

PACIFIC MANUSCRIPTS BUREAU

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Report on PMB fieldwork in Suva, 30 August-12 September 2010

The project was undertaken in response to the pending sale or possible closure of the *Fiji Times*, a News Corp subsidiary. The Fiji Government's Media Industry Development Decree required that all media in Fiji be transferred to 90 per cent domestic ownership by 28 September 2010. On behalf of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Brij Lal contacted the *Fiji Times* Editor, Netani Rika, asking for permission to make copies of parts of the *Fiji Times* photo archives. Anne Fussell, Managing Director of Fiji Times Limited, replied on 26 July giving permission for the ANU to digitise the photo archives.

On return from PMB fieldwork in PNG, I contacted Ms Fussell about the possibility of sending *Fiji Times* and/or *Pacific Islands Monthly* photographs to the ANU for digitisation but Ms Fussell did not consider it appropriate while negotiations for the sale were underway. There was further discussion of copyright issues. I pointed out that the PMB would be making the digital copies on behalf of all the Bureau's member libraries, not just the ANU, and suggested that access to the digital copies be granted on condition that all users would seek permission of the *Fiji Times* for publication and would credit the *Fiji Times* in any publication. The copyright and access issues were not resolved but Ms Fussell invited me to proceed to Suva in any case to undertake the digitisation project.

In Suva, working fairly solidly at the *Fiji Times* building every day during the visit, three PMB Photo Series titles were made, as follows

PMB Photo 35 *FIJI TIMES*, Photo Archive – Selected prints, 1970-2001.

PMB Photo 36 *PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY*, Photo Collection – Fiji, 1933-1987.

PMB Photo 37 HOARE, Charles (?), Album of Prints – Papeete, Nuku'alofa, Apia, Rarotonga, *et al.*, n.d. (c.1875?).

(See draft Item Lists at Appendix A & B for details.)

Fiji Times, Suva, 1-11 Sep 2010

Given the large quantity prints in the *Fiji Times* photo archives and the brief time available for digitisation, it was decided to use over-head digital photography to copy the prints rather than a flat-bed scanner. Darren Boyd, Coombs Photography Unit, kindly lent me his Canon EDS-1. I also took the Canon Powershot G9 and the Toshiba laptop (both of which had been purchased for the Tuvalu National Archives Major Project funded by the Endangered Archives Programme) and the Bureau's Hirakawa A3 copy stand and lighting equipment.

I was welcomed at the *Fiji Times* by Anne Fussell and Netani Rika. I met Margaret Keni, the *Fiji Times* Librarian, and Asaeli Lave, formerly *Fiji Times* Chief Photographer, now retired, who had been recalled to select the prints from the *Fiji Times* subject files for digitisation. Later I met Seóna Smiles who also had been called in to select prints from the *Fiji Times* personalities files for digitisation. I was allocated a work-room off the News Room and adjacent to the Library.

11,480 images in RAW format were made with the EDS-1 and 628 JPG images were made using the Powershot. I photographed the reverse of each print where there was a caption sheet attached or information had been inscribed on the back of the print. In total about 6,000 prints were copied. About 4,000 in the *Fiji Times* photo archives and about 2,000 in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* photo archives. There has not yet been time to process these digital images.

The *Fiji Times* photo archives consists of:

- *Fiji Times* Subject files A-Z, c.1970-2000, in 18 x 4-drawer filing cabinets (c.2,000 prints/drawer) = c.144,000 prints.
- *Fiji Times* Personalities files, A-Z, 4 x 4-drawer filing cabinets = c.32,000 prints.
- *Fiji Times* Sports files, A-Z, 2 x 4-drawer filing cabinets = c.16,000 prints.
- *Fiji Times* Prints in chronological order of publication, 1972-1976, 3 large (c.A2) albums.
- *Fiji Times* Digital prints (6" x 4"), c.Y2000+, in c. 600 small plastic albums (24 prints/album), labelled by subject = 14,400 prints.
- *Fiji Times* Contact prints with negatives, 1977-2002, in 600 ring back binders.
- *Fiji Times* Digital copies of photographs, Y2000+, on CDs.
- *Pacific Islands Monthly* Subject files by Island, then by subjects, 4 drawers of filing cabinets = c.8,000 prints.
- *Pacific Islands Monthly* Personalities Files, A-Z, 2 drawers of filing cabinet = c.4,000 prints.

The *Fiji Times* photographs in the photo archives mainly date from the early 1970s although the newspapers printed photographs from at least the early 1950s. It is not clear what has happened to the earlier *Fiji Times* photographs.

The *Fiji Times* prints which Asaeli Lave selected covered most aspects of rural and urban life in Fiji since the 1970s. Many of the photographs were superbly composed. Topics include: Chiefs, children, churches, copra/coconut industry, coups, cyclones, elections, festivals, floods, Great Council of Chiefs, Indo-Fijians, land disputes, land lease expiries, military, Parliament, police, political parties, politics, prisons, strikes, sugar industry, Royal family, USP, Vatukoula Gold Mine, village life, women in Fiji, WWII veterans, *etc.* (See draft PMB Photo 35 Item List for details.) Most of the photographs selected for digitisation were made by *Fiji Times* photographers, including Anne Livingstone, Asaeli Lave, Leca Vunibobo, and many others. Some were made by Rob Wright and the Fiji Ministry of Information.

Mr Lave used the opportunity to check the photo archives subject files for prints out of place and to reconstitute some of the subject files. He continued working along those lines after I returned to Canberra.

There was not time to begin digitising prints from the personalities files during my visit. In any case I think that Seóna Smiles needed more time to make her selection and she also continued sorting prints after I left.

The *Pacific Islands Monthly* was originally published by Pacific Publications in Sydney which was purchased by the *Herald and Weekly Times*. After News Ltd acquired the *Herald and Weekly Times*, the *PIM* was published from Suva and the *PIM* photo archives, together with the *PIM* library, were transferred from Sydney to Suva.

Mr Lave and I decided to digitise the Fiji series of *PIM* photographs which are from numerous sources, for example: organisations such as, the Fiji Museum, the Fiji Public Relations Office (Official Photographs), the US Army Signal Corps, Whites Aviation Ltd; and individuals and photographic studios including, Akbar's Studios (Lautoka), Caine & Co & Caines Jannif Ltd (Suva), C.L. Cheng (Suva), F.W. Collins (Auckland), Ngairé Douglas & Norman Douglas (Pacific Profiles), G.L.U. (Fiji?), Raman Lal (Levuka), A.G. Shearer (Suva), Chandra Prasad (Suva), Mike Saunders (?), Stinson Studios (Suva), Ray Strange (?), S.A. Whippy (Suva), Rob Wright (Suva), and others; as well as photographs by Pacific Publications P/L and *Fiji Times* journalists.

After discussion with Anne Fussell, most of the remainder of the *PIM* photo prints were packed, wrapped in plastic sheets for protection, into four cartons for transfer to the PMB on loan for digitisation. The transfer was postponed at Ms Fussell's direction pending further discussions with

prospective purchasers of the *Fiji Times*. [See Appendix C, Box List, *Pacific Islands Monthly Photo archives – Other Islands*.)

Ms Fussell did not make a final decision on the copyright and access issues during the visit.

At the very end of the visit I made a digital copy of one photograph album held with printed material formerly collected by staff of Pacific Publications. Dated about 1875 it includes prints of Burton Bros (Dunedin) photographs of Apia, Nuku'alofa, Tonga. It is not clear who made the other photographs. They may not be photographs by Charles Hoare. There are photographs of Papeete, Rarotonga, Tahitian women, men and families, Tahitian and Tongan Royal families, and other views, mostly with captions. Two prints are very faded.

National Archives of Fiji, 2 September

I visited Salesia Ikaniwai, Acting Government Archivist, at the National Archives of Fiji to discuss the work which the PMB was undertaking at the *Fiji Times*. Salesia stated that the National Archives would like to talk to the *Fiji Times* management about the possibility of eventual transfer of its photo archives to the National Archives. Salesia mentioned the *Fiji Sun* had already transferred its photo collection, 1970-2000, to the National Archives. I passed this information on to Anne Fussell. Salesia also mentioned that the National Archives had recovered its *Fiji Times* microfilm master negatives from Bell & Howell and that the microfilms are now available for purchase from the National Archives.

Headquarters of the Methodist Church in Fiji, 3, 6, 8, 10 September

I visited the Methodist HQ on several occasions in order to request permission for Kirstie Close, a PhD student at Deakin University (Melbourne) to have access to PMB microfilms of the Churches early records (PMB 1093 & PMB 1138) held under restricted access. Ms Close is a great-granddaughter of Rev. A.D. Lelean, a Methodist Missionary who was based at Davuilevu. There had been no response to Ms Close's earlier approaches to the General Secretary. On Friday 10 September Rev. Dr Tuikilakila Waqairatu gave me letters granting Ms Close his permission which I posted to her on return to Canberra.

Ewan Maidment
PMB Executive Officer
20 Sep 2010