)

Whether or not the crescentic wooden gorget of Tahitian mourning regalia, or the dark crescent bounding otherwise silvery mother-of-pearl shell breastplates of the Cooks, Australs and Tuamotus, also represent Rongo is unclear. But Rongo is Lono, godly patron of the great annual *makahiki* harvest festival of Hawai‘i, where the crescent was prominent on godly feather cloaks, and where, according to Kaeppler—who regards it as “one of the most important design elements in Polynesia, if not the basic element”—“the ultimate aim for a high chief was to look like a series of crescents” (Kaeppler, Kauffmann and Newton 1997: 91-92). The objects that most evoke *tapua*, however, are not from Polynesia but the Marianas. These northern Micronesian polished *Tridacna* shell crescents are uncannily similar to *tapua*. As with some *tapua/tabuabuli*, their tips are cut off, and the truncated ends drilled in a way that suggests they were either slung like *tapua* or linked end to end. Next to nothing is known about these Chamorro relics, but they are so close to *tapua* in size, character, finish and form it is hard to believe they are not related (see Flores n.d., Geldgeschichtliches Museum 1994: 15, Koch 1969: 138-39).

Regardless of whether *tapua* relate to those Micronesian objects, however, it would seem Brewster and Geddes were on the right track, for Hikule‘o, the *tupu‘i ‘otua* supplicated at the *‘inasi ‘ufimotu‘a*, and Aloalo, his *tautau lotufonua* counterpart, were both embodied in crescentic *tapua*. Working downward through the hierarchy of gods and chiefs who received first-fruits offerings at a more and more local level, this might imply that the gods concerned tended to be embodied in *tapua*. If so, this would parallel chiefly practices of wearing sun-like and heirloom *sifa* breastplates emblematic of descent from Tangaloa. Indeed, that likelihood is strongly supported by a parallel relationship between godly *tabua*, chiefs, fertility and tribal prosperity in western Vanualevu in Fiji, where Tongo-Samoan traits were still so marked when Buell Quain was there in 1935-36 he could only conclude:

> The system of chiefly titles and hereditary status is Tongan, and the prestige of Tongan invaders spread and buttressed it in this region of Fiji. Chiefly privileges are still identified with the customs of islands to the east: chiefs are said to sit ‘in the manner of Tonga’; their sacred backs are ‘Samoan.’ The whole complex has been accepted without complete obliteration of an earlier ethos. For each region… there are two sets of ancestors. The first are ‘owners’ of the land… the second are chiefly immigrants who built an empire

> at Flight-of-the-chiefs [Naseyatura] and then dispersed to found chiefly houses throughout the province [Bua]. (Quain 1948: 433)

Tongan roots are further exemplified in a tradition concerning Makinivalu, Tui Raralevu, who was killed in his *vata* 'litter' (Tongan: *fata*) in a scene reminiscent of the death of the last Tu'i Ha'atakalaua on Tongatapu in 1799 (Vason 1810: 168-69). Quain (1948: 37-39) noted that Makinivalu was so *tabu* "[h]e was always carried in a litter". It is therefore telling that the legitimacy of the paramount chief of inland Lekutu—under whose spiritual auspices the first-fruits were presented, and upon whose godly connection prosperity depended—was embodied in a *tabua* named Tu Lekutu, and that the legitimacy and rights to the chiefhood and first-fruits of the other four inland Lekutu tribes were likewise vested in sacred heirloom *tabua* (Quain 1948: 189-90).[19]

Allowing for the corrosive consequences of Christianity, this shows that just as *tapua* dedicated to Tongan gods served as their *fale*, *tabua* acted as the *bure* 'house' of Fijian gods, underpinning the power and legitimacy of their chiefly descendants and guaranteeing their capacity to ensure fertility and prosperity. The nub lies in the Fijian term *sautu* (*sau*: 'ruler', *tu*: 'permanence'), meaning divinely ordained prosperity, which is most cogently expressed in a prayer still uttered during *tabua* transactions: *me sautu na vanua* 'may the land prosper'.

This being so—and bearing in mind the crescentic shape of the *tapua/tabuabuli*—it is hardly coincidental that throughout Western Polynesia, and as far eastward as Rarotonga (Savage 1980: 354), a variety of *fusi* (Fijian: *vudi*) or plantain (cooking bananas, *Musa* hybrid) characterised by a tough, cross-grained skin and firm yellowish flesh is called *tapua* (Tongan: Churchward 1959: 185; Samoan: Pratt 1911: 322; Uvean: Rensch 1981: 369; Futunan: Grézel 1878: 257, Moyse-Faurie 1993: 375, Rensch 1986: 266).

Thanks to Tatawaqa and Brewster, this pairing of godly *tapua* with a namesake plantain is more intriguing than surprising, both being evocative of a quartering moon, and the plantain, with its many cultivars, indubitably being an ancient staple. Shared name and shape raises the prospect that *tapua* might be traced back to token *pua* wood, whale-bone, ivory or stone "plantains" presented at first-fruits rituals dominated by offerings of, not the *kahokaho* yam, but a plantain of particular spiritual significance, mayhap the *tapua*. The possibility is inadvertently supported by Cook and his officers, who were taken aback by a procession of about 300 pairs of ponderously trudging men bearing wooden tokens of young *kahokaho* yams for presentation at the *'inasi 'ufimui*. Given each token consisted of a *tapua*-sized bundle composed of "three bits of sticks… about the thickness of a finger and six inches long", strung like a *tapua* and slung to a shoulder pole between two men, and borne

as if staggeringly heavy, the offerings were clearly intended to promote godly protection over the coming planting and growing season. The exclusive "mystery" of the occasion—closely guarded by armed men, conducted within especially raised close fencing to ensure none but participants could bear witness—was certainly in keeping with the covert character of *tapua* (see Beaglehole 1967: 915-17, 1049). But more diagnostically, mature *kahokaho* yams, individually enwrapped in red ribbon to give them a godly *tapua*-like 'skin', were likewise slung like a *tapua* and presented in the same ponderously trudging, pretended weight-bearing way at the *'inasi 'ufimotu'a* first-fruit rituals dedicated to Hikule'o that Mariner attended (Beaglehole 1967: 47-154, 914-96; Martin 1818 v. II: 196-203). This suggests the name of the *tautau lotufonua* harvest festival—*tautau* 'hanging', *lotu* 'to pray/worship', *fonua* 'land'—may similarly reflect the ancient presentation of *tapua* tokens to Aloalo. If so, it is easy to see how gods like Hikule'o and Aloalo came to embody themselves in *tapua*, which in turn might resolve earlier speculation about the stringing of godly *tapua*, it being conceivable they were normally kept unstrung, and only unwrapped and strung for suspension as god incarnate at a crucial, highly secretive point in first-fruits presentation, before being unstrung, anointed, enwrapped and returned to their sanctum.

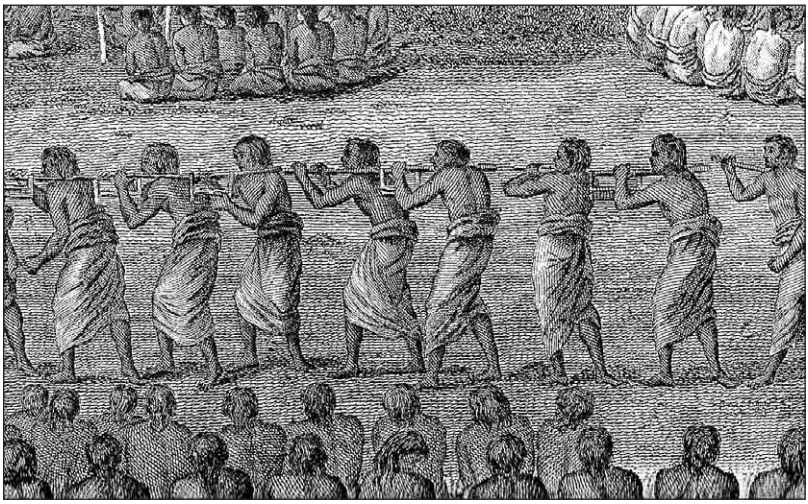

Figure 7. Detail of men bearing wooden tokens of *kahokaho* yams slung like *tapua* for presentation at the *'inasi 'ufimui*, Lapaha, Tongatapu, July 1777. Engraving after John Webber.

The *tapua*-like character of the *kahokaho* offerings at the *'inasi* likewise raises the question of whether they had replaced *tapua* tokens anciently offered to Hikule'o and Aloalo. This seems likely, for tradition insists the *kahokaho*—Fijian *kasokaso*—was unknown in Tonga when the first Tu'i Tonga was established there in the 10th century, it being a secondary introduction, supposedly stolen from Hikule'o and smuggled from Pulotu by the goddess Faimaile, or stolen by the goddess Fehuluni from the god Faifaimalie of Samoa (Gifford 1924: 163-64, 167-70).

With the *kahokaho* discredited from ancient *'inasi* by tradition—and perhaps quite recently introduced from yam-fixated Fiji—it is reasonable to suppose first-fruit offerings in earlier times had more in common with those of Tahiti, where yams were not much cultivated and root crops not included in first fruit-fruits offerings, but plantains strongly represented (Oliver 1974 v. I: 252, 261-63; Ferdon 1981: 55, 1987: 83). This seems the more likely, assuming that the Society Islands were settled from Samoa, whence came the Tu'i Tonga, and forebears of the other great Tongan chiefs, not to mention Hikule'o and Aloalo. In light of this, recall the ubiquitous way in which offerings of young plantain trees, accompanied by scarlet *kula* feathers, pigs and barkcloth, were proffered in the Society, Austral and Marquesas islands when welcoming and placating dangerous sea-borne strangers, supplicating gods and chiefs, and suing for peace or forgiveness. Tahitian plantain presentations seem to have much in common with *tabua* exchanges in Fiji and *'ie malo* mat transactions in Samoa. Indeed, the manner in which young plantain trees were interred with the diseased corpses of Tahitian chiefs, accompanied by prayers that the deified spirit not inflict the complaint on the living, is broadly analogous to the interment of *tapua*/*tabua* with chiefly corpses in Tonga and Fiji (see Morrison 2010: 218, Oliver 1974 v. I: 107-8, Wilson 1799: 364).

Turning again to 18th century Tonga, although plantains featured among the first-fruits offerings presented at Hikule'o's *'inasi* and Aloalo's *tautau*, evidence that they held any particular spiritual consequence is as fragmentary as that for the *tapua* itself. Cook voyage evidence indicates, however, that powerful sea-borne strangers were welcomed/supplicated with offerings of *kava* root accompanied by plantains, coconuts, cycad fruit and shaddocks. This is telling because, with the possible exception of the cycad, these plants are all ancestral Polynesian introductions (Whistler 2009). Most records are frustratingly vague, but decisive details are provided in this description of a canoe-borne welcome at Ha'apai in 1774:

> When they were along-side, a few beads and nails were presented to them, for which they immediately sent a bunch of bananas, and some delicious shaddocks (*citrus decumanus*) on the deck, besides a bunch of the red fruits

> of the palm-nut tree or padang (*Arthrodactylis*) which is a sign of friendship. This being done, they sold us all the shaddocks and fruit which they had, and came on board. (Forster 1996 v. I: 409)

Kava may have been overlooked, but the inclusion of plantains, shaddocks (*molitonga*, *Citrus maxima*) and, diagnostically, inedible red cycad or *longolongo* fruits (Forster's *Arthrodactylis*, Fijian: *logologo*, *Cycas rumphii*), indicate this was a deliberate, spiritually-based offering. *Longolongo* were planted about *mala'e* and close to *fa'itoka* (G. Forster 2000: 246; J. Forster 1967: 904, 922), and shaddocks (Labillardière 1800: 356) and plantains in god-house compounds. Taufa'ahau's symbolic choice of a *polata* 'plantain trunk' to kill the god Haehaetahi (see p. 173 above) and his spiritually possessed priestess in 1829 was likewise spiritually charged, as was the role of *polata* at the entombment of the Tu'i Tonga, where each of thousands attending were furnished with an unlit torch and a *polata*, which last were snapped in unison with a "considerable crash" at the point where the spirit of the deceased god-man/*tapua* seemingly left for the Langi from the *langi* (Martin 1818 v. II: 215-16). Ritual significance is likewise reflected by the formal division of a plantain bunch into five formally ranked *ta* 'hands' for ceremonial allocation (Churchward 1959: 437). It is notable, moreover, that in formal *kava* rituals in which gods were invariably supplicated and chiefs represented deified forebears, *kava* was served in *pelu* 'folded plantain leaf cups' (Fijian: *i kavilo*) rather than *ipu* 'half-coconut shells'. Physically, moreover, the components of some early whale ivory necklaces not only replicate plantains but can even evoke a hand of them, most graphically so in the case of a *sisi* necklace from Namosi in Vitilevu (Clunie 1986: 65).

In a similar vein, evidence from yam-oriented Fiji likewise relates shaddocks and plantains to god-houses, and singles out plantains as the principal offering made at particular first-fruit presentations. For instance, the *bawa*, a large plantain grown alongside god-houses, together with other unspecified cultivars, was *tabu* to all but priests and aged elders (Hazlewood 1850: 12, Williams 1858: 232), while *imatai* and *isemata* harvest festivals were dedicated to "the first-fruits, more particularly of bananas" (Hazlewood 1850: 87, 120). Relict evidence that the highly developed spiritual role of plantains in the Society Islands was rooted in Western Polynesia, moreover, is projected by an account of a *solevu* exchange between Komo island and Muanaicake on Vulaga in 1934, where early on the morning of the formal exchange the *tu rara* 'chief of the ceremonial ground' of Vulaga " took a banana shoot… to the men's guest house, stood outside the door, gave the chiefly greeting (*tama*) to the chief of Komo, and thrust the banana shoot through the door", whereupon the Komo chief "unfolded the shoot" and the

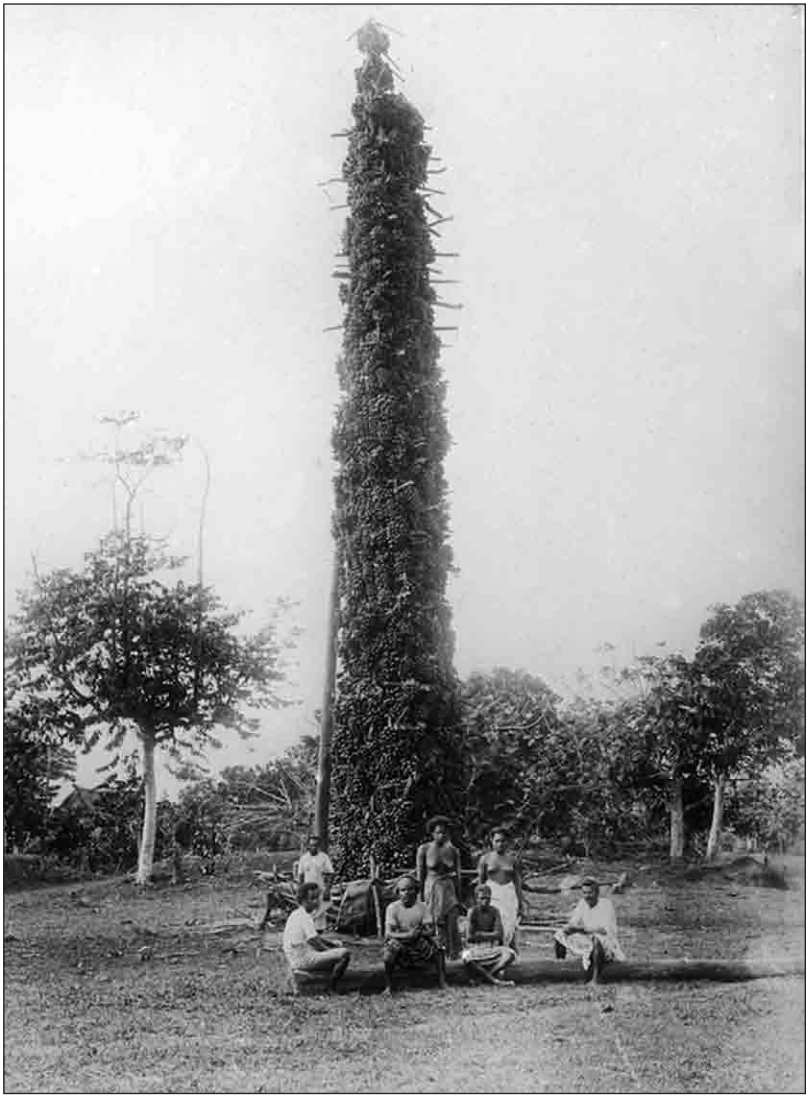

Figure 8. Food-offering column of plantains presented at the wedding of Ratu Tuisawau and Adi Rosea, Rewa, southeastern Vitilevu, c. 1895. (© Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Cambridge.)

tu rara "entered the house and put down the [plantain] stem", followed by young men "carrying a feast (*i vaka vandra* [*ivakayadra* 'to awaken']), which was presented to the Komo people and eaten by them" (Thompson 1940: 74).

The most striking evidence that plantains were prestigious enough to offer to gods in their own right, however, comes from southwestern Vitilevu, where in 1878 Ruthven le Hunte saw two great food-offering columns of plantains reaching for the sky at a church opening in Nadroga.

> The church opening at Nadroga was very good.… There were two enormous poles of bananas outside, 60 feet high, and running from about 3½ fathoms round at the base to 1½ at the top—eye measurement. You could see nothing but bananas—no sticks. (Gordon 1904: 61-62)

This is not the only record of plantain columns in Fiji: Figure 8 features another, "upwards of 40ft. high" presented at the marriage Adi Rosea to Ratu Tuisawau of Rewa (Thomson 1899: 377). In Fiji, pole-framed food-offering columns of this kind were likewise packed with yams or taro, sometimes combined with plantains, often punctuated and usually topped by pigs or turtles. It is essential to note that such columns are ancestrally Polynesian; the chiefly dynasties of both Nadroga and Rewa were founded by Tongan intruders in the 16th century, and analogous columns are recorded in Tonga, New Zealand and Hawai'i.[20]

Insofar as Tonga is concerned, only yam-packed, pig-embellished food-offering columns have been reported, but the columns (*tuputupulangi*?) were otherwise identical to their Fijian counterparts. Their religious character is best expressed by Mariner's account of those built at Vava'u in 1807 for the lifting of the *tapu* imposed following the death of Tu'i Tonga Ma'ulupekotofa. Four columns of yams, each "about fifty or sixty feet high" and topped by a "cold baked pig", were erected at the corners of the Tu'i Tonga's *mala'e*. After the gods left, the contents of one was allocated to Finau 'Ulukalala as Tu'i Vava'u, and those of the other three to the priests, Tu'i Tonga, and "Veachi and two or three other chiefs" who lacked strong temporal power but who were also god-men whose lineages traced to the mating of a sky-god and a Tongan woman (Martin 1818 v. II: 120-25).

* * *

On the basis of the evidence marshalled here and information accruing in the course of research into Tongan activity in Fiji in and about the 16th century (Clunie in prep.), the antiquity of the *tapua* can not be unequivocally resolved. Yet, I believe it reasonable to conclude it has deep Polynesian roots, and to propose it not only may have originated as a token fertility offering

associated with the quartering moon and presentation of the first-fruits of a sanctified variety of plantain, but also that through subsequent embodiment as Hikule'o and Aloalo, and other gods to whom first-fruits were presented, it came to embody the deified spirits of their descendant chiefs. Ultimately, by being entombed with the Tu'i Tonga and other great chiefs, *tapua* became the most supremely *tapu* form of godly embodiment.

The evidence presented here indicates *tapua* did not derive from "Fijian" *tabua*, but that the opposite applies. Archaeological evidence tracing the introduction of raised, stone-faced house and grave mounds and the *kava* ritual to Fiji in the 16th century, combined with traditional Fijian evidence, suggests that *tapua/tabuabuli* began to be strongly established in Fiji from about that time. This in turn might even suggest the *kahokaho* yam was introduced to Tonga from Fiji and only became established as a prestigious food and focus of the great *'inasi* after Tapuosi I's return in the early 17th century. The likelihood of those prospects must await confirmation in a forthcoming article.

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NOTES

1. This summation is mostly based upon the excellent account of the Tongan religion provided by Cummins (1977), and observations in Beaglehole (1967), Martin (1818), and Gifford (1929).
2. According to Tu'i Tonga Paulaho, Fatafehi (*fata*: 'regal canoe, platform'; *fehi*: *Intsia bijuga*) was an alternative name for Hikule'o (see Beaglehole 1967: 179, Wilson 1799: 276-77). Fatafehi, however, also collectively referred to the deified spirits of deceased Tu'i Tonga. This is not surprising, the lineage following the usual chiefly practice of attaching its tutelary god's name to the personal names of its chiefs (see Beaglehole 1967: 950). As an embodiment of Si'uleo/Hikule'o, the bloody-hearted *fehi* (Fijian: *vesi*) was sacred to the Tu'i Tonga and Tuifiti/Tu'i Fisi, so its wood was devoted to godly/chiefly purposes. *Vesi* was similarly sacred in Fiji.

3. For an account of the Tu‘i Tonga acting as *moihu* or intercessor to Hikule‘o, see John Thomas in Filihia 1999: 15.
4. For illustrations of *fono* of known 18th century provenance, see Kaeppler 1978a: 207-9, 226, 229; 2009: 194, 198-99. Others certainly exist, but currently lack comparable documentation, see Hooper 2006: 250.
5. For the Forster breastplates, see Kaeppler 1978a: 211. The British Museum specimen and a more normally-sized *sifatapua* are illustrated in Hooper 2006: 254-55. The massive breastplate Anderson saw at ‘Eua in 1777 was “very large and thick” (Beaglehole 1967: 964), so was not the thin British Museum specimen.
6. A surviving association of a mid- to late 19th century (and so only tokenly crescentic) *tapua* with a *mosikaka* basket is illustrated in Hooper’s Figure 11 herein. These paired objects (British Museum Oc 1920.0322.33 &34) were sent to Ratu Seru Cakobau, Vunivalu of Bau, by Taufa‘ahau Tupou.
7. For illustrations of composite *sifatapua* and *sifafonofono*, see Clunie 1986: 71-78, Hooper 2006: 252. Hooper (2006: 251) also illustrates this massive composite *tapua/tabua*. According to Toganivalu (MS. Ch. 8), “It is certain that this *tabua* was prepared in Tonga.”
8. *Mataisau* is respectful Samoan for a master canoe-builder or other *tufuga* specialist (Pratt 1911: 212). In Lau, Samoa-derived Lemaki and Jiafau carpenters, whose forebears arrived in the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, are called *matainisau* ‘the Sau’s carpenters’ to distinguish them from earlier domiciled *mataisau*, who lacked their plank-building skills.
9. Not all sanctified clubs were *hala*. Some, like *tapua*, were *fale* the god entered before occupying its priest/priestess.
10. Tu‘i Tonga god-houses in Fiji include Nautuutu—Tui Lakeba’s god-house at Tubou—and the Nawa god-house at Oneata, where he sought godly approval to proceed further westward. Both god-house mounds contained sacred soil from Tonga (Hocart 1929: 190, 199).
11. An archaic Lyth-collected *mosikaka* basket (MAA No. 57.D.4) in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, which he did not include in his *List of Curiosities* but nevertheless labeled an “Ancient Fijian basket”, very likely housed Lehalevao’s orange cowry *fale*.
12. For illustrations of ivory breast-upon-vagina *pule* pendants, see Clunie 1986: 68-69, Kaeppler 2010: 213, Oldman 2004: pls 59, 62. For *pulekula* pendants, see Kaeppler 2010: 118, Clunie 1986: 64.13. Centrally pierced *tabuabuli* include the British Museum’s BM 7057, collected by the Rev. J.S. Fordham; the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology’s MAA 1931-219, collected by A.P. Maudslay, and MAA 1918.213.74, collected by Sir Arthur Gordon.
13. 210. Tongan idol: Tui Hadjakafonna. Formerly worshipped by the family of the *Haw*, secular chief of the Friendly Islands.
    211. *Faabi Fonga*. Idol formerly worshipped by the sacred chief, the Tui Tonga.
    212. *Erki Tubu*. Idol worshipped by the sacred chief, the Taminaha and her family.
14. For the nomenclature of the ‘*inasi* ‘*ufimui* and ‘*inasi* ‘*ufimotu‘a*, see Douaire-Marsaudon 1998: 279.

15. Anderson (Beaglehole 1967: 948-49) calls Kaloafutonga "Kalla foo'tonga", while the Missionary Society missionaries wrote "Calla Filatonga" (Wilson 1799: 277).
16. The wooden *tabua* concerned (Fiji Museum 86.72) was last presented at the funeral of Niudamu at Nalawa in N.E. Vitilevu in 1920. Its worn suspension holes were drilled with a traditional drill, and the workmanship is so subtle that the wear shoulder, which often occurs where a sperm whale tooth meets the gum, is perceptible on its surface. The quality equals that of the best Tongan-made *tapua/tabuabuli* (see Clunie 1986: 99, 177).
17. Research into practical, non-invasive means of identifying woods used to make Polynesian religious objects is sorely needed.
18. The *Missions Protestantes Évangéliques* catalogue of the Exposition Universelle (Verne 1867: 23) lists what is evidently a third named goddess-image, the whereabouts of which are unknown: 214. *Déesse, appelé Vyuku, adorée à Ena* ['Eua]*, un des îles Tonga; son temple était la terre*/ '214. Goddess, called Vyuku, worshipped at Ena ['Eua], one of the Tonga islands; her temple was the earth/ land'.
19. Brewster (1922: 22) noted that in highland Vitilevu *tabua* of this godly type were kept "in the seclusion of their special kato or baskets for many years. Such are looked upon as most holy and are jealously guarded and seldom seen except by the initiated, who know of their existence".
20. Tu'i Tonga Paulaho presented a pair of food-offering columns packed with yams and topped by pigs to Captain Cook on Tongatapu in 1777 (Beaglehole 1967: 136, 901-2, 1029). Their similarity to the Rewa plantain column is evident in Webber's painting of "A Tongan Dance" (Joppien and Smith 1988: 320). In 1854 Wilson (MS 2004) mentioned "four quadrangles raised to the height of 15 or 18 feet", topped by pigs and packed with yams at the wedding festivities of a "chiefess of this place & a Haabai [Ha'apai] chief of high degree" at Vava'u in 1854. Their relationship to *pou hakari* (*pou*: 'post', *hakari* 'feast') columns in New Zealand is obvious. The so-called "oracle-towers" dedicated to Lono that the Cook voyagers encountered in Hawai'i in 1778 look like Tongo-Fijian food-offering columns with their contents stripped (Joppien and Smith 1988: 418-19, Handy 1926). For a more recent Fijian instance of a presentation tower of taro, erected at Rewa for a *solevu* between Lau and Rewa, see Hooper 1982, pl. 9.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the *tapua*—close relative of the Fijian *tabua*—a secretively sequestered supreme form of godly embodiment in Tonga and argues that the *tapua* is ancestral of the *tabua*. The symmetrically crescentic form of *tapua* is a more salient feature of the objects than the material used to make them. Strong links between *tapua* and gods receiving the first-fruits demonstrate the likelihood that the object originated as a token plantain presented as a crop fertility offering.

Keywords: tapua, Tonga, first-fruits, whale ivory, plantain.

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