

The top of the hill was formerly used as a general refuse heap by the natives, but it is now occupied by the house of the missionary. The native houses all lie on the flat low tract close to the sea. Mbau has long been a native fortress of great strength. Hence the immense labour which has been spent on its formation. It is now the residence of King Thackombau, and almost every one in the island is a chief or of high family.

Nearly the whole surface of the island, including the hill-ground, is covered with a thick kitchen-midden deposit of black soil, full of large trochus-shells and cockles (*Cardium*), which abound on the mud flats all around. Mingled with these are quantities of human bones, Mbau having been one of the places in Fiji at which cannibalism was most largely practised. There are very few trees growing on Mbau, and the food, such as taro and yams, is all brought from the main land, where there are extensive plantations.

One of the most interesting features in Mbau is perhaps the stone against which the heads of the human victims destined for the oven were dashed, in the ceremony of presenting them to the god Denge. This stone stands close to one corner of the remains of the foundations of the ancient temple of Denge, the "Na Vatani Tawake." The temple itself was destroyed when the Mbauans became Christians, but the mound on which it stood remains, and is of great interest.

It is a large oblong tumulus of earth, supported by two series of vertically-placed slabs of stone, exactly similar to those used for the sea parapet. The slabs of the lower series are much larger than those of the upper, and the upper series is placed further inwards, a sort of step being thus formed all round the tumulus. The mound must be about 12 feet high, and some of the stones of the lower series are more than six feet in height.

Opposite the centre of one side is set up a large column of basalt, and there is another opposite the strangers' house. These columns are said to have been taken in war, from some enemies on Viti Levu, and intended to have been used as posts for the king's house. The columns are, however, said by Dana* to have been brought by a Mbau chief from a small island in the harbour of Kandavu, which is composed of them, and they were long desperately defended by the inhabitants, who held them sacred.

* Dana: "U. S. Expl. Ex., Geology," p. 348. The columns at Mbau are referred to by Capt. Erskine, "Islands of the Western Pacific," p. 193, London, J. Murray, 1853, who, however, did not recognise them as of unartificial formation.