

Booklet

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LOTU SAVASAVA
EARLY ADVENTISM IN FIJI

By Milton Hook



Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series



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By Milton Hook

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Milton Hook is the author of "Flames Over Battle Creek", a brief history of the early days at the Review and Herald Publishing Association as seen through the eyes of George Amadon, printer's foreman at the institution. Dr Hook's doctoral dissertation researched the pioneering years of the Avondale School, 1894 to 1900, and he has published some of these findings.

He spent three years as a mission director in Papua New Guinea. His teaching years include primary, secondary and college level experience, especially in Bible subjects, in Australia, New Zealand and America. He is an ordained minister, married and the father of two sons.

He would welcome any information which may enhance the content of this series.

Melanesia and Micronesia meet in Fiji. The Micronesian element in Fiji is more recent. In years past some Tongans sailed westwards and settled among the Lau group of islands in eastern Fiji. There they intermarried, giving rise to a group who have lighter complexions.

There are more than two hundred islands in the entire group which comprise Fiji. More than half are small and uninhabited. The main island is Viti Levu, meaning "Great Viti" or "Great Fiji". To the north lies Vanua Levu or "Great Land". Its neighbour island is Taveuni. Some other significant islands are Kandavu to the south, and Ovalau in the centre where the old capital, Levuka, was situated.

Prior to the advent of Christianity cannibalism was rife. Raiding parties would often bring their victims home alive, stun them with a club, and throw them onto cooking fires amid the din of whooping and revelling. Human life was of little importance. Euthanasia was widely practised, the ill and elderly being strangled or buried alive. Close relatives of dead chiefs were strangled and buried with him. When a chief built a new home for himself a commoner or captive foreigner was buried alive in each foundation hole for the main supports. The Australian aborigine, the Kalahari bushman, and even the American Red Indian were mild saints in comparison to the infamous Fijian.

The real heroes in the Fijian conversion saga were the Methodist missionaries who first came from Tonga and Australia in the

1830's. William Cross and David Cargill, among others, became martyrs in their zeal to change cannibals into Christians. However, once the chiefs experienced conversion then Christianity quickly became the norm. Methodists also translated the Bible into the Fijian language.

Cannibalism was discarded, of course, but tobacco-smoking and yangona (kava) drinking persisted. The narcotic yangona was obtained from an indigenous plant. The roots were chewed to a pulp, spat out, mixed with water, stirred, strained, and then passed around for all to drink. In order to limit the spread of disease the government later outlawed the chewing of the root and insisted the preparation be done by pulverising it in some other way.

The first voyage of the PITCAIRN was Adventism's initial contact with Fiji.¹ While in Tonga a Mrs Bindermann was accepted as a passenger to Fiji. When they arrived at Suva in August 1891 she introduced the crew and missionaries to the European community. Some in Suva attended Sabbath meetings on board while the PITCAIRN was moored in the harbour. The interest prompted Pastor Edward Gates to hire the Mechanics Institute Hall and conduct a Sunday afternoon meeting.

The missionaries were anxious to assess the situation beyond Suva and sell the remainder of their book stock. Leaving John and Hannah Tay in Suva, the rest of the PITCAIRN party sailed first to Levuka on Ovalau. Albert and Hattie Read, together with Pitcairner James Russell McCoy, remained in Levuka to canvass books. Gates and his wife, Ida, sailed across the Koro Sea to Savusavu Bay, Vanualevu, later crossing Somosomo Strait to Taveuni. There they stayed in the home of the Methodist minister while they canvassed the area. Returning to Levuka to pick up their fellow-labourers, Gates preached twice in the Methodist church on Sunday before sailing back to Suva.

¹ For details of the PITCAIRN voyages see the booklet "Dame of the Deep".

Gates reported a Mrs Eastgate at Levuka had decided to observe the Saturday Sabbath as a result of her reading and discussions with the Adventists. Wherever they sailed a cordial welcome and Christian hospitality was given to the missionaries. One European, Burr St. John, even travelled with them to help locate the homes of English settlers.

It was understood by the Methodists that the Adventists were only passing through and had no intentions of encroaching on their parish. Nevertheless, the keen curiosity shown by some Europeans encouraged the decision to leave the Tays at Suva in order to nurture these developments. Book sales had been brisk. There was always the possibility that readers may want more literature or wish to ply someone with questions. Tay remained because of that likelihood and to generate more interest.

Tragically, Tay was stricken with influenza and died on January 8, 1892, only five months after his arrival. He was sixty years of age. It was a sad blow because Tay was the beloved patriarch of the PITCAIRN project. McCoy, who regarded Tay as his spiritual father, was especially distressed and immediately caught a boat leaving from New Zealand for Fiji. His concern was to shepherd Hannah Tay safely back to Auckland. She later spent some months in Australia before taking passage to America.

No replacement for Tay was immediately made after this sad beginning. On its second voyage the PITCAIRN stayed at Suva for three weeks, August 9-30, 1893. On board was Dr Merritt Kellogg who wrote, "There was some interest, and our visit was quite satisfactory in some respects. We ought by all means to place workers on the Fiji Islands." His vision was realised two years later.

The troubled third voyage of the PITCAIRN did not extend any further west than the Cook Islands. Under different circumstances perhaps missionaries would have disembarked at Fiji. Instead, Pastor John Cole and his wife, Fanny, who had taken part in the

PITCAIRN'S 1893 visit, transferred from Norfolk Island to Suva in July 1895.

The PITCAIRN arrived at Suva on September 10, 1895, during its fourth voyage. At that time it was decided Cole would locate more centrally at Levuka. There he rented a European -style five-roomed home, continued to learn the Fijian language and held Sunday evening meetings with the aid of an interpreter.

Cole spent nearly a year at Levuka making very little headway. In July 1896 he packed up, hired a sailing boat and native crew, and shipped all his goods and family to Suva. His live dictionary, the interpreter, was also on board. The Kelloggs were en route to Samoa at the time and stayed over to help Cole wherever possible.

The eighteen hour trip from Levukato Suva turned out to be three days long. By day they sat on top of the boxes of goods. Both nights they slept under a lowered sail as the rain poured down. Light winds, running aground twice at the mouth of the Rewa River, and other mishaps caused frustrating delays, but they finally arrived safely at Suva harbour.

In Suva Cole first rented a home. In the meantime Pastor John Fulton, his wife Susie, and two little daughters, Jessie and Agnes, transferred from New Zealand to minister in Suva too. Teenager Edith Guilliard accompanied them as a housemaid and tutor for the girls.

Both Cole and Fulton had worked together in evangelism back in America. Cole had officiated at Fulton's wedding. They were delighted to work together again. One priority was to build homes for themselves. They bought a house which had suffered hurricane damage, dismantled it and built two small homes from the salvaged materials. Chairs, tables, and cupboards were made from old packing crates.

In this spot, Tamavua, just north of Suva, Cole and Fulton laboured together. However, they quickly found the site was unsuitable because many Indian coolies were settling there and the Fijians did not frequent the area. At that stage the evangelisation of the Fijians was uppermost in the missionaries' minds so before long they moved elsewhere.

When the PITCAIRN called in September 1896 during its fifth voyage the captain noticed the Coles were ailing. Two years in the tropics had sapped their strength. They returned to America in mid-1897, but their keen interest in the mission continued. Their attachment to Fiji was evident in the very names they called their children - Ruita and Tavita, the Fijian equivalents of Ruth and David. Cole's two years in Fiji apparently did not produce any baptisms but he laid some foundations and at least one person, Alipati (Albert) Rainima, decided to keep the Saturday Sabbath. This man later became an excellent colporteur.

In those days there were no real roads or bridges constructed in Fiji except those in the heart of Levuka and Suva. The Fijians used only mountain trails and canoes for travelling. Both Cole and Fulton had recognized the urgent need of their own mission boat. For that reason one was built in 1897. It was completed just a few months before Cole left. They named it the LOUGHBOROUGH, after Pastor John Loughborough who had exerted a marked influence on the two men when ministering on the Pacific coast of America in the late 1880's.

The LOUGHBOROUGH was the first boat owned by an Adventist mission in the South Pacific Islands. It was little more than a dinghy in which a sail could be raised. It was suitable for coastal hugging inside the reef or in Suva harbour, but not designed for the open sea. This boat served their purposes briefly. By 1898 Fulton had bought a locally made nine-metre cutter of six tonne for \$160. He named it the CINA, meaning "lamp" or "light".

Fulton himself was a tall lean man, austere, persuasive, and totally committed to mission work. His frugal habits were necessary in the island field. At one time his wages didn't arrive for almost a year. After wearing large holes in his shoes he then went barefoot to save further wear and would carry his shoes in his hand, only putting them on when he was likely to meet Europeans. The whole family was poorly nourished. Their third child, little Georgie, was born in 1897 with a frail constitution. He survived only seven years. Missionaries' heart-strings always remained attached to their adopted land but they were forever knit when they had to bury their kin in its soil.

The translation of a booklet about the Saturday Sabbath, "Singa ni Vakathengu", proved to be significant in Fulton's early ministry in Fiji. He was a studious man and applied himself to learning the language quickly. With the help of a retired Methodist minister, Pauliasi Buna, the translation was completed before March 1898 when the Fulton family were forced to take leave in America because of Susie's poor health. Fulton had the first printing of the 32-page booklet done in America. A second issue was later printed at the Avondale Press.

While on furlough Fulton found Cole was showing stereopticon slides of Fiji throughout the American churches. In this manner Cole was collecting funds to buy a printing press for his beloved Fiji Mission. Cole had also urged headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan, to appoint another couple to help the Fultons. Calvin and Myrtle Parker were duly chosen and, with their two-year-old daughter, Ramona, sailed to Fiji with Fulton, arriving August 17, 1898. Susie Fulton and her girls followed later when her health fully recovered.

Throughout 1898 a family from Fiji attended the Avondale School in Australia. They were Ephraim and Mary Hathaway and their son, George. Ephraim had accepted Adventism earlier, when he worked in the New Zealand gold mines. His father was

American, his mother part-Fijian. Ephraim later did some carpentry work for the Adventist Mission in Fiji, especially boat-building.

During Fulton's furlough in America a real struggle was going on in the soul of Pauliasi. While helping Fulton to translate the Saturday Sabbath booklet he himself was confronted with the doctrine. For months he wrestled with his conscience and when Fulton returned Pauliasi committed himself to observe Saturday. It was a major breakthrough. Myrtle Parker wrote to a friend saying, "His action was leaven in the midst of meal", for it was not long before others followed his example and made the same decision.

Pauliasi Bunoa, or Paul the Sweater, as his name literally meant, had trained as a teacher. He was ordained as a Methodist missionary and served at Rabaul, New Guinea (1875-1885). There his wife and children died with chronic malaria and he, too, would have perished had he not hurried back to Fiji. He remarried a Christian widow, Mereseini, who had one daughter from her previous marriage. Together they had three more daughters by the time the Seventh-day Adventist message was introduced to them. They had settled at Suva Vou, a little distance around the bay from the Suva township. Pauliasi began his work for the Adventist Church almost immediately after Fulton returned from America.

In September and October (1898) Fulton and Parker made two extended trips in the CINA searching unsuccessfully for a spot where the Parker family might pioneer. They returned to conduct some public meetings at Suva Vou, building on Pauliasi's decision. These aroused further interest so they decided to transfer their headquarters to that village. With some difficulty they obtained a small piece of land in the area, government officials quizzing them about their intentions and complaining that there were already enough religions in Fiji. Immediately they set to work and dismantled Parker's home, carrying the timber down a steep hill to the bay, lashing the

materials together, and rafting it all across to Suva Vou where the house was erected again. Two young men, Ilaisa (Elisha) and Ilisoni (Wilson), providentially offered to help with the transfer of the building. They later became Seventh-day Adventists.

The missionaries were less than two weeks at Suva Vou before another major breakthrough occurred. Ratu Abrosa Tuivuya (Chief Ambrose) and his wife, Kilara (Clara) chose to link themselves with the Adventist missionaries. Ambrose had been a thief and drunkard who, at times, had beaten his wife unmercifully. However, the Holy Spirit softened his heart. One Friday evening Clara suggested they visit the missionaries, knowing they would find the Adventists celebrating their Sabbath. On the way they called in at Pauliasi's home. During prayer there Ambrose was reduced to tears as he confessed his wrongs. He said he wanted to be a real Christian. He asked if they could all meet with the missionaries the following day. For this reason on Sabbath morning a group of about twenty gathered in prayer and listened to the chief commit himself to a new way of life.

Both Ambrose and Clara gave up using alcohol and tobacco and about July 1899 were baptised by Fulton in the Lami River at Suva Vou. Old Tevita (David) Dama and his wife, Anareta, were baptised at the same time. Tevita was a former deacon in the Methodist Church. The Suva Vou church was then formed with Tevita being chosen as their elder. Soon after, Fulton erected a multipurpose building for a church, school, and print shop.

The sixth and last voyage of the PITCAIRN brought the printing press for which Cole had raised donations. It was a small Columbian lever press capable of printing only one page at a time. Cole sent some type as well and by January 1900 Fulton had begun to issue a little paper each month called "Rarama" ("Light"). He also printed some tracts on the doctrines of the Sabbath and the Second Coming, and a small hymnal. For about eighteen months their literature was printed in this way, first in a room in Fulton's home and then in an enclosed section of his

verandah. One of the difficulties encountered was the making of suitable ink-rollers for the press. A little instruction book said these could be made by boiling glue, molasses, and glycerine together and pouring it into a greased mould. Fulton experimented with this recipe and finally had success.

In 1901 the Avondale Press donated a larger machine with a font of type. This enabled Fulton to print two pages at a time, but pressure of work forced him to issue the paper only quarterly. Edith Guilliard gradually assumed charge of the printing work.

The Suva Vou community persistently pressed for a school to be started. Their requests were met in late 1899 when morning classes were begun for local Fijians. These were held from Sundays to Thursdays, Susie Fulton doing most of the teaching. At times she was assisted by her husband and Myrtle Parker. Fijians, by nature, are disciplinarians. The teachers found the children would imitate their parents in this regard. Fulton reported it was very difficult in the classroom. If the teacher reprimanded a student then the whole class would turn on the culprit, slapping and yelling at the poor unfortunate and causing quite a fracas each time.

Gates visited in 1900 and made a tour with the CINA to Ovalau, Mbatiki, Ngau, Nairai, and Savusavu Bay. Fulton, Parker, Ambrose, and Pauliasi accompanied him, searching for local acceptance and new places where they might begin more mission stations. Sailing into Savusavu Bay in pitch darkness they lost their bearings. Pauliasi hung over the bow listening intently to the faint wash on the reef as they sailed parallel to it. When the sound broke to silence he knew the passage through the reef lay alongside and he piloted them through the narrow gap to the safe lagoon.

Throughout the trip both Ambrose and Pauliasi used their influence to spread the Advent message among friends and relatives. However, by this time the word had spread in Methodist

ranks that they should beware of the Adventists. Nevertheless, Fulton decided Savusavu Bay would be the next field of mission endeavour, perhaps because three people living there had begun to observe the Saturday Sabbath. One of these folk, a seventeen-year-old youth named Mark Dods, accompanied Gates back to the Avondale School and attended there for a few months.

Plans for Savusavu Bay did not go ahead, mainly because the Parkers who would pioneer the area had to take sick leave towards the end of 1900. They returned two years later. In the meantime Pauliasi made trips in the CINA to distribute literature on Kandavu Island and among his own kin in and around Vanua Mbalavu. On another occasion Pauliasi sailed the CINA to a coastal village and moored it at the water's edge while he conducted a meeting. The tide rose and carried it back out onto the reef where it was wrecked.

Fulton was not devastated by the loss of the CINA. He had already planned to dispose of it and buy a launch. He needed a vessel with a shallower draught to cross reefs even at halftide. A motor was also desirable when winds were calm and for manoeuvring among mud banks.

When Fulton attended the 1901 Australasian Union Conference Session at the Avondale School he asked for donations towards a new boat. The delegates spontaneously gave him \$100. Sabbath School offerings in the first quarter of 1902 were also earmarked for the vessel. It was dubbed ANDI SUVA, meaning "Queen of Suva". At first the engine installed was too powerful and caused the boat to vibrate alarmingly. Also, freshwater fittings of steel and bronze were mistakenly put into the propeller shaft instead of all bronze ones for salt-water use. Not until late 1903 were all the problems resolved and it was in full running order.

While at the Conference Session Fulton was pleased to see the production of his little book of Bible readings called "Nai Balebale ni Parofisai" ("The Meaning of the Prophecies"). This publication

of approximately one hundred pages was printed at the Avondale Press and used in the Fijian Sabbath Schools as a study textbook. It was also sold by youthful colporteurs such as Alipati.

Fulton also agitated for a medical worker to be appointed to Fiji. In response, young Arthur Currow, who had done some nurses' training at the Summer Hill Sanitarium, embarked with the assurance from Gates that the Cooranbong church members would pay his wages. After two years' work he took leave for New Zealand and there married Margaret Reid, returning with her to Suva Vou two weeks later,

Currow not only gave simple treatments to any sick Fijians but he also trained some youth to do similar work in the villages. He was joined by Louis and Lizzie Currow who arrived at Suva as self-supporting missionaries in October 1903. Nineteen-year-old Eva Edwards accompanied them as a helper.

The loss of the CINA and the problems associated with getting the ANDI SUVA in operational order apparently did not slow mission expansion. Pauliasi, the indomitable sower, spread literature among many islands as he toured. He had outstanding success among his own people at Vanua Mbalavu, Cikobia, and Lakemba. For this reason, when the Parkers returned in 1902 they located at Lomaloma on Vanua Mbalavu instead of at Savusavu Bay as originally planned. By then Pauliasi had generated three companies of Sabbath-keepers in the eastern Fijian area.

The Parkers rented land and built a small house of thatch with woven-reed walling and an earthen floor. It measured little more than four-by-seven metres. There were two doors but no windows. With the ocean lapping at their doorstep and surrounded by jungle and coconut palms, they reserved one tiny room for a school. The weather, wrote Myrtle, was unbearably humid. Mildew was a constant enemy. It would rain heavily and then when the sun bore down on the forest it would cause clouds of vapour to rise from the vegetation. The odour of rotting fish was

always present. During the heat of the day Myrtle would drape her head with a wet cloth to get some relief from the humidity.

Myrtle taught her pupils for two hours each day when it was relatively cool immediately after sunrise. In the evenings Calvin would hold classes for the men. Instigated by another denomination, local government forbade the children to attend and some boys were whipped for ignoring the ban. Enrolment dropped somewhat but the Parkers persisted. The following year Parker built a better home, baptised ten local Fijians, and organised the Lomaloma church. Among the early believers in this area were Ratu Pita, Ratu Solomoni, and a Tongan called Joni Sisi. These men all served as lay-preachers.

In September 1903 Sybil Read joined the Parkers as an assistant. Early in 1904 Parker had a four tonne cutter built for his use. He named it RAMONA after his daughter. It was suitable for coastal sailing but left little margin for emergencies in deep sea waters. Parker, according to Fulton, was a workaholic. He also had a streak of derring-do in him. Risking bad weather and heavy seas he would sometimes beat for a week at a time against strong winds to visit a distant island. Lying on the deck continually awash with salt water, or standing bare-headed and bare-footed with an arm tightly around the spar, his anxious eye was always on the alert for dangerous reefs. He met with no serious mishaps while sailing but the RAMONA was dragged from its moorings during a hurricane four years later, swept out to sea, and lost.

While the Parkers pioneered at Lomaloma in 1902 and Arthur Currow cared for Suva Vou, the Fulton family together with Edith Guilliard took a break from the tropics and located at the Avondale School in New South Wales. Fulton's health was obviously low, having suffered thirty boils in a few months. Fulton taught Bible classes and shepherded through the Avondale Press his abridged Fijian translation of "Great Controversy" ("Nai Tukutuku ni Veigauna") and a revised Fijian hymnal with one hundred tunes.

The abridged "Great Controversy" was a large volume of approximately three hundred pages and designed to counter the small but growing presence of Roman Catholicism in Fiji. The book proved to be a slow seller, perhaps because of its size and price. Quantities later had to be heavily discounted as they gathered mildew at Suva Vou. However, many early converts later traced their conversion back to the reading of that book.

Susie Fulton sailed from Sydney to Suva Vou in October 1903, about nine months ahead of her husband. She left one daughter in the Avondale School and took the rest of the family with her, including Edith Guilliard. While at Avondale a romance had developed between Guilliard and Septimus Carr. Edith continued to write to him from Fiji. Such conduct in those days was often interpreted as mushy sentimentalism and frowned on by the School faculty. It was out of character for Fulton to bend rules, but for Edith's sake he became a party to the 'crime' of passing letters between her and Carr. Edith would address each envelope to Fulton but write also on the outside "Ngginggi ni vanua", meaning "Mr Chariot", her not-so-subtle code name for Mr Carr. The romance later blossomed into marriage.

Susie's letters to Fulton bore reports of mismanagement by Arthur Currow at the Suva Vou mission station. Fulton had instructed Currow to transfer to the Ra coast on the north of Viti Levu. However, Currow did not wish to pioneer that area. Friction developed and he left Fiji in 1902, returning some years later.

Currow's departure forced the Parkers to relinquish their station at Lomaloma and transfer to Suva Vou as a rescue operation. The baptised membership at Suva Vou had plummeted. Fortunately, the church and companies which Parker had generated in the Lau group did not wane. This was largely due to visitation by trusty Pauliasi.

In Fulton's absence Pauliasi had done some pioneering work on the Ra coast. Alipati, too, had canvassed books in the area and given simple hydrotherapy treatments to the sick -techniques he had learned from the Adventist missionaries which earned him the nickname "Dr Hot Water Bag" ("Dr Tangani Wai Katakata"). An Adventist trader, Epenisa Reece, had also distributed the "Rarama" and tracts whenever he sailed into those Ra bays.

Locals on the Ra coast requested a missionary be sent to them, but the response was slow. The chief himself, Ratu Meli Salabongi, came to Suva Vou and in his typical jovial fashion took hold of Fulton and said, "Now I'm going to tie you hand-and-feet and take you back home". Fulton then made a trip with Pauliasi in the ANDI SUVA all along the coast, noting there were already nine villages containing Sabbath-keepers.

Among the early converts on the Ra coast were, of course, Salabongi and his wife, Emeli (Emily), at Nambukandra. Another chief further north at Nanukuloa, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, literally meaning "Joni Sour-bread," also accepted.

A former teacher with the Methodist Church, Josefata Nacadruta, and his wife, Nanisi (a daughter of Pauliasi), were left in charge on the Ra coast. Joni Mataogo did some lay preaching too. Parker, in his usual fashion, slogged the 130 kilometres on foot from Suva Vou in 1904 to visit Josefata at Kavula, near Namarai, in order to become better acquainted with the district and its people. His feet became so blistered he was forced to return by boat.

For some time Fulton and Parker had yearned for a training school to be established in Fiji. The practice of sending youth for an overseas education had always presented problems. There were language difficulties, little immunity to some diseases, and a government reluctance to grant letters of freedom enabling them to study abroad.

When Septimus Carr, alias "Mr Chariot", arrived at Suva Vou in late 1904, fresh from his Avondale School graduation, as a missionary and teacher, the quest for a suitable training school site began in earnest. At the same time Fulton asked the Australasian Union Conference for \$600 to start the enterprise.

By early 1905 a property of more than two hundred hectares was chosen at Buresala on the western side of Ovalau. The annual rental was \$40. They estimated this fee could be met by selling the coconuts from palms already bearing on the property. There was no comparison with the few hectares of mission property at Suva Vou where training had been attempted previously. At Buresala there was plenty of wood for fuel, streams of water for bathing, and ideal soil for yam cultivation. The climate was less humid, the location more central, and it enjoyed a quiet rural setting away from Suva.

Once again the mission house was dismantled. John Stevenson, a self-supporting nurse who had attempted to pioneer Rotuma Island but found little support and the scorching heat unbearable, helped to transfer the house from Suva Vou to Buresala. It was taken apart, loaded onto a punt, towed to its new site, and with the addition of some local materials reconstructed into two homes. Fulton occupied one home and Carr, who married Edith Guilliard in February 1905, settled into the second building.

The Suva Vou church and members were not abandoned. In fact, a new church building was constructed there. The move to Buresala on Ovalau simply signified that the administrative centre of the Adventist work in Fiji had reverted back to a situation similar to Cole's day.

A rough building of native materials was constructed at Buresala as a printing office. Edith (Guilliard) Carr was virtually the superintendent of this little workshop until she left at the end of 1907. Each month twelve hundred copies of "Rarama" were issued. The print run rose to two thousand in a short time. Tracts

and the Fijian-language Sabbath School quarterlies were translated and printed too. In a short time the building deteriorated, forcing the workers to put up an umbrella over the press to protect it from the rain. A better building was constructed later.

At the end of 1905 Carr reported there were twelve young men with them at Buresala. All grew their own food and once a week they would go to the mountains and dig bush yams. Some wild cattle were also snared in pits and traded for food. Facilities were very primitive at first. The students lived in small huts made of bush materials. One hut was used as a village kitchen and another as a church.

In 1906 the school building itself was erected on a ridge overlooking the sea. It was the campus centrepiece. It measured twelve-by-six metres and was distinctly Tongan in style because the construction foreman was Joni Sisi, the Tongan captain of the RAMONA. Stout reeds for the plaited walls were shipped in from the Ra coast. The roof timbers came from Lomaloma and loads of coconut-leaf thatch were brought from Suva Vou.

By mid-1907 the school was completed and dedicated. Inside there was a raised platform at one end. The spartan facilities consisted of a pulpit, table, blackboard, two maps, and some mats spread on top of dead fern fronds on the floor. Gordon Smith, a Sydney Sanitarium nursing graduate, joined the Buresala staff for the years 1907 and 1908.

Before Carr left at the end of 1907 to pioneer Papua, he reported his twenty-six students ranged in age from sixteen to forty-five. There were six married couples preparing to be missionaries, in addition to twelve young men and two young women. It was in that same year that the property was purchased outright for \$500 from the owner, John Morris. The Carrs were replaced by newly-weds Andrew and Jean Stewart, beginning what proved to be a lengthy period of Pacific Island mission service. In 1909 the

Buresala staff was augmented by the coming of Annie Williams as preceptress and Tom Driver as superintendent of the printing works.

Among the early Buresala students from Suva Vou were Setereki (Shadrach), Jemesa (James), and Maika (Micah), sons of church elder Tevita Dama. Three came from Lomaloma and others from the Ra coast or further inland.

Young Mitieli (Mitchell) Nakasami attended Buresala too. Soon after his arrival he got up early one morning and cooked little Agnes Fulton's two kittens for his breakfast. When Agnes discovered the grisly truth she armed herself with a tree branch, ambushed Mitieli when he came out of school, and lashed him soundly with tongue and switch. She called him a cannibal, an eater of unclean meats, and anything else that sprang to her girlish mind in the heat of the moment. Mitieli never forgot his introduction to Buresala. Happily, he and Agnes patched up their differences and became firm friends.

The Buresala Training School became the power-house of the Adventist Mission in Fiji and beyond. Many were groomed to take leadership roles in the churches as they sprang up throughout the island group. Others came in from Tonga and elsewhere to study and then returned as missionaries to their own people. Some Fijians, after training, even pioneered in distant places like Papua.

While Buresala was being established another breakthrough was emerging back on Viti Levu. Earlier, a convert named Samuela had taken Adventist literature to his brother, Mecusela (Methuselah) Naisogo. Mecusela was a Methodist schoolteacher up in the mountainous Colo district inland from the Ra coast. His reading convinced him of the Saturday Sabbath and for some time he observed it faithfully despite the mocking from his own village people.

Mecusela finally made a trip to Suva Vou to discover more about Adventists. There he found Alipati and bought a copy of the Fijian "Great Controversy". Alipati recognised an opportune door was opening so he made a tour of Colo, canvassing his books and persuading others of the Adventist message. The year was 1906. Pauliasi had just visited Australia where he was ordained- the first Pacific Islander to become a Seventh-day Adventist minister. When he returned to Fiji he hurried to Colo district to help Alipati cope with the scores of interested people.

Fulton transferred to Australia in mid-1906 and Parker was appointed as superintendent of the Fiji Mission. In the New Year (1907) Parker himself trekked through the Colo district. He did it the short but hard way. Rather than sailing up the Rewa and Wainambuka Rivers he entered at the Ra coast and walked up the mountains. At times the trail was so steep his feet were level with the head of the person climbing behind. Much of the time he walked barefoot and was clad only in a loin cloth because of the heat. In the swift mountain streams he would have been swept away except for the jungle vines stretching across to the opposite bank. These vines he negotiated hand over hand. He baptised eighteen people during the walkabout. A few months later he baptised twelve more and completely wore his shoes out on the two hundred kilometre trek.

The Colo region was Methodist heartland. Parker's presence unsettled the established church. One Fijian minister took some Adventist converts to court but the suit failed. However, another minister sent two of his boys with Parker to enrol at Buresala. Before long there were little companies of Adventists throughout the Colo district, cared for by Buresala- trained men, even though there were repeated occasions of arrests and court cases brought against the converts.

The next area to respond to the Adventist message was Wainunu Bay on Vanua Levu. Josefata and Nanisi Nacadruta began work in the area in 1907. A church was organised there in 1909.

Tragically, Josefata died with chronic dysentery in 1910 while ministering at Lakemba.

In the same year (1910) Alipati and his wife, Eseta, another of Pauliasi's daughters, were instrumental in raising up a second small church on Vanua Levu. It was located on Nalewa Bay at Tunuloa in the Cakandrove district. One charter member was the local chief. A small company of believers was also meeting at Somosomo on the nearby island of Taveuni. Having established stations in that area, Alipati moved south to pioneer Kandavu Island in 1911. Previously, he had visited to sell literature. Climbing the steep mountains proved to be a daunting ordeal for Alipati's weakening heart and recurring lung trouble. He managed only a few months on Kandavu before fevers overtook him. He passed away early in 1912 and was buried at Buresala.

By 1912 all the larger islands of Fiji and many of the smaller ones had heard something of the Adventist message. However, virtually nothing had been done for the Indian population, at that time numbering forty-five thousand. Trying to convince the Indians of Saturday sacredness was pointless. They did not even understand the basic tenets of Christianity. Winning converts from this group would mean employing entirely different methods.

Apparently Louis Currow had come with the intention of targeting the Indians. But his stay of little more than two years was occupied in other endeavours. At the Fiji Mission's annual council meeting of 1904 it was voted, "That we do missionary work among the Indians and Solomon Islanders who are imported here to work". These good intentions were not developed by Parker. In 1909 he was still lamenting the lack of appropriate literature for the Indians.

Stewart considered the Indians when he became Director of the Fiji Mission. A resolution was made at the 1911 annual council to hire some Indians to work on the Buresala farm so that they would come in contact with the Adventist message. However, one

who understood Hindustani and the Indian religions was more sorely needed. This dilemma was solved in the person of Ellen Meyers, an Anglo-Indian woman whose husband had abandoned her. She was among the first group to be baptised into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in India. When she learned of the need in Fiji she agreed to do the pioneering work.

Meyers and her youngest son, Harold, sailed from Sydney to Suva in October 1912. Harold canvassed books and health magazine subscriptions among the Europeans, but his mother concentrated on befriending the Indians. In Suva they rented a tiny two-roomed apartment with kitchen and wash-house as extras, and hung on the front door a sign reading, "Seventh-day Adventist Mission for Indians". It was a humble beginning.

There were two English-speaking Indian families who were already observing the Saturday Sabbath in Suva. Ellen Meyers formed these into a Sabbath School and others were invited to attend too.

Simple home nursing treatments were given when needed and an evening school was started on the verandah of her apartment. Meyers taught up to twenty pupils four nights each week. In addition, a day school was operated a little later.

Education among the Indians was largely neglected. Most were illiterate but keen to learn the three R's. Any religious content was incidental. Meyers festooned the walls with Bible picture rolls in the hope that the students would be led to ask questions about the stories.

The verandah school was only a temporary venture. By the end of 1913 Stewart had located a rental property at Samambula, a few kilometres north of Suva in the midst of Indian settlements. A large mission home suitable for two families was first built on the site in 1914, members from Buresala and Suva Vou lending a hand. Meyers then closed her school in Suva on June 22, 1914,

and moved to Samambula. There, on August 3, she began a new school with new pupils. By the end of the first week there were sixteen young boys attending the day school. "I fear we will not find it so easy to secure the girls", Meyers reported, "The Indians are not eager to give them an education."

Alfred Chesson, a Missionary Course graduate from Avondale, and his wife, Lillian, who had just graduated from the Sydney Sanitarium, went to assist Meyers. They remained throughout the year (1915) before transferring to India. "Maam Sahib", as Meyers was affectionately called, continued on with up to forty pupils in the day school and a few young men in evening classes. Newly-ordained Pastor Joni Lui came to help in 1917.

Isolated cases of adult Indian conversions were occurring throughout Viti Levu. To generate more interest from this quarter Dudley and Stella Meyers arrived early in 1918 to evangelize the Indians living in and around Suva. Dudley was another of Ellen Meyer's four surviving sons. At the annual council meetings held at Buresala in June a baptism was held. Among the candidates were three Indian men - Suchit, Abdul Rahim, and Ram Khalon (better known later as Jimmy Ramkalawan). Other converts followed. Some, such as Dwarka Singh and Nur Bahadur, sailed to India for missionary training and returned to strengthen the Adventist cause in Fiji. A church at Toorak, suburban Suva, was organised especially for the Adventist Indians.

Dudley Meyers direct evangelism of adult Indians was more in favour with church administrators. It was felt the Indian neighbourhood at Samambula was only using Ellen Meyers as a convenience for educating their children. Thought was given to closing Samambula. There were other factors in this decision. A Mohammedan school had started in the vicinity to counteract any Christian influences, and some volatile situations had arisen when Indian parents realised their children were absorbing more than just the three R's from Ellen Meyers.

Converting Methodist Fijians proved to be comparatively easy when compared to the conversion of Hindus and Mohammedans. "We had a religion before Christianity was first thought of," said a smug Hindu contact. This wall of indifference was difficult to breach. The schoolwork among the children bore results in the long term, but because there were few immediate baptisms church administration increasingly grew reluctant to invest much more than token support. Instead, most of the resources went direct to Buresala. Samambula was closed. Ellen Meyers then used the Toorak church in Suva as the base for her influence. Later, the school for Indians was restarted on a property near Samambula.

By 1915 there were over two hundred Seventh-day Adventists in Fiji. The value of the Buresala Training School and its graduates proved to be an important element in establishing a strong foundation for future years. Another vital component was the conversion and continuing support of some Fijian chiefs. Many of their family members joined them in baptism. The same applied to Fijian Methodist ministers. Pauliasi was but the first of many who were educated to some degree in the Scriptures and prepared to change denominations. They quickly grasped the issues and became highly vocal among their own people.

Furthermore, in comparison with the Polynesians to the east, the Melanesian convert tended to be more stable in religious matters. By nature they seemed to be more self-disciplined and therefore inclined to heed the ethical standards advocated by the Seventh-day Adventist Mission.

The ideals of the Mission included Saturday Sabbath-keeping with its various customs; attendance at religious meetings, including the foot washing and communion services; the prohibition on growing, using, or selling of tobacco; the ban on preparing or drinking yangona; the restraint on the production and eating of swine's flesh; the exclusion of some types of fish from their diet; tithe paying; the condemnation of borrowing money; the

disapproval of marrying non-Seventh-day Adventists; the boycotting of traditional feasts and sports; and the admonition to keep their bodies and homes clean. These requirements were repeatedly stressed by Fulton and Parker at the annual council meetings and appear in the resolutions made during the sessions.

The Fijian converts endeavoured to live up to these ideals. It was some of these standards which earned them the reputation of being the "Lotu Savasava" or "Clean Church". It was a far cry from the cannibalism and disease - ridden villages of their forefathers.

Major sources for this booklet are the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times"; the "Home Missionary"; the "Australasian Record"; the "Missionary Leader"~ the John Fulton letter collection; Eric Hare's 1960 book, "Fulton's Footprints in Fiji"~ and the author's personal collection of pioneer data.

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