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*Edited by*  
ANNE PEREZ HATTORI  
*University of Guam*

JANE SAMSON  
*University of Alberta*

\*

*General Editor*  
PAUL D'ARCY



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## Archives and Community Memory in the Pacific

OPETA ALEFAIO AND NICHOLAS HALTER

Dynamic and proactive archives are crucial for safeguarding and growing community memory and knowledge. Despite this, South Pacific Island archives are plagued by stark challenges which hinder their role. Principally, it is an issue of trust. The echoes and expectations of a not-too-distant colonial past have isolated archives from the communities they are supposed to serve. This is made worse by traditional archival practice, which has a narrow focus, and with characteristics and requirements that prevent Pacific archives from connecting with their communities. These dated archive practices concentrate on 'control' of archival holdings with less consideration for the 'accessibility' of these holdings to the general public. This is driven by assumptions that may be relevant in Europe and societies where the written record has a long history, but which do not fit the realities of the island nations of the South Pacific and other countries that are former colonies, where oral tradition has a more dominant role. Using the developments at the National Archives of Fiji from 2012 to 2019 as a case study, this chapter will examine the challenges to Pacific Island archives, reveal how acknowledging cultural norms is key for Pacific archives to build trust and establish relevance in the community, and demonstrate how connecting with community is critical to overcoming the obstacles which prevent archives from serving their communities as desired.

Traditional archival practice has a narrow focus, with characteristics and requirements which can hinder Pacific Island archives from connecting with their communities. Ideals of neutrality, passivity, and objectivity that were once championed by conventional archives are useful but they do not go far enough to suit Pacific Island contexts. Pacific Islands and cultures are marked by diversity, and cultural contexts are highly specific, subjective, and political. Archives not only reflect the circumstances of the past, they are also shaped by the context of the present. Today Pacific Island archives are increasingly reaching out to engage their communities and must find new

ways to demonstrate that they are accessible, useful, and relevant. This presents many challenges for institutions which have inherited a colonial legacy yet operate in a post-colonial context. The preference for the written word over the Indigenous knowledge systems means that archives are regarded with suspicion, distrust, or apathy. This perception is reinforced by geography – archivists work on the colonial record in the urban metro-pole while memories are preserved in oral form in the villages. How do Pacific Island archives bridge this divide in the twenty-first century?

As one of the largest and most well-established archives in the Pacific Islands, the National Archives of Fiji (NAF) is an example of Indigenous-driven archival administration. This represents a newer paradigm in archival management, with Indigenous archivists experimenting with novel ways to merge cultural values and practices with archival principles and standards. The NAF's outreach and accessibility projects have brought the centrality of the Indigenous voice to the archives collection by rebalancing the colonial stories with community Indigenous memories. By making collections accessible through a variety of community outreach projects, the NAF has strengthened community knowledge and pride, empowered communities to tell new stories, revealed hidden and neglected histories, and sparked creative outputs, emotional responses, and local activism. This community-centred practice represents an exciting new phase in recordkeeping in a region where Pacific Island archivists are starting to be more actively involved in memory making and knowledge construction.

Traditional archival practices emphasized the importance of evidence over memory, and archival identity deemed collectors to be custodians of evidence. Principles of impartiality and authenticity were advocated by Sir Hilary Jenkinson of the Public Record Office in London in the early twentieth century. According to this Jenkinsonianism, 'His creed, the sanctity of Evidence; his Task, the Conservation of every scrap of Evidence attaching to the Documents committed to his charge; his Aim, to provide without prejudice or afterthought, for all who wish to know the Means of Knowledge ... the good Archivist is perhaps the most selfless devotee of Truth the modern world produces.'<sup>1</sup> As Pacific Island archives were established by colonial regimes in the region their success was judged by comparison to European ideals of the archive. Terry Cook argues that archival

<sup>1</sup> H. Jenkinson, 'The English archivist: a new profession', in R.H. Ellis and P. Walne (eds.), *Selected Writings of Hilary Jenkinson* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2003), 236–59, at 258.

identity shifted in the 1930s from being custodians of evidence to active selectors and curators of cultural memory.<sup>2</sup> Evidence and memory 'evolved ... in archival discourse in a kind of creative tension', as archives claimed to preserve the collective memory of nations and peoples yet ignored the selectiveness of memories. In the context of the Pacific Islands, subject to centuries of colonization by Europeans, Islander voices were often omitted in the collective memory of Pacific archives. Movements for self-determination and independence in the 1970s had far-reaching implications for the governance of many Pacific Islands, but the importance of the written record remained unchanged: 'Oral forms of recording memories have been undermined through social changes imposed by new economic patterns and educational practices, the growth of government and economic systems for which written recordkeeping is an integral support, and the expectation that memory is being kept elsewhere.'<sup>3</sup> One response by Pacific communities advocating for self-determination or Indigenous rights has been to reclaim and repatriate knowledge embedded in archives. This is highly sensitive and political, as archives are 'entangled in the reassertion of identities'.<sup>4</sup> Monica Wehner and Ewan Maidment argue that 'the struggle for repatriation of the past is a struggle for the right to control and possess the present'.<sup>5</sup> Thus Pacific Island archives are situated in a precarious position between communities and governments, while their relevance is determined by how often they are actively used. As Panitch noted, 'Far from standing as enduring monuments to the past, archives instead appear somewhat fragile, eternally subject to the judgement of the society in which they exist ... the archives of the past are also the mutable creations of the present.'<sup>6</sup>

In this context, Pacific archives operate in difficult circumstances to reclaim and repatriate knowledge for their Indigenous communities. Cook argues that the advent of the digital age means that archiving is increasingly viewed as a participatory process in which the community is involved in 'collaborative evidence- and memory-making'. This involves 'a shift in core principles from exclusive custodianship and ownership of archives to shared stewardship and collaboration; from dominant-culture language, terminology, and definitions

<sup>2</sup> T. Cook, 'Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms', *Archival Science* 13:2–3 (2013), 95–120, at 102.

<sup>3</sup> Cook, 'Evidence, memory, identity, and community', 197.

<sup>4</sup> Cook, 'Evidence, memory, identity, and community', 199.

<sup>5</sup> M. Wehner and E. Maidment, 'Ancestral voices: aspects of archives administration in Oceania', *Archives and Manuscripts* 27:1 (1999), 23–41, at 32.

<sup>6</sup> J.M. Panitch, 'Liberty, equality, posterity? Some archival lessons from the case of the French Revolution', *American Archivist* 59:1 (1996), 30–47, at 47.

to sensitivity to the "other" and as keen an awareness of the emotional, religious, symbolic, and cultural values that records have to their communities'.<sup>7</sup> The practical implications for Pacific archivists who wish to engage and empower their local communities is more uncertain. Evelyn Wareham's summary of archive development in the region considers it an act of evangelism in which archives must justify their system of knowledge to Indigenous communities that already maintain existing systems: 'to overcome distrust, archival practices must be adjusted so that they are transparent and understandable for local communities, and local people should be encouraged to use the records held'.<sup>8</sup> Until very recently, specific examples of this were not easily found in the South Pacific.

This chapter focuses on a series of innovative projects by Indigenous archivists at the NAF from 2012 to 2019 to develop a more community-focused practice. First, a brief history of the changing roles of Pacific Island archives, the establishment of the NAF, and the structural challenges they have faced is illustrative of the broader context of archive development in the Pacific. Next it considers the limitations of traditional archival practices, highlighting specific Indigenous Fijian protocols that enabled it to engage legitimately with communities. Finally, it considers a series of outreach projects run by the NAF and highlights specific cultural values that have a wider relevance for Pacific Island archivists who wish to build trust and establish relevance in the community.

### The Establishment and Role of Archives in the South Pacific

Archival collections in the Pacific first emerged as a result of European exploration, as visiting collectors gathered a variety of objects, manuscripts, and maps related to their economic, political, military, or scientific interests. These rare collections were transported and stored outside the Pacific, where many remain today. With colonial rule in the Pacific Islands, government bureaucrats began to gather documentary records of colonial administration in the region, and the archives that were created were formalized as countries transitioned to independence in the 1970s. This corresponded with a global professionalization of the archives marked by the beginning of formal

<sup>7</sup> Cook, 'Evidence, memory, identity, and community', 113.

<sup>8</sup> E. Wareham, 'From explorers to evangelists: archivists, recordkeeping, and remembering in the Pacific Islands', *Archival Science* 2:3-4 (2002), 187-207, at 206.

training and the formation of professional organizations. In the South Pacific today, seventeen Pacific Island states and territories comprise the membership of the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA). This organization was formed in 1981 for 'promoting the effective management and use of records and archives across the Pacific and preserving the region's archival heritage'.<sup>9</sup>

The National Archives of Fiji was initially established as the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) in 1954 after numerous efforts from bureaucrats who were interested in securing the colony of Fiji's documentary evidence for administrative effectiveness, as well as researchers concerned that vital research materials would be lost without a formal organization tasked with their care. Then in 1971, less than a year after Fiji attained independence, the records of the WPHC were relocated to other institutions and the Central Archives formally became the National Archives of Fiji (NAF) with an amendment of the Public Records Ordinance.<sup>10</sup>

NAF is responsible for two acts. These are the Public Records Act (PRA) Cap. 108 of the laws of Fiji and the Libraries Act Cap. 109 of the laws of Fiji. Together these laws give NAF its two main objectives.

The first objective is to attain, conserve, and make accessible important archival records and all publications printed and published in Fiji. Together the archival records and publications comprise a large portion of the nation's collective memory. The archival records act as the corporate memory of government. And for the general public they offer proof of decisions and activities, thus supporting their rights and entitlements. The publications complement the archival holdings as either synthesized interpretation of data found in those archives or externally, as commentary on the development of Fiji and the wider Pacific, and as creative works to educate, entertain, and inspire. In unison, these two broad categories of holdings form a vast reservoir of information for a wide array of users.<sup>11</sup>

The second objective is to enable evidence-based governance by supporting government recordkeeping. The PRA directs the Archives to support government agencies to care for their corporate records accurately.

<sup>9</sup> Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, 2016, [www.ica.org/en/parbica](http://www.ica.org/en/parbica).

<sup>10</sup> A.I. Diamond, 'The Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission', *Journal of Pacific History* 1:1 (1966), 204-11.

<sup>11</sup> O. Alefaio, 'Archives connecting with the community', paper presented at IFLA WLIC 2016, Columbus, OH: Connections, Collaboration, Community in Session 96, Asia and Oceania.

Authentic, accurate, accessible records provide the foundation for the smooth conduct of government business. NAF meets this obligation through records, surveys of agencies, and recordkeeping training for clients.

Combined, these responsibilities make NAF the National Archive, the National Library, and the government's recordkeeping authority and capacity-building body for managing information. This is a deep and encompassing set of responsibilities for the care and accessibility of the nation's information assets and documentary heritage. Unfortunately NAF is confronted with a significant group of obstacles that collectively and seriously undermine its function.<sup>12</sup> Namely, these are climate challenges, structural deficiencies, and lack of community trust.

### Climate and Related Challenges

Firstly, the tropical climate of the South Pacific is a major threat to the safe care of aged and brittle records. The combination of high humidity and high temperature poses a direct threat to the long life of records in all formats. In addition, natural disasters such as cyclones and floods are a significant concern for Pacific heritage professionals. For example, in 2003, Category 5 tropical cyclone Heta with winds up to 296 kilometres per hour caused massive damage to the archives of Niue. It took a concerted effort over a number of years to get the archive back to basic functional working order.<sup>13</sup>

The next major difficulty for Pacific archives is extremely low societal awareness of both recordkeeping and archives as key enablers for administrative efficiency and accountable governance, as well as a crucial evidence base to guarantee the rights and entitlements of the public at large. This is played out broadly at two levels: firstly, in terms of government priorities, decision making, and resource allocation, and secondly, in terms of general acceptance and engagement by the community itself.<sup>14</sup>

Public heritage and information institutions receive very little support in the South Pacific. This is especially true for archives. In fact some South Pacific Island countries do not have a national archive: Nauru, Tokelau, and

<sup>12</sup> Alefaio, 'Archives connecting with the community'.

<sup>13</sup> T. McCormack, 'The Niue Archives Project', *Panorama 2* (2008), 7–12; M. Enetama, 'Cyclone Heta: disaster preparedness and response. A brief report on actions taken by Pacific archives following recent disaster', *PARBICA 14: Evidence and Memory in the Digital Age*, conference paper, Sāmoa, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> S. Tale and O. Alefaio, 'We are our memories: community and records in Fiji', in J.A. Bastian and B. Alexander (eds.), *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 87–94.

Tonga are three examples. Those countries which do have archives are not likely to provide the resources needed. As the former deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the South Pacific Dr Esther Williams mentioned in her 1998 UNESCO study on the information needs of the Pacific Islands, 'Very few decision-makers and Pacific Island leaders will link good governance and accountability to the efficient management of public sector records... These institutions are given minimal recurrent funding and are barely surviving. There is a clear lack of political will to support development in these fields.'<sup>15</sup> This is also supported by Pacific archivists themselves who submit country reports on the status of their archives and developments impacting them during their biennial PARBICA conferences.

This lack of attention from decision-makers severely hampers archives from fulfilling their obligations. Document conservation, for example, is a core activity necessary to prolong the lifespan of records. Without this activity it is extremely difficult to ensure that records are accessible for today's use and into the future for generations to come. Sadly, most South Pacific archives are not able to perform this activity.<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing, only the French territory archives of New Caledonia and Tahiti, as well as the National Archives of Fiji, have working conservation laboratories.

It is not enough though to possess a conservation laboratory. It must receive the necessary level of resources to be effective. Air conditioners and dehumidifiers are necessary to counteract the tropical weather so detrimental to old paper records and newer electronic records. These are expensive and difficult to replace. The materials necessary for restoration works are also difficult to obtain. They are unavailable on the local market and must be flown in. They are also very expensive, and the limited funds provided mean that archives are forced to take a reactive approach rather than a proactive approach with their conservation programmes. Under such circumstances conservation and restoration efforts can only be applied to those records at the very highest risk. The archive is not able to provide remedial care to those documents needing attention though not yet at advanced or critical stages. These records, however, are likely to constitute a major portion, if not the majority, of the collection. Over time the lack of proactive conservation puts increasingly telling pressure on these records, cutting short their lifespan.

<sup>15</sup> E.B. Williams, *Information Needs in the Pacific Islands: Needs Assessment for Libraries, Archives, Audio Visual Collection and ICT Development in the Pacific Islands* (Sāmoa: UNESCO, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Wareham, 'From explorers to evangelists'.

Advanced decay in records can cause concern in the user, and rightly so. A group of concerned Fiji citizens once wrote a letter to the Office of the Prime Minister to express their distress at the condition of some of the records they had seen at the National Archives of Fiji.<sup>17</sup> In his 1992 UNESCO report on the state of the National Archives of Fiji, Bower explained that inadequate funding and an inadequate staffing structure had had a negative impact on the ability of the archive to give its holdings the level of care required.<sup>18</sup>

### Structural Deficiencies

Poor staffing levels provide a host of difficulties for archives. For one, the low numbers of staff mean 'back of shop' activities such as processing of consignments, applying of descriptive standards, and conservation efforts, all of which are the foundational work for an orderly archive, will be curtailed. This leads to worsening backlogs, making it difficult to exert meaningful control over the collection. In such a situation, misplacement and loss become a marked risk. Bower's survey in 1992 found that the National Archives of Fiji had been put in this very predicament.<sup>19</sup>

Staffing shortages were not just a matter of insufficient numbers caused by prolonged delays in recruitment. The organizational structure itself was distinctly inadequate. Bower also saw it as not only meagre and unbalanced, but stifling and demeaning. Frequent denials to repeated requests to address longstanding personnel, training, and infrastructure needs nudged Bower to make a key recommendation to elevate the Principal Archivist to departmental head status with the designation of National Archivist; to bring long-overdue clout in engaging with other government agencies and advocacy in general.<sup>20</sup>

The following decade did see some minor enhancement to the organizational structure in response to constant pressure and submissions to decision-makers, but those with the authority to act on recommendations largely resisted. By 2012, NAF's organizational chart continued to have three entire levels missing. For more than four decades, this predicament forced staff to

<sup>17</sup> T. Te'aiwa, personal discussion (Wellington, New Zealand, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> P. Bower, 'The state of the National Archives: Fiji', UNESCO Assignment Report RP/1990-1991/II.C(i) (1992).

<sup>19</sup> Bower, 'The state of the National Archives'.

<sup>20</sup> Bower, 'The state of the National Archives'.

leave the organization if they wanted to improve their lot. In short there was no real career path.<sup>21</sup> This meant that all on-the-job training and capacity building provided to a staff member was effectively lost to the NAF. Already stretched thin, NAF management were consistently having to request permission to recruit at entry level and somehow find time to train these newcomers, as a steady stream of experienced and valuable team members left for better prospects.<sup>22</sup>

Training and capacity building is another considerable constraint. There is not now, nor has there ever been, any formal education for archives, records management, or document conservation in Fiji. Only distance and online educational packages are available but these are too expensive for archives and records management professionals in the South Pacific. On-the-job training and the biennial PARBICA conference provide the only consistent capacity building opportunities. The need is great, especially in the light of technological advancements since the 1990s and the resultant growing public expectation that all relevant information should be accessible at the push of a button. While technology has great potential for improved efficiencies and services, in the Pacific it is often deployed on a project basis, leading to information silos and legacy systems whose usability over time is not planned for.<sup>23</sup> Poor deployment of technology and the terabytes of data it puts at risk poses a potential catalyst to detonate the multiple frailties listed above.

The obstacles dealt with so far cover the intense challenges caused by the tropical climate of the South Pacific region and structural deficiencies caused by the low regard of decision-makers towards recordkeeping and archives. We will now move to another set of problems caused by a lack of community trust in official archives which has resulted from echoing fears of the colonial experience and unfamiliarity with the role and uses of archives. This second set of obstacles was then amplified by traditional archiving concepts and practices which sought to maintain distance between the archivists and their clients in the name of neutrality and objectivity.

<sup>21</sup> O. Alefaio, 'Aim high: looking past our problems to get past our problems', 2018 Asia-Pacific Library and Information Conference (APLIC), keynote address (Gold Coast, Australia, 30 July-2 August 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Bower, 'The state of the National Archives'.

<sup>23</sup> O. Alefaio, 'Archival revival, heritage and social media: the example of the National Archives of Fiji', Oceanic Knowledges, conference paper (Canberra, Australian National University, 27-8 July 2017).

## Lack of Community Trust

Archival institutions in post-colonial societies have a difficult time gaining traction. This occurs not only with the senior officials who have treated them as an indulgence at best and pointless Western 'white elephants' at worst; but also with the public for whom oral tradition is a cornerstone of existence. Under these conditions, archives are seen primarily as extraneous institutions whose primary focus is to preserve records created by former colonial masters (with their prejudices and limited understanding of the concerns of the colonized) for use by themselves and Western academics.<sup>24</sup> Against this backdrop it is easy for archives to be seen as a type of imposition, and trust in them is not abundantly overflowing. However broadly one might attempt to define archives, it is very difficult to allay the lingering notion that they exist to compete with and/or dominate native knowledge systems. Orality versus literacy is a daunting proposition for both archives and the public.

This was made even more challenging by shallow and outdated thinking which sought to minimize the role and value of oral tradition in general and Indigenous oral tradition in particular. In reality, Indigenous oral tradition contains scientific knowledge pertaining to architecture, seafaring, medicine, agriculture, fisheries, genealogies, and migration histories.<sup>25</sup> The knowledge is not static; rather, it is dynamic, put through numerous feedback loops, and evolving through phases of transmission between generations to encourage innovation and knowledge building.<sup>26</sup> It does, however, have shortcomings which make it sometimes inappropriate for modern administration and the business of government. And it is here that official archives as the repository for the permanent records of government have a crucial role for accountability and transparency of government by providing the evidence to help it meet its obligations, illuminate planning, enable effective programme implementation, and support the rights and entitlements of the public.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> A. Cunningham, 'Archival institutions', in S. McKemmish, M. Piggott, B. Reed, and F. Upward (eds.), *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society* (Wagga Wagga: Charles Sturt University, 2005), 21–50.

<sup>25</sup> B. Biggs, 'What is oral tradition', in S. Vatu (ed.), *Na Veitalanoa me balaeta na i tukutuku maroroi = Talking about Oral Traditions. Proceedings of a Workshop on Fijian Oral Traditions Held at the Fiji Museum, August 16th–August 21st, 1976* (Suva: Fiji Museum, 1977), 1–12.

<sup>26</sup> C. Peteru, 'Protection of indigenous knowledge', Preservation of Local and Indigenous Knowledge Workshop, conference paper (Suva, World Wide Fund for Nature and Department of Environment, 16–17 November, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> S. McKemmish, 'The smoking gun: recordkeeping and accountability', 22nd Annual Conference of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, 'Records and Archives Now – Who Cares?', keynote address (Dunedin, September 1998).

The value of the written record and recordkeeping systems notwithstanding, the 'foreignness' of archives is compounded by the memory of life under colonial masters. Many Fijians did not know the role of the archives and the ways in which it could benefit them, and more than a few viewed it with fear or a sense of futility.<sup>28</sup> As Eric Ketelaar argued, archives are a source of power and have been used by those in power as a means of dispossessing and dominating entire populations.<sup>29</sup> Decades after Fiji achieved independence in 1970, this sense of dispossession is still evident. There are those who are hesitant to use the archives out of fear that the information held there is secret and available only to senior administrators.<sup>30</sup> There is also concern that the information held in the archives is harmful. As shown by Fiona Ross, Sue McKemmish, and Shannon Faulkhead, colonial records created in a different time and under a different set of priorities often reflect the shortcomings of colonial administrators, revealing the unpleasant realities of the day. Interacting with such materials can be disturbing and even traumatic, particularly for the descendants of the 'subjects' described in those records.<sup>31</sup>

Those who are not dissuaded from visiting the archives are met by another set of obstacles. Firstly, the archives are located in the capital city of Suva in order to be in close proximity to the headquarters of government agencies, the source of records which feed the archives and also the first level of clients to recall such records to support operations and research. This can make visiting the archives an expensive exercise, particularly for those who have to travel long distances. Those who do travel to Suva from a long distance are not likely to 'waste' the short time they have in the capital with a visit to the archive.<sup>32</sup> Another impediment for users is that the vast majority of the records are in English. While Fiji has a high literacy rate, and English is one of Fiji's official languages, it is not the first language of a large portion of the population. Furthermore, the records are written in bureaucratic

<sup>28</sup> T. Balenaivalu, 'Designing how Pacific archives are perceived: using empathy and experimentation to make archives more "relevant" in a resource poor environment', Joint International Council on Archives (ICA), Australian Society of Archives (ASA), Archivists and Records Managers Association of New Zealand (ARANZ), Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) conference, conference paper (Adelaide, 21–5 October 2019).

<sup>29</sup> E. Ketelaar, 'Access: the democratic imperative', *Archives and Manuscripts* 34:2 (2006), 62–81; E. Ketelaar, 'Archives as spaces of memory', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (2008), 9–27.

<sup>30</sup> Balenaivalu, 'Designing how Pacific archives are perceived'.

<sup>31</sup> F. Ross, S. McKemmish, and S. Faulkhead, 'Indigenous knowledge and the archives: designing trusted archival systems for Koorie communities', *Archives and Manuscripts* 34:2 (2006), 112–40.

<sup>32</sup> Balenaivalu, 'Designing how Pacific archives are perceived'.

language of the colonial era and bear very little resemblance to the type of English today's Fijians utilize. A working knowledge of the administrative history of government is also necessary to be able to navigate the records, interpret them, then match them with the real needs of the user, who may not necessarily know exactly what they are looking for. Usually only professional researchers are equipped with the skills and experience to conduct independent research in the archives, and the majority of the Fiji public are not professional researchers.<sup>33</sup>

In-house training for NAF staff prepares them to assist a variety of client requests, with a special focus on those who are first-time users possessing no familiarity with the collection or any idea of how to use them. But this approach assumes that the public will use the archives, as is the case in the Western world and in other nations with a deep and longstanding involvement with the written word. This assumption does not reflect reality, and poorly funded archives may not be in a strong position to change that reality. In the case of the NAF, under-resourcing resulting from the intermittent attention of government officials combined with traditional archival practice meant that the archives focused on their most pressing concerns; securing the collection, making safe the premises, and serving those entering the premises.

Traditional archival practice was valuable for laying the groundwork and establishing an archive in good working order. But in a post-colonial environment, access and usability have become more pressing concerns for heritage institutions seeking to demonstrate 'relevance' with both senior government administrators and the community. NAF has found that under these circumstances archives need to move in the opposite direction. Not only do they need to make their holdings and services more accessible by actively seeking out the community to develop a dialogue or relationship; they also have to deliver unique value to excite and inspire the community to collaborate and share knowledge. Ultimately, NAF must advocate on the behalf of archives by providing a positive feedback loop through government bureaucrats to decision-makers for increased resourcing. This would enable the archives to increase services and programmes to grow that connection to community.<sup>34</sup>

But this new thinking has its own challenges, as Wareham has stated, as advocating for what are largely colonial archives in a post-colonial Pacific is no simple matter.<sup>35</sup> Islander populations who have weathered evangelism,

<sup>33</sup> Balenaivalu, 'Designing how Pacific archives are perceived'.

<sup>34</sup> Alefaio, 'Aim high: looking past our problems to get past our problems'.

<sup>35</sup> Wareham, 'From explorers to evangelists'.

colonialism, and recently the driving forces of neoliberalism and development have little time for newer forms of proselytizing. Prospective engagement exercises to 'educate' or 'enlighten' the community can be seen as condescending and self-serving. Instead, as the remainder of this chapter demonstrates, the archives must approach the community using traditional protocols of introduction such as the presentation of *sevusevu*, a ceremonial presentation of *yaqona* by a visitor upon arrival, after gaining access to the community through longstanding governance channels of the Fijian Administration.

### Negotiating Indigenous Spaces and Protocols

External parties are obliged to follow particular paths to connect to Fijian villages. These paths and their 'gatekeepers' are often colonial constructs, themselves introduced by the British colonial administration in the nineteenth century. This presents something of a paradox for archivists who must utilize colonial legacies and institutions in order to access the communities. When Fiji was ceded to Britain in 1874, successive policies introduced by governors Sir Arthur Gordon and John Bates Thurston created a Fijian Administration for the Indigenous population. This operated separately from the Indian administration which supervised the Indian indentured labourers who were brought to Fiji to work on sugar cane plantations as part of a British plan to develop the economy and protect the 'native' from dying out. Under the 1876 Native Affairs Ordinance, Gordon established councils in the districts and provinces, headed by a Great Council of Chiefs. Villages were headed by a *Turaga-ni-koro*, districts were led by a *Buli*, and each of the fourteen provinces was head by a *Roko*. The Native Lands Ordinance of 1880 also created *mataqali*, landowning groups, and, together with the Native Land Trust Board, divided Fiji into freehold land, state land, and *iTaukei* (Indigenous) land. Though Fiji secured its independence from Britain in 1970, some of these institutions and positions have remained and are necessary stepping stones for organizations to access Indigenous communities formally. For community outreach activities in the past, the NAF had to consult for permission first with the Provincial Councils before approaching the district and then village levels. Approvals attained through this chain provide a safe opportunity for archives to seek their audience, and through the presentation of *sevusevu* (if accepted) inform the community of their role and purpose.

The *sevusevu* is a ceremonial presentation of *yaqona* by a visitor upon arrival at the home, village, or meeting. *Isevusevu* are 'ceremonial offerings of *yaqona* [kava] by the host to the guest, or the guest to his host and done in



respect of recognition and acceptance of one another'.<sup>36</sup> *Yaqona* are the dried roots of a plant (*Piper methysticum*) which are pounded into a powder and mixed with water. The drink, known as kava, serves a ceremonial purpose in many Pacific societies. The Fijian word *sevu* means 'taking the first fruits', either to the paramount chief or to God.

One key importance of the *sevusevu* is that it reinforces assumptions about rank, allowing members within a community to define their status relative to others. Brison states that 'the *sevusevu* expresses typically Polynesian notions of social ranking both through the ordering of drinking and through providing each "chief" or important person with a spokesman (Fijian: *mata ni vanua*)'.<sup>37</sup> In Fiji, *vanua* can be simply translated as 'land', but the term has multiple meanings. Ravuvu considers it as a sense of place, also as 'the people of the land, common descent, common bonds, parochialism, identity'.<sup>38</sup> Others have defined *vanua* as a landowning group in the legal sense or as a 'decision-making group' for traditional affairs.<sup>39</sup> Whilst studies of the *sevusevu* have emphasized the importance of the protocol for ascertaining social ranking within the village, they have failed to observe the reciprocal purpose – it allows the village to determine the ranking within visiting groups, a significance for the discussion of the Fiji Archives in the next section.

The *sevusevu* is also significant for reinforcing communal solidarity. This is reinforced through the actions and speeches of the people involved. Brison argues the 'theme of social embeddedness' is always present, which means 'framing everything an individual does as representing his or her group'.<sup>40</sup> This is important for conflict resolution and consensus decision-making, with the *sevusevu* being one part of a complex tradition system of reciprocity designed to minimize conflict. For important decisions to be made and communicated, the *sevusevu* provides one forum for this to occur, with the social presentation of the *yaqona* (or in other cases a *tabua*, whale's tooth), sealing the decision.<sup>41</sup> For new visitors, the ceremony is important for coming

<sup>36</sup> A. Ravuvu, *Vaka i Taukei: The Fijian Way of Life* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1983), 120.

<sup>37</sup> K.J. Brison, 'Constructing identity through ceremonial language in rural Fiji', *Ethnology* 40:4 (2001), 310.

<sup>38</sup> A. Ravuvu, *Vaka i Taukei*; A. Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987).

<sup>39</sup> See P. France, *The Charter of the Land. Custom and Colonization in Fiji* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); I.Q. Lasaqa, *The Fijian people before and after independence* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1984).

<sup>40</sup> Brison, 'Constructing identity through ceremonial language in rural Fiji', 309–26, at 314.

<sup>41</sup> S. Siwatibau, 'Traditional environment practices in the South Pacific: a case study in Fiji', *Ambio* 13:5–6 (1984), 365–8.

to an understanding about shared values. This is one of the most important functions for external groups visiting villages in the present day. And the act of remaining until the *tanoa* (kava bowl) is empty, symbolizes solidarity.

The *sevusevu* also has significant spiritual functions. Once a semi-religious rite, only high-ranking people were allowed to participate. Today they are more common, and every adult can participate in them regularly. The use of *matanivanuas* or spokesmen upholds the belief that high-ranking people are semi-divine and imbued with the power of ancestral spirits (*vu*). Thus it is still commonly believed that the ceremony ensures that visitors are protected from spirits whilst in the village. The formalized and ritualized pattern of speech and actions elevates the people and the discussions above worldly politics. Drinking kava is part of this process to infuse the sacred power of the spirits (*mana*) into society.<sup>42</sup>

The *sevusevu* plays an important role in Pacific research as well. Fijian scholar Unaisi Nabobo-Baba explained the importance of *sevusevu* as part of the 'Vanua Research Framework'.<sup>43</sup> In many cases it is a culturally appropriate protocol to obtain consent, because once the *sevusevu* is presented and accepted all the doors to the village have been opened. The social aspect of the ceremony also ensures that all members of the community are aware of the visitor's presence.

### Community Outreach

Between 2012 and 2019 the NAF organized a series of outreach projects to engage with the local communities. This was part of a wider goal to promote public awareness of the archival collection and its relevance in order to encourage its use by a broader cross-section of society. Each activity represented a different approach to archival engagement that changed over time. Some of these projects were shaped by contextual factors at the time (whether support was provided by government or donor grants, or requested by specific communities), but they also represented a change in thinking within the archive staff as they reflected on the successes and challenges of each project. This was part of a process of establishing the

<sup>42</sup> J. Turner, "'The water of life": kava ritual and the logic of sacrifice', *Ethnology* 25:3 (1986), 203–14.

<sup>43</sup> U. Nabobo-Baba, 'Vanua Research Framework', *Sustainable Livelihood and Education in the Pacific Project (SLEP)* (Suva: Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, 2007). See also U. Nabobo-Baba, *Knowing and Learning an Indigenous Fijian Approach* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2006).

avenues to enable community-centred practice. Three particular activities are outlined here – village visits to remote communities, community participation in the archival process, and a programme of digitizing and sharing historical images. Each activity highlights specific archival approaches that may have a wider relevance for Pacific archivists with similar community-centred goals.

### Village Introductions

Fiji consists of many remote rural communities where accessibility is a major challenge. Some of these communities are scattered over 300 islands, while other villages are in remote mountainous areas of the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. The NAF partnered with its sister department, the Library Services of Fiji, to commemorate World Book Day and carry out a literacy programme in the hinterlands of Viti Levu. To enable this, permission was attained through the stepping stones of the Fijian Administration to visit the proposed villages. Word was also sent out to neighbouring villages to draw as much participation as possible. Just as importantly, a partnership was struck with the divisional office of the Ministry of Education to facilitate the participation of schools in the area, which eagerly responded to the opportunity. *Sevusevu* presentations and other traditional practices were central to setting up and executing this programme, and the results were very encouraging. The active participation and positive feedback from the community proved to the NAF that carefully targeted outreach programmes facilitated through culturally relevant channels and practices was worthwhile. 'It is satisfying and heartening to see so many people, especially students, flocking and asking historical questions at the National Archives booth', remarked NAF team member Taito Raione in 2012.<sup>44</sup>

A short while later, after a number of similar outreach exercises with various partners, the NAF began visiting remote communities as part of newly launched 'Government Roadshow' programme, accompanying other government departments which would visit specific provinces or districts for a few days to share information and provide government services. The Rotuma Day Outreach in 2013 was typical of some of these early ventures. Rotuma is an isolated Polynesian island situated at the very north of the Fiji group which takes two days to reach by boat. The NAF provided copies of

<sup>44</sup> Alefaio, 'Archives connecting with the community'.

land records, genealogical records, historical photos, and audiovisual footage, much of which the Rotuman Islanders had never seen. Given that this was the first time that they were given access to their documentary heritage, many formed long queues to speak to the archival staff about the records and ask questions.<sup>45</sup> These face-to-face visits allow the archive staff to build personal relationships with the communities and to make the appropriate gestures necessary to share knowledge freely. This is also an important act of translation – not only are the archival staff translating the language from English to the local dialects, but they are also acting as a bridge between colonial records and Indigenous knowledge, and so they translate between two different cultural spaces. Many of the issues associated with family records and land records are highly sensitive and cannot be simply deposited in the communities. Some records may challenge or exacerbate pre-existing village debates. So it is important that these village visits take place over several days, allowing villagers time to consider the information, discuss it amongst themselves, and ask questions of the archivists. These often take place in informal settings, around the kava bowl, during meals or in the homes, as much as they do under a government tent in a village *rara* (open ground).

The success of these village visits rests upon the respect shown for customary protocols which ensure that visitors are properly introduced and accepted into traditional spaces. Traditional colonial archival practices assumed that archives were static institutions that would preserve records so that people could travel to access them. This static view was reinforced by the colonial records themselves which often presented the Pacific Islands and its people as passive. With time, Pacific archives like the NAF are beginning to realize that archivists must go out into the communities to engage them and take the records with them. Not only is the sharing of information important, but it is also the courtesy of introductions like the *sevusevu* which allows 'foreign' institutions like the archives to identify themselves and explain their goals to the communities.

### Community Participation

Another step towards engaging the community began in 2014 with the sharing of Pacific indentured labourer records. In November 2014, the

<sup>45</sup> Alefaio, 'Archives connecting with the community'.

descendants of Pacific indentured labourers celebrated the 150th anniversary of their ancestors' arrival in Fiji. This community endured considerable hardship during their period of indenture and long afterward, and many had come to view their history negatively after an extended period of marginalization. They were a composite of various ethnicities, including many from the Melanesian region. The Melanesian labourers came from different islands and villages, but once in Fiji coalesced and formed new communities to survive. The NAF outreach team set up a stall at the anniversary celebrations to display records related to the labour trade, such as registers containing the names and islands of recruits. They were surprised by the response of many participants who were overcome with emotion upon sighting these records. According to the organizing committee chair Pateresio Nunu in 2015,

Without the presence of National Archives most of the descendants will still rely on the verbal history relayed to them through stories. They are now confident that what they know is something that was recorded during that time then and there and are reliable information. Many of them were so moved they had tears in their eyes when they returned from your tent.<sup>46</sup>

The NAF responded to this encouraging feedback by turning its attention to the Melanesian and Indian indentured labourers to Fiji. Though digitization programmes are well advanced in archives around the globe, there is a relative lag in the Pacific due to financial and institutional constraints. The NAF collaborated with the University of the South Pacific to invite members of the public to assist with the data entry work. Over a period of three days, over a hundred volunteers worked in computer labs to transcribe copies of colonial registers into Excel spreadsheets, which could then be cross-checked later by archivists in order to create a catalogue of names that could be posted online and freely searchable. Many of the archive enquiries in Fiji are family history enquiries, with a substantial number from descendants of migrant labourers searching colonial registers.

This example of community participation in the archival process was relatively simple and small-scale, yet it had a significant impact on those involved. The indentured labour records are one of the most frequently requested records at the NAF because they contain traces of Indigenous lives and migrant voices. Contrary to traditional archival practices which ensure that documents are securely stored in controlled environments and viewed

<sup>46</sup> Alefaio, 'Archives connecting with the community'.

under strict conditions, this activity brought archives into the public domain and invited people to participate in the preservation of their documentary heritage and share their experiences. Such practices are powerful because they acknowledge the Indigenous owners of knowledge – in this case, the indentured labourers and their descendants. Acknowledging the traditional owners of land, of knowledge, and of history is an important aspect of Pacific Island cultural values.

### Co-creating Archives

Photographic and audiovisual collections are some of the most engaging records held by the NAF, but until recently have been difficult for the general public to access. The growing impact of this archival community outreach was earning increased credibility with senior government administrators, enabling the NAF to take on new activities to demonstrate the unique value of documentary heritage and strengthen the connection with the community.

The digitization programme by the NAF and its use in public fora such as social media and television has allowed for greater community participation in the archive, including, to a limited extent, content co-creation. In 2006, Fiji's official historical audiovisual and photographic collection, consisting of 2,000 hours of audiovisual footage and 200,000 historical photographs, was brought to NAF for temporary storage. In 2012, the NAF assumed full ownership of these materials. A new team was established to start working on the photographs and 1 million Fiji dollars was acquired to restore and digitize almost all the footage (97 per cent of the footage was salvaged). Following the successful conclusion of the project in December 2013, NAF formed a partnership with the agency which created the footage to enable its curation and repackaging into a digestible educational programme called 'Back in Time' for free-to-air television. This provided the access for the public to its heritage at no extra cost. This television programme proved very popular as it put forgotten histories and practices back into current-day discourse. The footage contains many cultural practices which have since passed from everyday life, or which have become totally dormant.<sup>47</sup>

According to one journalist from the *Fiji Sun* in 2015:

<sup>47</sup> Alefaio, 'Archives connecting with the community'.

we need to know how our culture has evolved over the years, and the developments that have taken place, and why they did that in those days and why they are not being done now . . . but unless you know what happened then, which is recorded by the video, we wouldn't know, because people have died, people who knew, who had the knowledge and probably the skills have gone, but the film has got it all recorded, so we can watch it and learn and probably try and revive.<sup>48</sup>

The footage has since been used by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs to revitalize such practices in the communities which hold ownership. This television programme has run over four seasons and has over 150 episodes.

The NAF also experimented with using social media as a platform to share historical images. Though village visits encouraged deep impact with specific communities, a strategy was developed in 2015 to use social media to increase the breadth of that impact. One unintended consequence of this action was the immediate feedback generated by the community, which helped to identify unlabelled photos and provide additional historical information with which to corroborate details in the images. For example, to commemorate International Biodiversity Day the NAF posted on Facebook an image of a traditional fish drive on the island of Beqa (see Figure 37.1). This brought animated discussion, with Indigenous Fijians from all parts of Fiji discussing their histories around this practice. Then one user, a member of a high-ranking family of the villagers in the photograph, gave a full description of the cultural significance of such a fish drive. He described the various clans involved, and the conservation protocols put into place two to three years before the fish drive to ensure the success of the drive and the sustainability of marine resources. He named the special occasions the catch was used for, and so on. Through this public Facebook discussion, the user was able to demonstrate and assert his community's customary knowledge and ownership. This social media strategy to connect with community not only enabled him to access his documentary heritage, it also enabled him to write his history in a public forum for all to become engaged.

According to Facebook this post received over 7,700 likes and reached over 100,000 Facebook accounts. That amounts to an engaged audience (likes comments and shares) approaching 1 per cent (0.85 per cent) of Fiji's population and a total audience (total number of accounts exposed to the post) of about 11 per cent (11.11 per cent) of Fiji's population. This post is not among the NAF's four most popular posts. According to Facebook the most

<sup>48</sup> Alefaio, 'Archives connecting with the community'.



Figure 37.1 Beqa villagers' traditional fish drive, 1947.

popular post reached 162,000 accounts and was liked 138,000 times. That is an overall audience of about 18 per cent of Fiji's population and an engaged audience of 1.5 per cent.

Technology that allows archives to digitize and share images has allowed the communities to take full ownership of the historical images and start adding precious additional information to them. In the archives, these photos were disorganized and uncatalogued, unceremoniously dumped and in an advanced state of decay. But through the Facebook posts the public are commenting on who is in the photographs, where or when these may have been taken, and how they themselves are personally connected to the images. In short, the public are 'making history'. This is a form of content creation that allows archivists and villagers from two different spaces to share knowledge that benefits one another. It also creates a space for oral histories to inform written colonial records and deepen our knowledge of historical events.

The increased visibility and acceptance of the NAF has also enabled it to work with other parties to make accessible Fijian heritage held abroad.

The NAF has established a relationship with the Fijian Art Research Project jointly hosted by the Sainsbury Research Unit at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge (MAA), to post on the NAF Facebook page images of Fijian heritage in their collection. This has given Fijians access to cultural material not held in Fiji. These items and designs are sometimes controversial, because they are no longer found in Fiji today. Certain *masi* or *tapa* (bark cloth) designs have caused animated debate because the designs are no longer used in contemporary pieces, and consequently showing this to the Fijian public has broadened previously narrow ideas of what 'Fijian' art is. More than just (re)discovering lost heritage, practices, and ideas, this has also underlined the ongoing relevance of archives as public institutions that have much to contribute to contemporary debate about memory, identity, and knowledge. Using documentary heritage held in trust within archives is not simply about living in the past, but is as much about making the present and building for the future. This collaboration took another big step with the 2018 sharing (or 'repatriation') of 3,000 historical photographs of Fiji by the MAA with NAF to support public outreach and education. NAF has full permission to reproduce the images, with the condition that the MAA be properly acknowledged and that any contextual information (metadata) contributed by the public be passed along to MAA.

With the rapid pace of technological advancements, archival institutions are well placed to experiment with new technologies because they have the expertise, funding, and equipment that local communities may lack. For Indigenous communities concerned with the loss of knowledge and tradition by natural attrition, archival institutions are well placed to connect sources and people to remote communities using technology. This presents a contradiction for those interested in preserving historical memories at the local level who rightly question whether archival institutions can or should be trusted. This is the challenge facing Pacific archives which must simultaneously accept their colonial inception and convince local communities that they can open new possibilities for sharing and protecting Indigenous knowledge. This is further underlined by the NAF's participation in the Pacific Virtual Museum (PVM) project led by the National Library of New Zealand and the National Library of Australia, with funding and support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). The aim of the PVM is to connect Pacific Islanders with their documentary heritage by providing an 'online portal that provides an

easy single access point to digitised Pacific cultural heritage items held in different museum, gallery and library collections around the world'.<sup>49</sup>

Demonstrated relevance and impact in the community also brought increased trust with senior government administrators. For example, public outreach and engagement was not a funded activity in 2011. After the initial pilot carried out in 2012, the NAF was given an allocation of 20,000 Fijian dollars in 2013, resulting in eleven outreach programmes. By 2018, this had increased to 100,000 Fijian dollars, enabling thirty-six outreach programmes. At this point NAF's expertise and the unique value it provided had become highly acknowledged and sought after by all ethnicities and provinces, for national events as well as regional and international events hosted locally in Fiji.<sup>50</sup>

Positive community feedback also helped secure project funding of 1,000,000 Fijian dollars for the salvaging and digitization of the national audiovisual collection of over 2,000 hours of footage. The benefits that came from connecting with the community helped the NAF to address longstanding internal issues. Funding on the whole saw a steady increase for the NAF, rising from 405,000 Fijian dollars in 2011 to 1,889,000 Fijian dollars by 2018. This finally facilitated a solution to the deeply set and ongoing personnel woes described by Bower, rising from a staff establishment of nineteen in 2011 to thirty-six in 2018.<sup>51</sup> The NAF now has a balanced organizational structure, providing a career path for all who enter its service.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

The archives, as both repository and catalyst for sparking community conversations and thinking, can have a key role to play in nurturing the memory and knowledge of society. In the South Pacific the ability of archives to meet this potential has been severely curtailed, as discussed early in this chapter. This is due principally to the low priority with which they have been seen by senior administrators, as well as the lack of interest and the suspicion they have received from the wider community. The underlying tension at the root of this hesitancy and distrust is a legacy of the outdated colonial practice of elevating Western knowledge systems at the expense of Indigenous

<sup>49</sup> National Library of New Zealand, Pacific Virtual Museum, <https://natlib.govt.nz/about-us/collaborative-projects/pacific-virtual-museum>, accessed 25 April 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Alefaio, 'Aim high: looking past our problems to get past our problems'.

<sup>51</sup> Bower, 'The state of the National Archives'.

<sup>52</sup> Alefaio, 'Aim high: looking past our problems to get past our problems'.

knowledge systems. Today's reality undermines this historical assumption. South Pacific Island nations need to take ownership of and elevate both systems. We stand to lose out if either or both of these is not functioning at the levels needed. The primacy of literacy over orality is a proposition pushed by those seeking to achieve an advantage. Archives, because of their colonial origin and early function, are easily seen as representing that legacy of domination and subjugation.

Without the resources needed to face a daunting array of challenges, archival practitioners turn to their training to address what they feel is 'in their control'. This generates positive increments in their work. They pull inwards, focusing on the 'control' aspect of their jobs by dispassionately applying archival techniques to the collection, ostensibly to make it more 'usable', but without making a concerted effort to go out proactively to the community to make sure it is used. This was not without its advantages; in the case of Fiji it meant that a very good archival foundation was put in place, though poor resourcing over a period seriously undermined this.<sup>53</sup>

To make the most of the good work of earlier archivists, the NAF in 2012 took the archives to the community, but only after the proper approvals were attained through established channels trusted by the community in order for the NAF to make a formal introduction and then provide unique value to a welcoming audience. The success of this exercise and the support it won from officials responsible for prioritizing and apportioning resources enabled the NAF to develop more services and initiatives targeted at demonstrating value through community engagement. This opened the eyes of the public to their heritage and the possibilities that brought with it.

When Pacific Island archives engage with their communities on multiple levels for extended periods, they can become a trusted agent for the dynamic collection and recollection, imagining and reimagining, of their society. Without sustained community engagement, and without dynamic archives, Pacific Island communities over time will be left wondering what they know and what they don't know. They will be bogged down and hampered by the illusory question of literacy versus orality. The truth is, there is more than enough space for both. The truth is we need them both. And Pacific Island archives can be a key point of confluence to acknowledge this, and grow this understanding, in order to benefit their peoples.

<sup>53</sup> Bower, 'The state of the National Archives'.

## Missing in Action

### *Women's Under-representation and Decolonizing the Archival Experience*

SAFUA AKELI AMAAMA

#### Introduction

The archival record, in all its forms, plays a significant role in the documentation of histories, peoples, and events. In the Pacific region, archival collections typically reflect their respective colonizers' interests, are written in colonial languages, and are confined in different and far-flung collections. Furthermore, underlying these archives lies a complex variety of gender issues. Hence, this chapter considers the broad archival record in Oceania as a body of privileged knowledge embedded within the deep material cultures of the Islands and oftentimes strongly evoking emotions and memory. It seeks to privilege women's experience and voices to generate meaningful discussions. As Natalie Harkin eloquently expresses of Australian Aboriginal archives,

Our family archives are like maps that haunt and guide us toward paths past-travelled and directions unknown. We travel through these archives that offer up new stories and collections of data, and a brutal surveillance is exposed at the hands of the State. We gain insight into intimate conversations, letters, behaviours and movements, juxtaposed with categorisations of people, places, landscapes and objects. These records are our memories and lives; material, visceral, flesh and blood.<sup>1</sup>

As I myself recall some early archive memories, I fondly remember my paternal grandmother, Palepa Ioane Akeli (1923–2008), and her well-worn exercise book, a volume that she kept with her bible in which she documented her life story and genealogy. Grandmother was born in Ti'avea

<sup>1</sup> N. Harkin, 'The poetics of (re)mapping archives: memory in the blood', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* 14:3 (2014), 1–14.