

## **PACIFIC MANUSCRIPTS BUREAU**

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### **Trip Report, Fiji, 17 - 26 July 2022**



*Figure 1 Thurston Gardens, Suva*

#### **Summary**

The main purpose of the trip was to:

- Appraise/digitise records at Davuilevu Theological College (DTC)
- Present at University of the South Pacific (USP) history writing workshop
- Reconnect with various institutions after travel hiatus due to pandemic

**Titles: PMB MS 1444: Bachelor and Diploma Theses of Davuilevu Theological College (Incomplete, access conditions TBC.)**

#### **National Archives of Fiji**

On Monday afternoon, I visited the National Archives of Fiji (NAF) where I met with Timoci Balenaivalu (Principal Archivist) and Losena Tudreu (Archivist). It was great to hear about the excellent work going on at NAF, including:

- Records management training with various ministries;
- Request and delivery from Fiji Police for records management training;
- Work with Brandon Oswald of Island Culture Archival Support to sort and rehouse the NAF map collection; and
- Working with the Henry Landseer Tripp collection.

I was particularly interested to hear about the work they are doing with intergenerational knowledge sharing within the NAF team. Long serving staff are giving presentations to all staff in an effort to pass

on their knowledge to the newer members of the team. This is a great way of passing on corporate knowledge and providing professional development.

We also discussed ways that PMB may be able to assist, including working with those Methodist Church records which are held at NAF.

### **Davuilevu Theological College (DTC)**



*Figure 2 Exterior of the Davuilevu Theological College Chapel*

On Tuesday, I travelled out to Davuilevu Theological College (DTC). DTC is the training college of the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma (MCIF). The College is located about 40 minutes from central Suva, just across the river from the airport at Nausori. The College's main offering is the Diploma of Theology and there is a small cohort of Bachelor of Divinity students. A new classroom is being built for the teaching of a Masters program which they plan to introduce in the coming years. The Principal is the Rev Dr Jolame Sedra.

I was greeted at DTC with a sevusevu at morning devotion, which was beautiful, generous and completely humbling. Many thanks to all staff and students involved in this warm welcome. I was then shown to the library where the Digitisation Committee, consisting of Rev Savenaca Vuetanavanua, Librarian Aneeta Reuben and students Jiare, Jone and Josefa had laid out all student theses. Jiare had also compiled a spreadsheet which lists all the library's thesis holdings. I cannot thank the Digitisation Committee enough for this preparation, which saved me a significant amount of time and work. After reviewing the listing and the physical theses, we decided to prioritise the oldest Diploma theses and project papers. These were mostly comb-bound and some were starting to show signs of damage. The more recent theses are in hard covers, so better protected. Many of the older theses are also written in Fijian vernacular.



*Figure 3 Davuilevu Theological College Library*

I worked with Jiare, Jone and Josefa over four days to complete the goal we set of digitising all the comb-bound diploma theses. In four days, we digitised Diploma theses from 1990-2017, that is 109 theses or 5136 pages. Many thanks to Jiare for keeping excellent progress statistics, concluding that we digitised 42.7 percent of the thesis collection in four days. DTC is extremely enthusiastic about completing this work and have suggested that I return in late November/early December. Principal Rev Dr Jolame has also asked me to view the College's archive when I return. DTC is a small college and both staff and students are enthusiastic about improving their digital resources, such as a new library catalogue and improving



access to digital content. The library has a small computer lab with three PC's for student use, so there is digital infrastructure to build on. DTC is very enthusiastic about their digital future and is keen for PMB guidance on next steps.



*Figure 4 Kari and Josefa digitising theses*



*Figure 5 Theses digitised while at DTC*



*Figure 6 Rev Save, Josefa, Rev Dr Jolame, Kari, Jone and Jiare*

### **The University of the South Pacific Library (USPL)**

On Wednesday, I spent most of the day at the USP Laucala campus. It was a pleasure to meet with Gwen Rounds and Susana Mavanawai at USP Library. We reaffirmed the positive relationship between PMB and USPL. While PMB resources are used by academic staff, we discussed how we could better promote PMB collections to undergraduate students and USPL staff. I left some brochures with Susana for the Information Desk and we agreed that I would send some PMB posters for the library as well. I also offered to do online training with USPL staff.

I also organised the transportation of maps from the USPL collection to ANU Library, where the ANU CartoGIS team is gradually digitising the USPL map collection. Many thanks to Dr Nick Hoare for stepping in to transport the maps from Suva to Canberra because I had forgotten how much equipment fieldwork requires! The maps will be returned to USPL after they have been digitised. Those maps which are out of copyright will be available on [ANU Open Research](#).

A suggestion for future digitisation projects in Fiji was the Catholic Church archives.

### **The University of the South Pacific School of Law and Social Sciences**



*Figure 7 Presenting at History Writing Workshop at USP. Photo courtesy Dr Nic Halter*

After meeting with USPL, I went to the School of Law and Social Sciences to give a presentation on the PMB collection to postgraduate history students as part of a two-day history-writing workshop run by Dr Nic Halter (USP) with Dr Nick Hoare (ANU) and Sala Dr George Carter (ANU). The response to the presentation was very positive, with follow-up enquiries from a number of students interested in using our resources in their research. It was also good to meet with Dr Dario Di Rosa and Dr Robert Nicole. I have recently been corresponding with Dr Nicole about PMB resources, so it was great to meet in person.



An issue that came up in this discussion is the difficulty in accessing materials on microfilm in Fiji. The microfilm reader at NAF does not focus properly and is difficult to use for long periods of research. Any leads for acquiring a cheap microfilm reader for NAF (and indeed others in the Pacific) would be greatly appreciated (write to [pambu@anu.edu.au](mailto:pambu@anu.edu.au)).

### The Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma (MCIF)

On Friday, I met with Rev Dr Semisi Turagavou (General Secretary), Rev Dr Anil Reuben (Deputy General Secretary) and Rev Wilfred Regunamada (Communications Secretary) to discuss PMB, and how we might be able to assist the MCIF archives. I advised the General Secretary that I would provide a list of recommendations. I also presented a USB with digitised copies of *Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu* (PMB DOC 199 – PMB DOC 205). I look forward to working with MCIF in the future to assist in the preservation of this significant collection.



Figure 8 Rev Regunamada in MCIF records room



Figure 9 Delivering digitised *Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu* to MCIF

### The Fiji Times



Figure 10 Excited selfie at The Fiji Times

As a former media librarian, I was very excited to visit *The Fiji Times*. I stopped in briefly to meet library staff and discuss a past PMB photo digitisation project at *The Fiji Times*. The discussion was very positive and I look forward to further discussions with the library about these significant collections. For more information refer to [2010 PMB Fiji Trip Report](#).

## **Vinaka vakalevu**

**At Davuilevu Theological College:** vinaka vakalevu to the staff and students who welcomed me so generously in a very difficult week for their community. Thanks go to Principal Rev Dr Jolame Sedra, Rev Savenaca Vuetanavanua, Jiare, Jone, Josefa, Aneeta, Rosarina and everyone who turned pages, updated spreadsheets, fed me, drove me, prayed for me and welcomed me into the DTC community. It was truly a privilege and I believe this is the start of a long friendship between PMB and DTC. Heartfelt thanks for *Isa Lei* as I departed DTC.

**At MCIF:** vinaka vakalevu to Rev Dr Semisi Turagavou, Rev Dr Anil Reuben and Rev Wilfred Regunamada for a generous welcome to Epworth House and your enthusiasm for future collaboration with PMB.

**At USP:** vinaka vakalevu to Gwen Rounds, Susana Macanawai, Dr Nic Halter and all the brilliant staff and students involved in the Postgraduate History Writing Workshop. It was a great privilege to learn about your research and I hope to be able to provide archival assistance to the students going forward.

**Special thanks** to Prof Matt Tomlinson, Dr Nick Hoare and Dr Nic Halter for assistance in preparing for the trip, and to Nic during the entirety of my visit. Nic and his wife Makayla are truly generous hosts.



*Figure 11 Police recruits cool off in the harbour at sunset.*

Kari James

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