TWO IMPORTANT WHALE-TOOTH IVORY OBJECTS FROM FIJI, HIDDEN UNDER THE SOBRIQUET OF "SCRIMSHAW" IN THE W.L. CROWTHER LIBRARY COLLECTION, HOBART

Rod Ewins [1]

Ewins, R., 2013. Two important whale-tooth ivory objects from Fiji, hidden under the sobriquet of "scrimshaw" in the W.L. Crowther Library Collection, Hobart. *Kanunnah 6*: 94–107. ISSN 1832-536X. Two whale-tooth ivory objects located in the W.L. Crowther Library Collection are identified as typical Fiji presentation *tabua*. Whale teeth, most particularly the large teeth from the lower jaw of the Sperm-whale, are highly regarded when presented formally in a solemn ritual. One of the objects appears to be ritualistic and used in exchange to satisfy the spirit of generous group sacrifice without the concomitant obligations carried by establishing real kinship. The second object, a crescent-shaped pendant, is believed to have originated from a politico-religious movement, called Tuka, in the eastern highlands of Vitilevu, Fiji. This particular whale-tooth is of historical and documentary significance and value. It may be the only known example of these celebrated "message teeth" to have survived..

Rod Ewins, PO Box 748, Nubeena, Tasmania 7184, Australia. Honorary Research Associate, Tasmanian College of the Arts, University of Tasmania.

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Introduction

Because of my long research into things Fijian, over my 45 years of residence in Tasmania I have attempted to familiarise myself with all of the objects and documents relating to Fiji in the various libraries and museum collections around the State.[2] One valuable source of reference material is the W.L. Crowther Library Collection, housed in Hobart in what was formerly the State Library of Tasmania, now part of LINC Tasmania.

The W.L. Crowther Library Collection and its Fiji whale-teeth

The Crowther Library was built on the collection of Sir William Edward Lodewyk Hamilton Crowther (1887–1981), who

donated some 15 000 items to the State Library of Tasmania between 1964 and his death seventeen years later. He had a lifelong interest in natural history and collecting, and his substantial collection included a considerable body of literature, and some objects, that were Pacific-related. His interest ran in the family, both his grandfather for whom he was named, and his father Edward Lodewyk, had been keen amateur ethnologists and collectors. However, it was Sir William who amassed the very substantial collection that is the W.L. Crowther Library today.[3]

In searching the Crowther Library database I found numerous publications but no *objects* listed as being from Fiji. Fortunately, however, in the early 1990s the Library put on public display a piece from its "scrimshaw" collection that I immediately identified as being *not* scrimshaw but an important carved whale-ivory pendant from Fiji. I was in the process of writing a book on the social role of Fijian art, and because it was quite relevant to the discussion, I described and illustrated this pendant in it (2009: 215 and Plate 3b).

Since that time, there has been the happy addition to the catalogue of thumbnail photographs of most articles, and in late 2012 when I had the opportunity to have a look through these, I quickly discovered two typical Fiji presentation *tabua,* both also described as scrimshaw and not localised.[4] One was always unremarkable and is now much damaged, but the other looked interesting, so I sought the assistance of library staff to allow me to examine it closely and photograph it, as I had previously done with the pendant. It was during this process that I discovered that this too is no ordinary *tabua,* but very possibly a most interesting piece of Fiji's history. So, because of Sir William's enthusiasm for scrimshaw, two important Fijian objects have inadvertently found their permanent home in Tasmania.

The importance of the whale tooth in Fiji

Before moving to a detailed description of the two teeth and why they are so important, I should give some contextual information. Whale teeth from a number of species of Odontoceti (toothed whales), most particularly the large teeth from the lower jaw of the Cachalot or Sperm-whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), are inordinately prized in Fiji. Sperm-whale teeth, and also the ivory obtained from them if they are re-fashioned, are referred to in Fiji as *tabua* (pronounced tah-m-boo-uh). When presented formally in a solemn ritual, the *tabua* is certainly their most powerful talisman, believed to have great effectiveness in achieving many profound social and spiritual objectives, an effectiveness conveyed by the word *mana,* which they are said to possess.[5] The ivory may be used for many purposes, but the products are always imbued with a level of spiritual importance, even though the same object used in the same context but fashioned from wood or shell might possess much less inherent significance. They were once capable of purchasing literally any service or expunging any offence. They still today carry great significance, and to accept a *tabua* is to acknowledge a strong connection between the person (or group) presenting it and the receiver. It may also impose an obligation on the recipient group or individual's part.

On occasion, *tabua* might also come to be considered to be the repositories, or shrines, of the most powerful spirit of a place, as in the case cited by Rev. Royce in Kadavu:

> This morning the Kadavu god was brought to me. It had been kept secret till the present time; the god is no more nor less than a fine whale's tooth, and by appearance and report [is] a venerable fellow.
>
> (Royce 1855–62: 354)
> Cited in Tomlinson (2012: 215)

The antiquity of such ascribed importance is unknown, though various hypotheses have been, and continue to be, advanced. Most interestingly, it has been only recently pointed out that one whale-tooth in Cambridge, collected in Ha'apai, Tonga by a missionary in 1836, was also labelled as being considered the repository of a god (Clunie 2013). Oral tradition has been recorded to show that such a tooth would serve as a transit between the god and his priest at times of divination (Gifford (1929) 1971: 304 cited by Clunie op. cit.). So it is clear that, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, whale teeth were of singular spiritual importance in both Tonga and Fiji, though whether this originated in Tonga and was adopted in Fiji, as Clunie concludes, or was part of the great amount of borrowing from Fiji into Tonga in the eighteenth century,[6] probably can never be proven at this time, beyond inductive theorising. Indeed, the roots of this spiritual significance could conceivably lie to Fiji's northwest, in islands on the path of the first immigrants, such as the Western Solomons where they were associated with their ancestral religion and death (Richards 2006). It is all speculative.

While it is clear that whale-teeth were in widespread use long before regular Western incursion into Fiji commenced at the end of the eighteenth century, there was no indigenous whaling carried on in this part of the Pacific, unlike the Northwest Coast of North America where the Inuit people had long harvested migratory whales for food, bone and ivory. For the deeply interconnected societies of Fiji and Tonga, the source of whale-bone and teeth was limited to natural strandings, until Yankee, Australian and other whaling ships came into their waters, chasing the whales whose migratory paths took them up between and through those island groups.

It has been suggested that Fiji's whale teeth originally came from Tonga (Tonganivalu [Toganivalu] 1917), and more recently, that whales did not frequently wash up on Fiji reefs (e.g. Thomas 1991: 110). However, Fiji's waters are actually more reef-strewn than Tonga's (hence the great trepidation with which early sailing ships entered them), and certainly these great creatures were, at least before the predations of whaling, plentiful in Fiji waters, so strandings did, and continue to, occur there. The captain of the U.S. Exploring expedition, Charles Wilkes, recorded the following notes in his journal while enroute from Fiji's solitary township at that time, Levuka, and the port of Savusavu, on the south coast of Vanualevu. He was, therefore, virtually in the geographical centre of Fijian waters, as signified by the Fijian name for this area, Lomaiviti (the middle of Fiji).

> On our way across, we saw a school of sperm whales. These begin to frequent the seas around these islands in the month of July, are most plenty in August

> and September, and continue about the reefs and islands four or five months. I am informed that they are frequently seen from the town of Levuka, near the harbour and adjacent reefs. It seems remarkable that the natives of these islands, 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. The chiefs, of whom I inquired, seemed to show an ignorance upon the subject that I was a little surprised at. Although daring navigators in other respects, they showed a great difficulty in comprehending the mode of capturing whales. Their canoes would not be adapted to this object, being easily overturned, and, as yet, they have but little intercourse with whaleships.
>
> (Wilkes 1845: 194)

That infrequent intercourse was already changing as he wrote, and when they did come in large numbers, whalers were quick to capitalise on the enormous store placed by Fijians on the sperm-whale teeth. Indeed, so many teeth entered the Fijian system that the political balance was profoundly affected. Chiefs with access to large numbers of teeth (such as the confederation centred on the island of Bau) had an enormous advantage over those with little or none, when seeking alliances in warfare or other forms of enrichment for themselves and their polities.

Despite the religious use and significance of whaleteeth in Tonga, there they had fine mats and other *koloa* valuables to occupy the social roles that *tabua* also performed in Fiji, so the obsession with teeth appears not to have been so profound.[7] Therefore, Tongans had a sufficient surplus to permit them to develop a lively trade in teeth to Fiji, and by the mid-nineteenth century, the carvers of Ha'apai were also trading man other articles they fashioned from whale ivory.

Processing the *tabua*

Only the lower jaw of the Sperm-whale bears teeth, while the upper jaw has sockets into which these fit. They range from modest-sized teeth of only about 13–15 cm long, to huge objects well over 20 cm long, as well as thick and deep and weighing up to a kilogram or more.

After being chopped out of the jaw of a dead whale, the tooth is carefully polished and sometimes ground to shape. The shaping (or in some cases carving into other forms) was carried out by male specialists using the same toolkit used for wood-carving,[8] since whale ivory is a relatively soft and easily-worked material. Prior to the introduction of Western steel tools, the first rough forming was done using rasps made from coral, moving from coarse to finer, and then moving to a finer rasp made of stingray skin stretched over a short length of wood. Any detailing would be done using gimlets made from fish teeth and sharks' teeth. For "emery cloth" recourse would be had to a plant, the Horsetail (*Equisetum debilis*), appropriately named in Fijian *masinitabua* or "scrubber of *tabua*". The outer bark of the stem of this plant is strongly impregnated with silica, giving it an abrasiveness suitable for polishing ivory and wood.[9] Final polishing would be done using the rough leaves of certain figs (*Ficus scabra* and *Ficus aspera*), finally adding coconut oil lubricant.

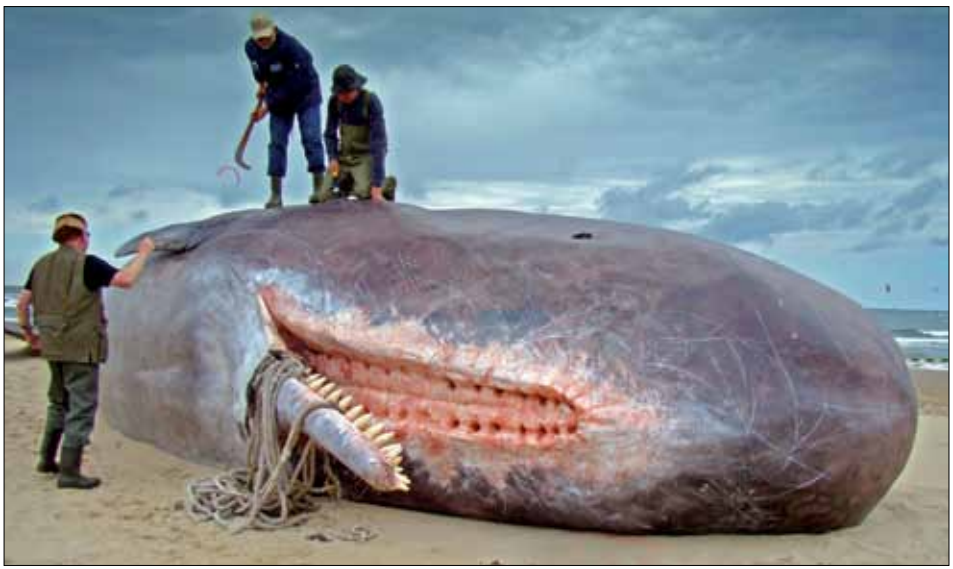

Fig. 1. Beached Sperm whale, showing lower jaw teeth and upper jaw sockets.
From a photograph by Dirk Claesen
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Dirk _ Claesen _ - _ Sperm _ Whale.jpg (accessed 25.3.2013)

The teeth might be fashioned into inlays for clubs, wooden headrests etc., and various pieces of ivory jewellery. perhaps the most singular of which will be discussed below. Small teeth could be strung together as necklaces, or worn singly as pendants, either further carved or simply suspended by a finely woven and sometimes ornamented cord – usually passed through a single hole drilled on one aspect of the root end, so as to allow the tooth to lie flat against the chest, curving to one side or the other. Large teeth were sometimes sawn into long tapering units that were ground to cylindrical form, polished and bound together to form outward-curving gorgets, handsome objects that originated in Fiji but were adopted and made throughout the Fiji/Tonga/Samoa cultural and trading complex.[10]

The female element in *tabua*

I have elsewhere discussed at some length what I consider to be the female denotation inherent in *tabua* (Ewins 2009; 2013: in preparation). This relates to the resonance, indeed symmetry, between male and female elements in Fijian society. The manner in which *tabua* came to perform a critical, in fact principal, role in this regard is difficult to deduce from current usage, since on the face of it, *tabua* appear to be quintessentially male objects – certainly they are produced, controlled and presented by males. I do not suggest that modern-day Fijians consciously relate the *tabua* to women or to the "female element," but a "female equivalence" was indeed proposed long ago by both Hooper (1982: 133–4) and Clunie (1986: 160–61),

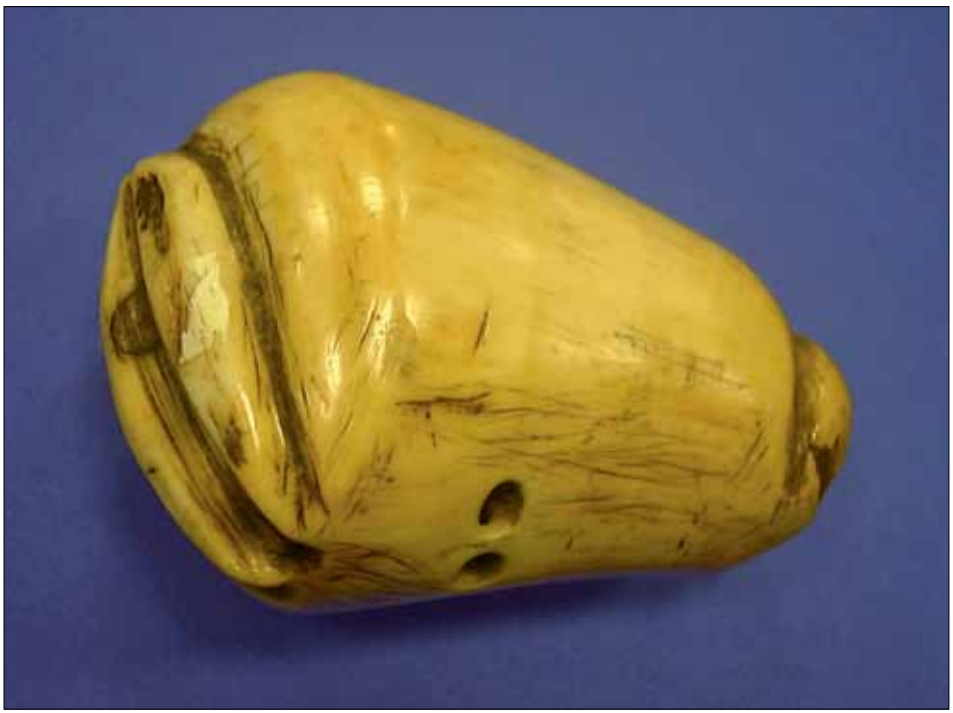

Fig. 2. Carved whale-ivory pendant.
AUTAS001127117596, Photograph © Rod Ewins 2005, courtesy of W. L. Crowther Library & Archives

going so far as to suggest that a *tabua* may originally have been considered a surrogate woman.[11] As such, *tabua* could function in ritual exchange as though they *were* women, satisfying the spirit of generous group sacrifice without the concomitant obligations carried by establishing real kinship, first affinal and finally sanguinal in the form of offspring. Such signification can really only be surmised, however, and modern Fijians understand the deep spiritual undertones of such presentations, but know nothing of their origins.

Most interesting in this context is the existence of apparently very old whale-ivory pendants with a nipple carved on the distal end, and vulva on the other (Plate 3b, and see also the examples illustrated in Clunie 1986:68–9). Genitalia are among humanity's longest-used signs, widely denoting gender, reproduction and fertility, and thus the biological continuity and inter-group connection that women afford in such kinship-based societies. The cords on those examples that still possess them are relatively fine plaited or twisted sennit or hibiscus fibre, rather than the heavy four-strand plaited sennit cord that is customary on prestation *tabua*. Also, the suspension holes are drilled in the

centre of the body of the object rather like Japanese netsuke, rather than in the ends as is the case with *tabua*. Both facts suggest that they were indeed worn as pendants rather than functioning solely as ritual objects as *tabua* do today, but this does not rule out the possibility [even likelihood] that these ancient small objects performed both roles.

> Clunie mentions "intermediate" forms of *tabua* which draw the connection close, and it seems entirely plausible that … [after long usage] the need for representative specificity faded, and the tooth with cord came to transcend pure surrogacy, becoming a sign for the female element in nature, and cosmic generativity generally, … [thus] simultaneously engaging the spiritual and temporal worlds.
>
> (Ewins 2009: 122)

It was very exciting for me, therefore, to find one of these small pendants in the Crowther Library. It is absolutely as described in the quote above, lacking only the fibre suspension cord.

I have never seen a photograph of one of these pendants being worn, but I assume they would have been worn in similar fashion to the white cowry in the next photograph, which was tied to a white barkcloth choker using a piece of hibiscus cord. The whale-ivory pendant might have been worn similarly attached to a choker (quite elaborate forms of which were fashioned from shells and shell or coral beads), or the hibiscus cord could be long for wearing the pendant on the upper chest instead. The shell in the photograph, *Ovula ovum*, also has considerable spiritual significance in Fiji and the wider Pacific. Similarly to whale ivory, its use is generally reserved for religious or chiefly purposes, and it too is a fertility symbol, undoubtedly related to the often-noted female genital appearance and colour of its orifice. To draw this analogy closer, some of the whale-tooth pendants have the lips grooved to resemble the crennelated orifice of a cowry (see Clunie 1986: 68, 160 Photo 113).

Fig. 3. White cowry pendant, a chiefly fertility symbol which shares some features with the Crowther whale-ivory pendant, which might have been worn in this manner. The young woman is Marica Va'aselamu Varani, member of the chiefly clan of Natewa village, Vanualevu Island, Fiji.

Presentation tabua

For a presentation *tabua*, when processing is complete, holes are drilled in either end of the tooth (again using the gimlet), through the tip from side to side, and on the "gum" end of the concave curve of the tooth. To these holes are tied the ends of a stout sennit cord, normally square-plaited.[12] This is *not* a suspension cord for wearing the object round the neck (for which purpose it is generally too short anyway), and such a *tabua* is virtually *never* worn as a piece of jewellery, contrary to the description in many museum catalogues as a necklace or "breast ornament." In fact, it is reserved for the presentations that are an essential part of all very solemn and serious ceremonies in Fiji. As seen in the following photograph, during these presentations, the cord is held in one hand, the tooth in the other, and the presenter uses very formal language that uses the cord as an analogy for the bonds between their two people, consistent with the metaphorical exchange of women.

Most of the *tabua* that have found their way into public and private collections in countries outside Fiji were presented to government officers on official business, or other visitors deemed important enough to warrant the signal honour of receiving one or more. Many were passed along as these recipients continued to pursue the exchanges essential to their work, but other teeth were carried "home" and out of the circulation network within Fiji. However, probably thousands still pass from hand to hand each year, always with solemn ceremony.

The Crowther presentation *tabua*

Exactly how and when this particular *tabua* found its way into the Crowther collection I have been unable to discover, and unfortunately Sir William did not leave detailed notes about the provenance of his collected objects. His interest in scrimshaw and other things associated with whaling came in part from his boyhood when he habituated the waterfront of the busy port of Hobart, and also via his surgeon grandfather. William Lodewyk Snr. The latter, though an eminent surgeon, was entrepreneurial in business, and at times during the period 1825–1870 he owned a fleet of trading ships that sailed to many Pacific destinations. Among these, at one

Fig. 4. Rātū Semi Bosewaqa, the Tui Namo (High Chief) of Lomanikaya village, Vatuleŧe Island, giving the speech to ritually present a *tabua*, in this case as part of a chiefly kava ceremony (*yaqona vakaturaga*). Note also the white cowries attached to the base of the sennit cord on the *tānoa* kava bowl (which is stretched toward the highest-ranked recipient), amplifying the messages conveyed by the *tabua*.
Photograph © Rod Ewins 1993

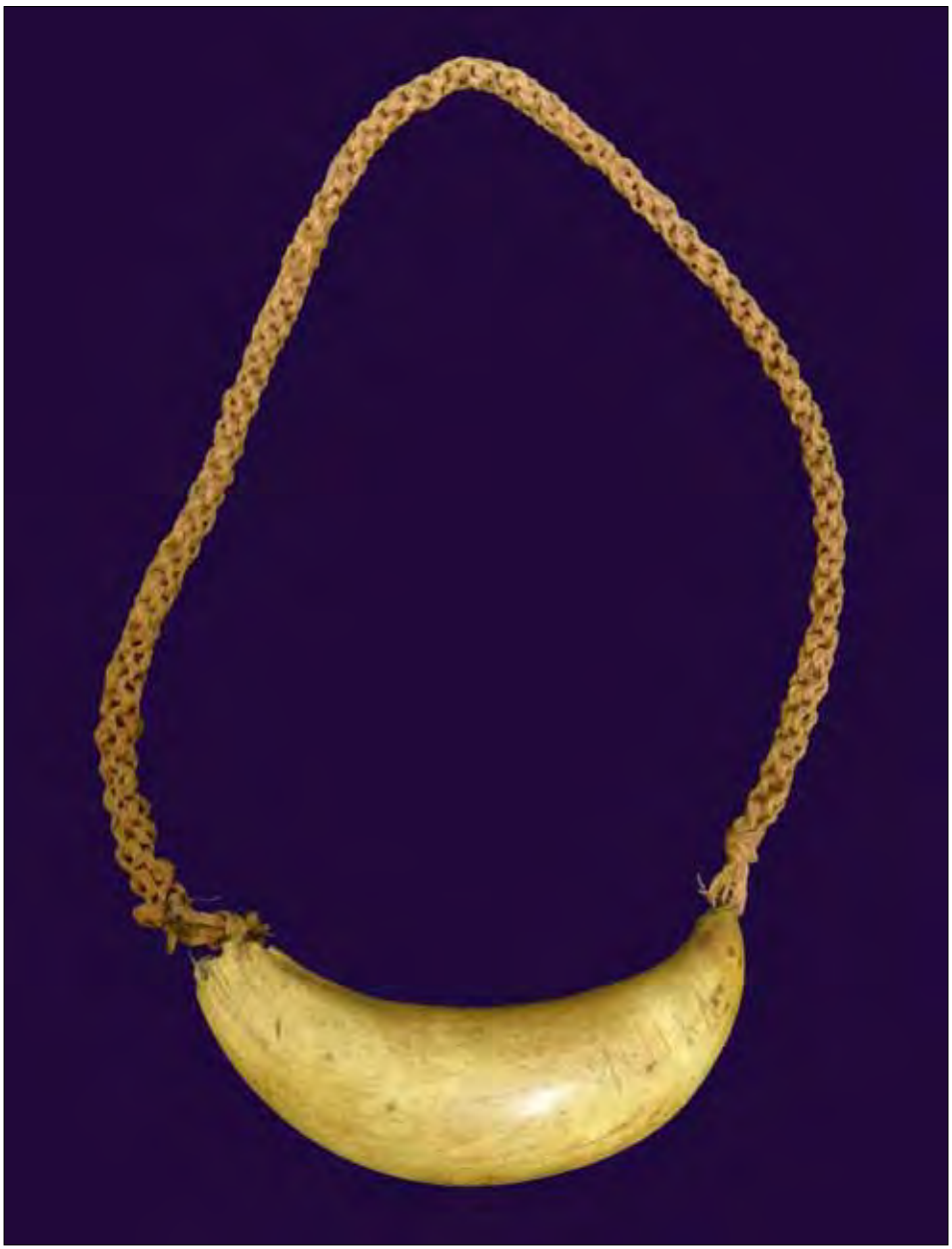

Fig. 5. Fijian presentation *tabua*.
AUTAS001127114833, CRO, Store L11, photograph © Rod Ewins 2012, courtesy of W.L. Crowther Library & Archives

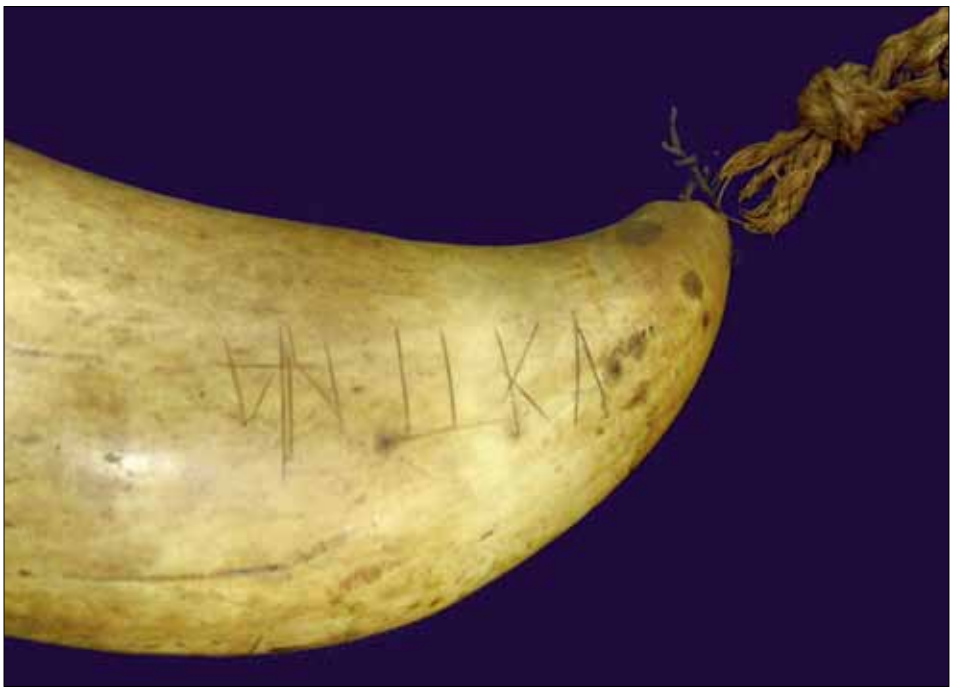

Fig. 6. Detail of Fijian presentation *tabua*.
AUTAS001127114833, CRO, Store L11, photograph © Rod Ewins 2012, courtesy of W.L. Crowther Library & Archives

stage he owned no less than seven whaling ships, a fact that Sir William celebrated in an address he delivered at the annual meeting of the Tasmanian Branch of the British Medical Association on 13 February 1943 (Crowther 1943). The pendant is very possibly the older object despite its being in better condition, and it may well have been alienated from Fiji quite early, even perhaps coming direct from Fiji courtesy of one of William Snr's ships' officers. However, in light of the date I will propose for the presentation *tabua* being used within Fiji before being removed, it is likely that it was obtained later by Sir William himself, perhaps exchanged with other collectors or purchased from dealers.

The crescent in Pacific art and Fijian *tabua*

My interest in this object was initially aroused because unlike many museum examples it retains its sennit cord, is well worn and has been ground into an almost complete crescent form, which is regarded by Fijians as a *beau idéal* for *tabua*. It has been suggested that the widespread use in many cultures of the crescent is a symbol "of fertility because it represented the fertilising moon." [13] That would be entirely consistent with the suggestion I have advanced above, that the potency of the *tabua* in Fiji may have its origins as a symbolic

vehicle for the "female element," also embodying fertility. And there is further evidence that the new moon was indeed recognised as the basis for the preferred status of crescentic *tabua*. In the case of the "shrine" *tabua* mentioned earlier, Royce went on to say:

> Its name is Takei, from *takelo,* [meaning] 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. If ever there was a scarcety [*sic*] of food on Kadavu, or in the case of war, it was conveyed to some distant island and only returned when peace and plenty were restored.
>
> (Royce, op. cit.)

So the connection with the new moon, and with abundance (albeit somewhat idiosyncratically), were clearly in play.[14] Perfectly symmetrical crescentic *tabua* do exist, but perhaps understandably considering the labour involved, and the size and form required in the original tooth to make them suitable for such re-shaping, they are not common. Most *tabua* are merely polished and drilled, with no further modification, and the flaring gum-insertion and hollow nerve-channel are still obvious.

Though this particular example is not perfectly symmetrical (the "gum" end has not been completely ground down), most of the *tabua* in circulation are far less carefully shaped than this. Nonetheless, if its age and shape were all there was to this tooth, it would not be particularly remarkable, since there are many *tabua* in collections that are finer and more perfectly formed.

A link to a most important chapter of Fijian colonial history

There is, however, one feature of this tooth that suggests that it is indeed remarkable, and that is revealed in a word that is incised near the tip of the tooth. On first seeing this, I assumed it was an owner's name, since it is not uncommon for owners to incise their names on *tabua*, establishing at least transitory ownership. Sometimes several names can be found on a single tooth. The Australian Museum in Sydney has listed seven names "and others."[15] However, closer inspection revealed that the word in this case is TUKA.[16]

Tuka is not a person's name, though it can be part of compound words meaning grandparent. However, there was from about 1860 on, what has been dubbed a millenarian movement called Tuka, in the eastern highlands of Vitilevu, Fiji. In this context, *tuka* meant immortality, which was promised to adherents of the politico-religious movement. With a rhetoric of reclaiming their hegemony over their own lands and people, when the Tuka adherents started assembling and drilling troops the British authorities arrested and deported the "prophet" Mosese Dugumoi, to Rotuma.[17] This failed to deter his followers in his home village of Drauniivi, however, and in the late 1880s they started sending *tabua* far and wide to garner support for their cause (Brewster 1891, Kaplan 1990;1995).

Sending *tabua* from one place to another is not of itself a very unusual activity, and it probably would not have attracted undue attention from the authorities had they become aware of it. But the incision of the word "TUKA" on the *tabua* would have made the message quite unambiguous to the receiver. Such

is the potency attaching to *tabua* that if accepted, the recipient would have been bound irrevocably to the cause.[18] Brewster (*op.cit.*) made the observation that these *tabua* performed a comparable function "to the Chupatties [*sic*) of the Indian Mutiny." Importantly, the case that a "mutiny" was being planned by the Tuka adherents was undoubtedly stronger in the minds of the colonial administration than could, then or now, be established empirically for the Tuka members.

However, speech that was interpreted rightly or wrongly as seditious by the colonial government, and that was plainly attracting great support, was sufficient to cause pre-emptive moves on the government's part. Finally, determined to respond but wishing to employ a less draconian response than that shown the highlanders during the 1870s (when the Gordon government declared all-out war on those resisting their authority), the Governor determined to relocate the entire village for a time from their hard-to-control mountain fastness, to rich Crown land on the distant island of Kadavu. This must have seemed to the Governor to be a generous response, but it took no account of the Fijian's attachment to place (there are many discussions of this in the literature, but see for example Ewins 2009: 22, 37–9). When the administration considered that their "threat" had abated, after an absence of 18 years, the people were permitted to return and re-establish their village. It would appear from the research conducted by Kaplan (op. cit.) in the 1980s, that to this day the highlanders of that area still hold many, perhaps all, of the prophesies and beliefs of Navosavakadua to be true. Their identity and sense of agency and self-worth, indeed, depend on this belief.
While I doubt it will ever be able to be proven categorically, if as I strongly suspect this particular whale-tooth is one of those circulated by the would-be reformers of the Tuka movement, it has a historical and documentary significance and value that far exceeds its being merely a nice specimen. I know of no other example of these celebrated "message teeth" having survived.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the following staff of LINC Tasmania who assisted me in locating and photographing the whale teeth discussed in this paper: Tony Marshall, Stephanie McDonald, Ian Morrison, and Liz Lehede. I thank my good friend and colleague, linguist Dr Paul Geraghty, for suggesting the Tuka movement as a possible contender when I shared with him my doubts about the incised inscription being a person's name. However, he bears no responsibility for any further conclusions I have drawn. I also thank Professor Martha Kaplan for reading an earlier draft of this paper, correcting a couple of factual errors I had made in relation to the Tuka movement, and making other useful comments. She is the pre-eminent authority on this topic and I am grateful for her review and input.

Endnotes

1 Dr Roderick Ewins is a retired academic from the Tasmanian College of the Arts, University of Tasmania, where he continues as an honorary researcher. Born and raised in Fiji, he has for over 30 years been researching and writing about the art and material culture of the indigenous *Itaukei* people of Fiji.

2 This resulted in a book about the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery's collection (Ewins 1982), a revised 2nd edition of which is scheduled to be published shortly.

3 See the Australian Dictionary of Biography Online: http://adb.anu.edu.au/ biography/crowther-sir-william-edward-lodewyk-hamilton-12374 – accessed 23 February 2013.

4 Marian Jameson usefully detailed Tasmania's scrimshaw collections (1998), particularly those of Crowther. A copy of her thesis is held in the LINC Tasmania library, Hobart, as well as the James Cook University Library.

5 *Mana* is a word used in all Polynesian languages, but its meaning is not consistent. In a Fijian context, it should be understood to mean effectiveness, no more nor less, though context may impart various overtones to that, as it does in the case of *tabua*. A good recent discussion of its meaning in Fiji is that in Tomlinson (2006).

6 As documented for numerous objects and customs, by the early observer in Tonga, William Mariner (Martin & Mariner 1981, 2006–08).

7 Perhaps for this reason, though the religious significance of the teeth was displaced (or at least driven underground) by the advent of Christianity in both Fiji and Tonga, only in Fiji did they still have the strong social role that could maintain their supremacy among Fijian wealth. I am informed that in Tonga today, whale teeth only have special significance for certain noble families, particularly those with Fiji connections. Among other classes of Tongans, they have no value as ritual gifts (pers. comm. Ping-Ann Addo, May 2013).

8 Mariner stated that in Tonga, the ivory carving was principally done by canoe builders (Dale 2006–8: 390).

9 Even more curiously, perhaps, these plants also contain small amounts of gold – but that is not relevant to their use as abrasives.

10 The Fijian origin of these is confirmed linguistically (Paul Geraghty, pers. comm. 2012) and by the very early eyewitness account of William Mariner, who was cast away in Tonga and lived there between 1805 and 1811. He wrote that "*Fono'i* [is] carving ornaments using whale teeth, for the neck wear, and inlaying clubs, etc. with the same material. This art, as far as it regards ornaments for the neck, is of Fiji origin; but inlaying clubs, wooden pillows etc., is [Tongans'] own invention." (Dale 2006–08: ibid.)

11 The case for equivalence is made stronger by the fact that formerly, women given between tribes to cement alliances in war were called *tabuanivalu* – "war *tabua*." (Capell (1941) 1973: 210)

12 Sennit is plaited by men using coir fibre from a variety of coconut palm with a very long nut. The nut is husked when mature but still green, and the husk roasted in an earth oven (sending it red-brown). It is then shredded and the fibres "spun" between hand and thigh. The resulting thread is plaited into fine three-strand plaits, and these are in turn plaited into square cord.

13 Skinner (1943: 136).

14 Tomlinson (op. cit.; 216) proposes to explain the apparent idiosyncracy as Takei not ensuring peace and plenty, but indexing them. Fijian thought on such things is often elliptical, so I perceive no inherent contradiction. As an aside, there is even a report of one crescentic stone object from Komave, on the Nadrogā coast of Vitilevu (today referred to as the "Coral Coast"). (Geddes (1945) 2000: 47)

15 McCarthy (1953: 96). The practice might be compared to the owners' seals that were printed on the margins of Japanese woodblock prints, sometimes becoming quite numerous as the prints changed hands between collectors.

16 The strange way of forming a "T" from two triangles and a vertical is not uncommon on such early inscriptions – most commonly they would have been incised with a sharp knife, not engraved, and this would have placed constraints on the use of curves, and also perhaps made the maker feel that the thin lines of a simple "T" shape would not be sufficiently bold.

17 Mosese's *nom-de-guerre*, as it were, was Navosavakadua, which I would translate as something like "the final word".

18 The most celebrated example of this sort of power being brought to bear against foreigners was that in which a *tabua* was sent ahead of the Wesleyan missionary Rev. Thomas Baker on a trip he took into the highlands of Vitilevu, securing his murder by a chief who finally accepted the tooth. The story was fictionalised by Jack London in his *South Sea Tales* (London 1912) as "The Whale Tooth" http://www.literature.org/authors/london-jack/south-sea-tales/chapter-02.html (Accessed 25 February 2013). On two separate occasions since, descendants of the chief responsible have sought to expunge their inherited guilt, again by presenting *tabua*, first to the Methodist Mission in Fiji, and quite recently, to the descendants of the unfortunate Rev. Baker.

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