

**READING PHOTOGRAPHS IN COLONIAL HISTORY:
A CASE STUDY FROM FIJI, 1872**

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This essay explores the significance of a photographic triptych, ca. 1872, pasted on a colonial-era photographic album about Fiji. The author argues that these photographs are reliable documents of referent questions that go beyond the aesthetic effect of photography, the new impact of the medium, and the European curiosity developed for the representation of the "savage." First, the content of these images are examined within the context of the Fijian colonial history, that is, their "*signifiant*" in Barthes's terms. But the interpretation of this triptych is extended further in light of our present knowledge of photography and its use in a certain class of photographers' hands in the nineteenth century. Consequently, the second part of this essay is an attempt of interpretation, paying attention to the local commercial photographer Francis Herbert Dufty. The "*signifié*" of the photographic images as a triptych is stressed and the photographs are re-placed in the historical era of their production and circulation. In conclusion, the triptych is considered as a metaphor for the benefits of civilization and Westernization by means of evangelization at a time when Fiji, already partly converted to Methodism, would become a new colony of the British Empire.

"READING PHOTOGRAPHS" AS NARRATIVES responds to the fact that very few photographs found in archives come supplied with stories or interpretations. I intend to demonstrate that photographs are reliable documents providing the substance for a definable moment of intersecting histories: those of anthropology, colonial history, and local Pacific history (Edwards 1994).

This study considers a group of photographs taken in Fiji by the local photographer F. H. Dufty and looks at expressions of colonialism within gov-

ernment and mission discourse in Fiji in the late nineteenth century. The intentional choice and position of these three photographic portraits, pasted on a privately owned album's front jacket, influence one's vision of the photographer and inform the possible impact of his work on the viewer (Figure 1).

In this respect, I would like to consider the significance of ethnography in the Fijian historical context. The ambivalent character of photography has disallowed its recognition in the historical discourse (Dubois 1990). Moreover, reading photographs implies an experience besides critique and evaluation (White 1957). Just as the oral text needs an audience, so the photograph needs a viewer. As a historical document a photographic image is fertile today only if someone can say something about it as a product of human labor and a cultural object whose being—in the phenomenological sense of the term—cannot be dissociated precisely from its historical meaning and from the necessarily datable project in which it originates (Damisch 1980: 288). Then it is no longer an illustrative adjunct but a “reference” in the sense of “the founding order of photography” and a starting point for investigation.¹

In the case of the Dufty photographs, I tried to identify each one by cross-checking the reference. However, it is not only what the photograph represents that matters here, but what it means. Indeed, it is the juxtaposition of the photographs to form a triptych and their duality that justifies the search for meaning. This album's front jacket and its contrasting views of Fiji strike me as the work of a photographer who wanted to represent the country, to build up a collection of human types, and to stimulate the development of the future colony (d'Ozouville 1997). Since an image refers always to another image, I will associate the triptych photographs with some of Dufty's other works to develop my historical argument.²

Fiji in the early 1870s was characterized by a search for stability because there was no centralized form of European government. Between the community of settlers and the chiefs, local relationships were organized according to reciprocal interests based mostly on landownership. The community's political dilemma and the question of sovereignty were constant worries, and many Europeans expressed the need for an agreed-upon form of government. The ultimately successful settler-dominated Cakobau government was launched at Levuka on 5 June 1871. A Deed of Cession ceded the Fiji group to Great Britain on 30 September 1874.

Ratu Seru Cakobau, now acknowledged as Tui Viti, or king of Fiji, blamed Fiji's disunity for his kingdom's eventual loss of independence. Scarr's view is that it was destroyed by three factors: the resistance of the *kai colo* mountaineers, the collapse of cotton, and the Anglo-Saxon settlers' belief that they had the right to rule the islands (Scarr 1973, 1980).

It was during the troubled years from 1871 to 1874 that the photographs

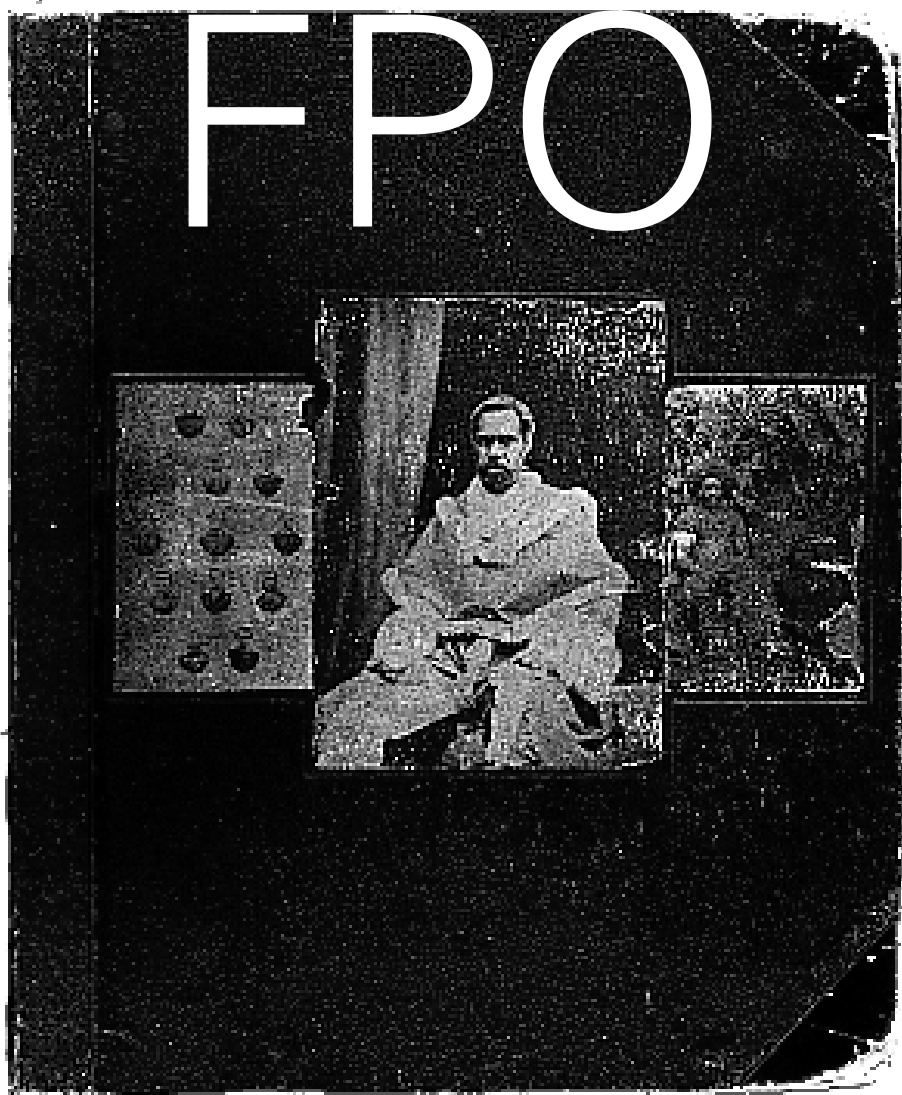


FIGURE 1. **The photographic triptych. Photographs by Francis Herbert Dufty.** (From an album cover at the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, Q988.8/P)

under consideration were taken by Dufty. Originally from England, he came to Fiji in 1871 after six years spent in the Colony of Victoria practicing the art of photography. After moving to Fiji, Dufty established a profitable business and became an active member of the colonial society of Levuka, then the major port and capital of Fiji. His photographic portraits have traveled around the world, becoming the “true” representation of the people of Fiji (Darrah 1981; Sagne 1994). His role parallels that of other photographers of his time working elsewhere in the world, such as Jean Geiser, in Algeria, 1848-1923, for whom photography was a technique, an aesthetic, and a means to serve history (Dubuisson and Humbert 1995:277).

Photographic compositions made intentionally are actually the testimony of meanings relating to the hidden historical dimension of the photographs, which are more than just illustrations or memories of places. Through their composition, subject matter, and symbolic content, they reveal their internal evidence. The economic and social environment affects the opportunities and disappointments of the photographer, who is an instrument of an inevitable history.³ Dufty’s contribution to Fiji was of primary importance in the 1870s. His photographs promoted the Fijian-European politics of the church and the government, concerned as they were to instill social order in the country. Although photographers of the last century have left many images, documentation such as diaries, logs, private papers, and manuscripts that allow a serious analysis of the genesis of their work is rare.

The Photographic Portraits: A Descriptive Approach

Because a photograph does not have an exclusive meaning, the descriptive approach is the beginning of interpretation. No caption and no date were given for the three portraits under study, but for their appreciation one needs a caption, a context, and a code (Gombrich 1972). I identify the portraits as Ratu Marika Toroca in the center, Wesleyan missionaries on the left, and Tui Namosi and another mountaineer on the right, with the latter two images in *carte de visite* format.⁴ Although the *carte de visite* was the mainstay of the photographer’s business, its role in the history of photography remains virtually unexplored.⁵ Nevertheless, the photographer had to do more than just photograph, he had to “biography,” to give life to his subjects (Disderi 1855:25).

The photographs under study belong to an album in the photographic archives at the Mitchell Library in Sydney. It contains mostly views of Fiji and its capital, Levuka, which range from 1871 to 1910 and are not organized chronologically. This album is like a fragment of history of the 1870s, left as a visual outline. Because the album is stamped with the name “Dufty

Bro.” on the inside back cover, it is likely that it was purchased in the late 1870s, when the studio operated under this name.⁶ The place of the photographic album in nineteenth-century society stresses the significance of photography; indeed, it fulfilled the Enlightenment dream of a universal language. It is a symbolic object for social and familial cohesion in which affective attachments and social relationships are demonstrated. Since political and artistic preferences are expressed, the album has a definite impact on ideas and mentalities, reinforcing convictions developed elsewhere. It is an integral part of the social relations of photography’s production, reproduction, and consumption, considered as modes of historical expression.⁷ It was only when I identified Ratu Marika, the native judge, that the significance of this set of images became obvious (Figure 2 and Figure 3, no. 232).⁸

Ratu Marika looks like a European, but he is a Fijian. In his full judicial robe, an ermine coat, Mr. Justice Marika’s handsome portrait was taken by the photographer Duffy in his studio. Viewed against a classic background made up of a large velvet curtain, the “civilized” Fijian has a short haircut, a moustache, and a well-shaved beard responding to the European fashion of the time. Ratu Marika was the associate judge to Chief Justice Sir Charles St. Julian. Article 64 of the Constitution stated that “the Supreme Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and no less than two Associate Justices, one of whom shall be a Native.” However, it also provided that two justices, one being a native, may hold court (*Fiji Argus*, 7 August 1874). Ratu Marika Toroca was also a Fijian chief from Namata, Tailevu. He was “remarkable for the profundity of his knowledge, for the perspicuity with which he could grasp a difficult question of law, and for the soundness of his opinions.” He was an example of success in the process of civilization and was known as “the venerable magistrate” (Roth and Hooper 1990). As a popular illustrated Australian magazine noted, “His dwelling is one of the most civilised-looking households in Fiji. In public Marika dresses carefully in European costume, which becomes him, but in his own home he willingly returns to the simple *sulu* and white shirt of the civilised Fijians. Altogether, Ratu Marika is one of the most successful instances of a native in Fiji discharging a public function” (*Australasian Sketcher*, 4 October 1873).

Duffy made a mosaic card of the Wesleyan missionaries, as reported in the *Fiji Times*, “to keep memory of those who have worked for the mission.”⁹ The raison d’être for this photograph, made of thirteen head-and-shoulder portraits, was “to secure the shadow ere the substance perish.” The Reverend Langham, head of the Methodist Church in Fiji, is in the center; among the others are D. Wylie (just underneath), A. Webb (above), and L. Fison (Figure 4).¹⁰ These portraits contributed to the mosaic of “the colonists of Fiji” that Duffy started in 1875 as a “social and colonial institution.” The

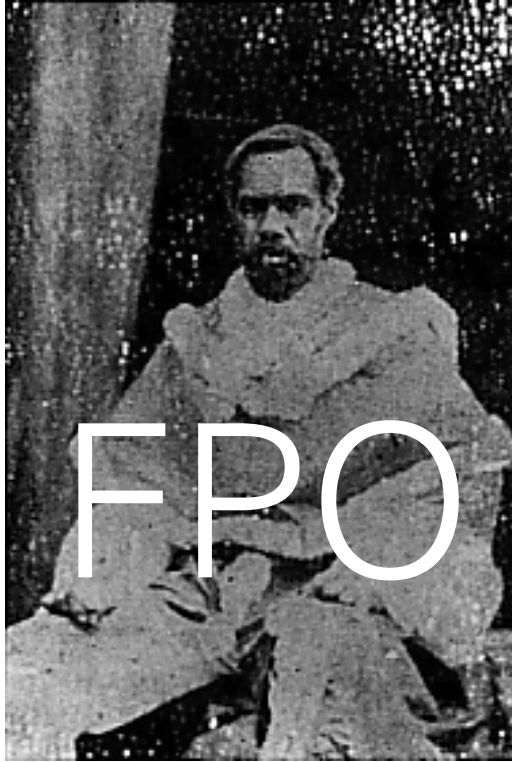


FIGURE 2. Ratu Marika Toroca, the native judge, a cabinet portrait. (From the triptych)

composite photograph was later published in the *Cyclopedia of Fiji* (Allen 1907), where the portraits of the colonists bore numbers; for example, the Reverend Arthur Webb is 886.

From the beginning of the mission in 1835, the Wesleyans cultivated and gained the support of chiefs, and Methodism became the church of the high chiefs in Fiji. The mission conserved the traditional Fijian structure and assumed it would remain in place in the future. The mission, from 1857 onward, passed from the British to the Australasian Wesleyan Mission Board and was run from Australia and New Zealand in the 1870s and 1880s (Garrett 1992). The Reverend Frederick Langham, nicknamed “the Cardinal,” ruled the whole machine with a firm and strong hand, for example, shipping off the Lovoni people as plantation labor after their uprising against Bau (Scarr 1984:51). “Qase Levu” to the Fijians, he was received in great state, re-

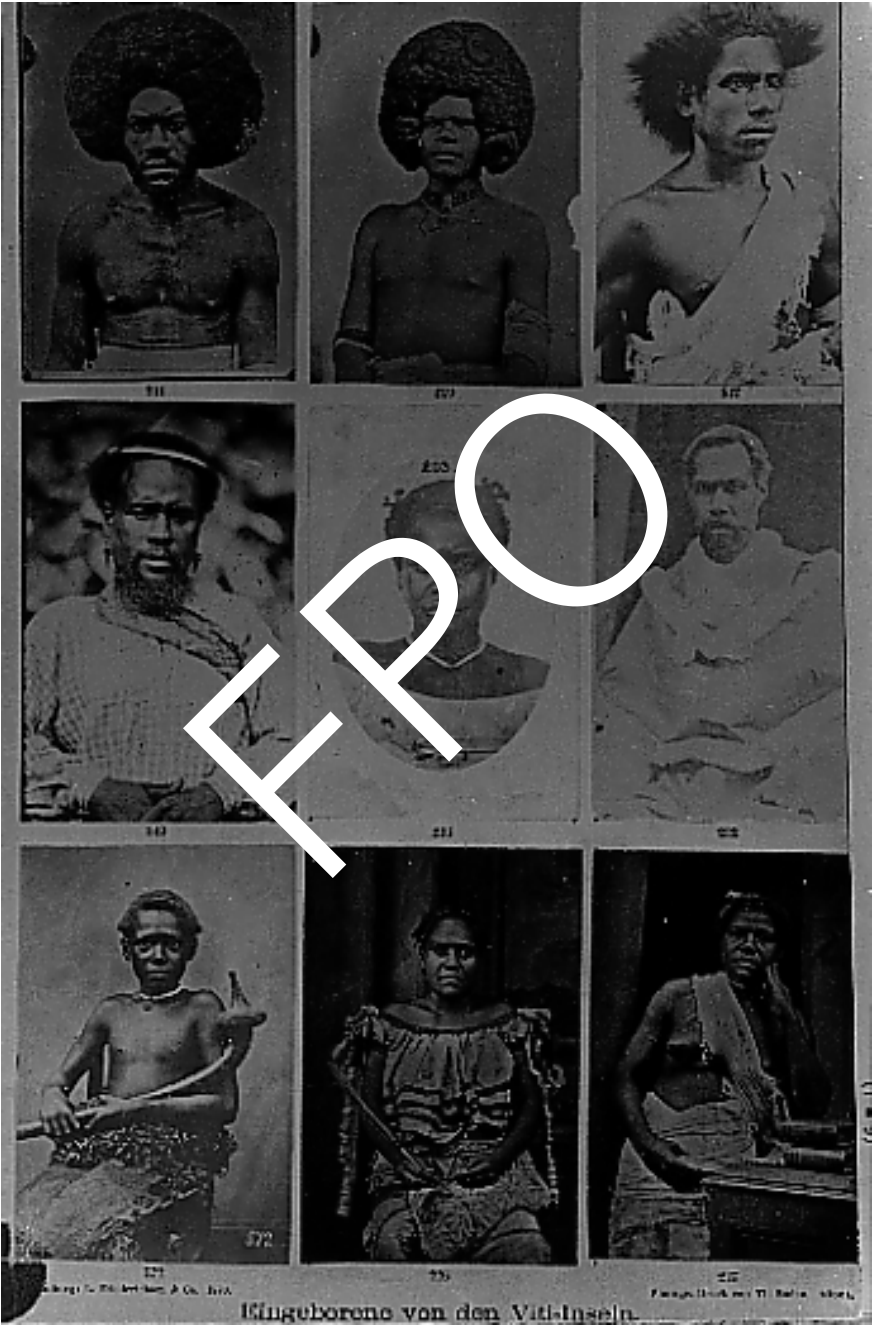


FIGURE 3. "Natives of the Fiji Islands." Assemblage of photographs by Francis Herbert Dufty from the Godeffroy Museum. (Photo Collection, Musée de l'Homme, Paris)

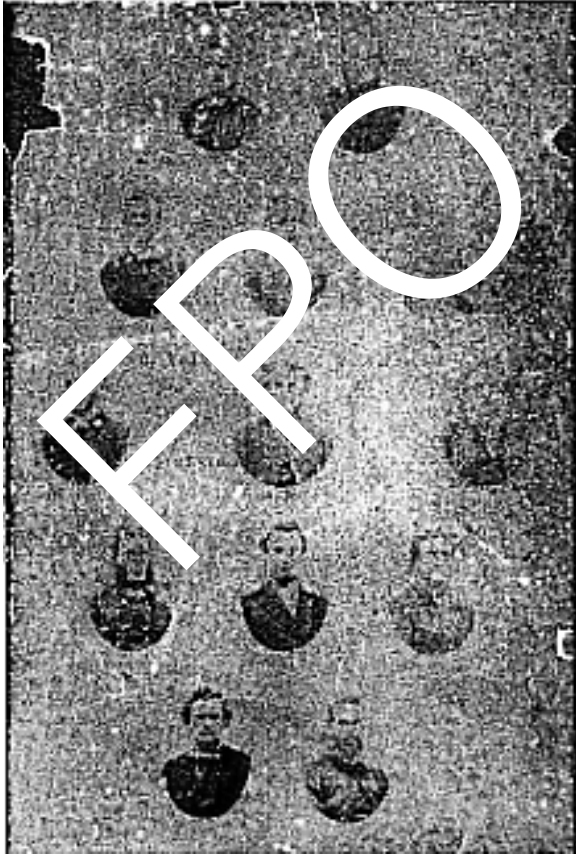


FIGURE 4. The Methodist missionaries: a mosaic card of head portraits, *carte de visite*, 1873.

(From the triptych)

flecting the influence he wielded within his church, whether or not his European colleagues and Fijian pastors approved. They did not when it came to withdrawing church membership over tobacco smoking and drinking *yaqona* (kava), and a moral code imposed by the Wesleyan church created discontent in the community (Young 1984). The colonially trained European missionaries adopted an authoritarian approach that did not trust the capacities of Fijian ministers and Tongan missionaries to run the church (Garrett 1982: 279, 284), and in 1874 Joeli Bulu and other native missionaries clashed with

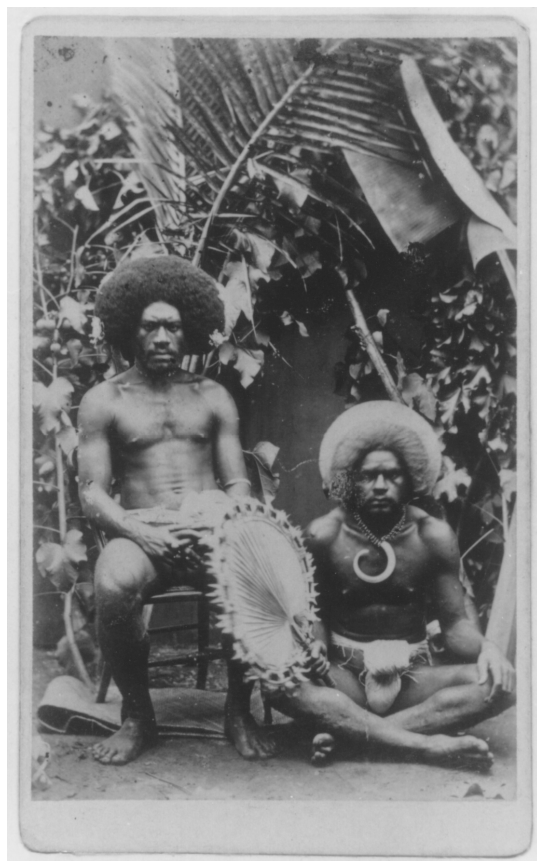


FIGURE 5. **Tui Namosi and attendant, *carte de visite*, ca. 1872.** (In various collections; here from Small Picture File, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney)

the Reverend Langham over their exclusion from the decision-making annual meeting of the church.

The photograph on the right side of the triptych represents two Fijian mountaineers, or *kai colo*, photographed in Dufty's studio or possibly in the field at Navuso against a backdrop featuring tropical foliage (Figure 5). They are half-naked with loincloths, thick hair, and a *yawa* fan in front of them. In view of their position, one must be the chief and the other an attendant, or *matanivanua*, his spokesman. Both men are from the interior of Viti Levu. I

identify the chief as Ro Matanitabua, Tui Namosi, king of the mountaineers of Fiji. Namosi was a “powerful chiefly kin-group” whose men perceived the Cakobau government as a useful counterweight against both their neighbors and the Rewa chiefs who claimed authority over them (Scarr 1973:23, 162). Tui Namosi’s portrait circulated widely outside Fiji with other “representative” Fijian images (see Figure 3 above, no. 231).¹¹

In their narratives, many travelers and visitors to Fiji described the physique of the native Fijians, not sparing racial comments. Great attention was paid to their dress and hairstyle, especially to their *sulu*, a piece of tapa cloth around their loins, and their magnificent mops of hair (Brenchley 1873: 151). These were considered as the distinctive visual marks of Fijian identity, stimulating attraction and curiosity (Clunie 1981).

Dressing and attributes, an essential part of photography’s significance, reveal origin, status, and function and therefore have a strong impact, especially in nineteenth-century photography. Dufty portrayed some Fijian chiefs as curiosities,¹² adding to the circulation of the portraits of princes, princesses, and celebrities of foreign lands and, in so doing, constructing “the other.” These portraits, mostly in *carte de visite* format that circulated internationally, were pioneering in photographic art instruction and appreciation. Cakobau was most photographed, as he became the direct ally of the Europeans. The evolution of his appearance, seen through Dufty’s photographs, was proof of his colonial transformation.¹³ In 1873, the so-called Barbarian King was ironically described as “dressed in his *tapa sulu* and a clean white shirt” (*Illustrated London News*, 8 March 1873). In this Victorian era, visual representation was a major concern (Freund 1974:57), and it is precisely during this period of the 1870s and 1880s that photography became a tool for anthropology, to classify “human types” and organize collections. In the Godeffroy collection the nameless portraits of Namosi and Marika figure among other Fijians (see Figure 3); in the von Hügel collection Tui Namosi is referred to as Matanitabua, erroneously the chief of Ba.

The Interpretation of the Photographic Triptych

Let us rest our attention on the triptych composition in an attempt to “dream up the history by interpreting clues and cues in the image” (Gibson n.d.). The attraction is due to a kind of duality, the co-presence of discontinuous elements, heterogeneous for not belonging to the same world (Barthes 1990: 23). It also arises from readings in the sociocultural context. The link between the history of photography and the country’s own historical process is evident, and different connections are revealed within and among the photo-

graphs: the complex role of the native judge as a traditional chief, convert, and government official; the place of justice in a country searching for ways to establish social order; the representation of the Fijians in the outside world; and the function of the church in linking civilization with Christianity; and, among these connections, the impact of the colonial photographer.

If we look at the attitude of the people in the three photographs, Ratu Marika is facing the viewer, but his gaze is closer to the group of missionaries; he is sitting in a sideways position; his back is turned against the *kai colo*; his larger portrait, standing forward and lightened by Mr. Justice's surrounding white coat, contrasts with the dark background of the *kai colo*'s skin and the vegetation. This duality creates a tension in the photographs between the coldness and the warmth relating to both worlds, Western and Pacific. This contrast is exhibited as the missionaries are surrounded by an empty space—the sky. Their heaven is contrasted with the rich environment of the *kai colo*. There is also a contrast between the missionaries' heads, their formal attire, in opposition to the half-naked bodies of the mountaineers. Following European classical thought, the upper part of the body—the seat of the mind, the spirit, and the reason of the superior being—is viewed in opposition to nakedness as an inferior state closer to nature, symbolized here by the studio's tropical foliage. The Cartesian dualism between the body and the mind finds here an embodied significance. Indeed, Mr. Justice, the government's representative, being the highest native official in all native matters, is surrounded by the church's leaders on one side and the world of the heathen on the other.

However, the apparent contrasts are also part of the unity of the triptych. Indeed, if we remember the role of the triptych in medieval and religious history as a referential and symbolic object, originally three images of which the two small parts on the sides could fold into the larger centered image, we can see the composite image as a set of related elements: a single vision was desired. In sanctuaries these images were generally presented in a privileged place to attract the devotion of the people. Here they are presented on the cover of the album, which is indeed the best place to stress the message.

The photograph of Ratu Marika is a symbolic image of the colonization process. On the one hand was the government, who regarded Ratu Marika as one of the most successful natives on the public scene, and on the other hand, the white settlers' community, who jeered at him as the "darkey" judge, saying he was a mere puppet and patronizing him because he was not highly educated: "His library cannot be supposed to occupy much of his time, for it is limited to a Fijian translation of the Bible and Bunyan's *Pil-*

grim's Progress" (*Australasian Sketcher*, 4 October 1873). For his opponents he was considered unsuited for a Supreme Court judge—"not able to give his opinion on points of law, he was, of course, ignorant of all law except club law—And he could speak scarcely a word of English" (Forbes 1875). The *Fiji Times* summarized the situation: "In all other respects the Europeans will rule: the power of education and civilisation must come to the front, and if the prominent figure be a native, whether in the form of a king or a president, it is only a puppet, the strings of which are pulled by a white man" (29 July 1871). Toward the stranger there are only two attitudes, both of mutilation: recognizing him as a puppet or as a pure reflection of the Occident. Most important is to take away his history. Exoticism's profound justification is to deny any situation its historical context (Barthes 1957:165).

The widespread circulation of photographs made possible by the *carte de visite* and the cabinet-size photograph had different consequences for European societies and foreign lands depending on the background of their production. The evaluation of the effects of reproduction and consumption of such images from the Pacific region has only just started.¹⁴ Indeed, it is the use that is made of photographs that determines their meaning for the past as one tries to analyze them with the knowledge of the present. For instance, the reproduction and distribution of the likeness of political personalities served to embody their authority and social stability, as, for example, Ratu Marika's photographic portrait, when it was published as an engraving in the *Australasian Sketcher* in Australia. The flattering text described him as "a man of upright character with a clear head and great natural sagacity; he has an earnest desire to raise himself in the scale of civilisation." A further sentence in regard to Ratu Marika best summarizes the colonial hopes for the country of Fiji: "May his tribe increase" (*Australasian Sketcher*, 4 October 1873). As the embodiment of progress, Ratu Marika, a Europeanized chief and a person of distinction, united the church in Fiji with chiefs who had not yet accepted European values of civilization.

In spite of his high position and his family connections with the Kingdom of Bau, Ratu Marika Toroca was subject to tensions arising from traditional chiefs' prerogatives.¹⁵ "A literate man and very much of the modern age," he intrigued over Tailevu sugar land against the interests of his Bauan overlords when money came into the Fijians' hands from leases. Ratu Marika, an official as well as a ruling chief, could rely on an unfair proportion of rent monies. The connection between wealth, the chiefly system, and the Methodist Church in Fiji led some observers to link conversion with corruption associated with the introduction of commercial duplicity (Thomas 1993:55). An engraving of Ratu Marika's portrait by Dufty was associated with another one captioned "A Fijian missionary meeting," referring to the *meke vuka*

missionari, at which the yearly contributions are made to *na lotu wai wai*, “the oily religion.” In Australia in 1873, it was thought that “the missionaries bled them well, but the missionary is but a flea to the Government vampire, and these two great authors of taxation frequently come into unpleasant contact” (*Australasian Sketcher*, 4 October 1873).

The remarks on the “tax-collecting competition” stress the success of the Wesleyan mission and the benefits the Fijians were getting from it in return for their gifts, in comparison with the government, from which there were no returns.¹⁶ There was tension between the government and the Methodist Church, and some of the most acculturated and sophisticated Fijians like Ratu Marika Toroca and Ratu Jone Colata of Bau, lieutenant in the Armed Constabulary, were able to take advantage of it to challenge the legality of the protective Fijian law code, *Na Lawa Eso*, inspired by the mission and enforced by the government.

It is partly through the connection of the mission with the administration of justice that Western ways were taken up in Fiji. A changed conception of justice occurred as missionaries drew up rules for civil government to be recommended to Christian chiefs (Derrick 1946:115). The adoption of a new code was under way. A unique view showing natives in court suggests how Western and Fijian culture were becoming entangled (Figure 6).¹⁷

Some of Dufty’s photographs served both the judicial domain and the politics of a government trying to control the most remote native communities. Dufty owed to the official *Fiji Gazette* (21 February 1874) the label of “colonial celebrity” for his photographic portraits of the mountaineers known to be the Burns family’s murderers. The incident reveals the function of photography as an effective check on crime, obviously calculated to render valuable aid in the detection of notorious criminals (Sekula 1986). The infamous being popular early subjects, Dufty took this commercial opportunity to satisfy public curiosity by selling the murderers’ portraits.

The mountaineers, called the *Tevaro*, or “Devil People” of the hills, were regarded as extremely savage compared with other peoples of the Pacific region. They were alleged to be fully engaged in warfare and cannibalism (Thomas 1993:54). In July 1867 Thomas Baker, a Wesleyan missionary, was murdered by the *Vatusila* people at *Nubutautau*. Did the mountaineers associate the *lotu* (Cakobau’s religion) with subservience to Bau and its allies? Had Baker gone as a mere visitor, and not as a missionary, would he have been murdered? A photograph captioned “Devil or Ba mountaineer” in the von Hügel collection was one of the most widespread images of the Fijian mountaineers. Confronted with the fierce attitude, the club, a boar’s tusk, and the cruel look, the colonial viewer could easily have been prompted to fear these Fijians.



FIGURE 6. Interior of Police Native Court, Levuka. Photograph by Francis Herbert Dufty, ca. 1879. (Stone Collection, 27–1–98, Birmingham Central Library, England)

Some of these tribes fought the government and had a fearsome reputation on the coast. From 1868 to 1874 Fijian attacks on isolated planters were followed by speeches about law and justice, and punitive expeditions to avenge them. For example, the Ba expedition of 1871 proved to be merely the first of a series of attempts on the part of the settler community, Cakobau, and later the British colonial government to conquer the mountaineers of central Viti Levu. The *kai colo* resistance was one of the elements that undermined Cakobau's ascendancy and caused his loss of independence. In 1875, Baron von Hügel, the famous ethnologist and collector, was prevented from traveling inland because "the natives, treacherous at all times, had now since the measles epidemic driven away the Wesleyan teachers and returned in a body to their cannibal practices" (Ross and Hooper 1990:14). The western side of Viti Levu remained unevangelized as late as 1890.

Not surprisingly, interest was high in Australia about the situation in Fiji, where many Australians had settled and others planned to go. Various engravings related to indigenous people and local wars captured the imagination of

the readers of illustrated magazines. For instance, the engraving of Ratu Marika was published in the *Australasian Sketcher* (4 October 1873) in association with a report on the “Native War” and the killing of planters in Ba and Rakiraki. Commentators sought to highlight Australian concern in Fiji’s troubles, and in contrast to exalt the progress made in the colony.

A photograph and its engraving captioned “Mountaineers of the Ba Country, Fiji”—found in various archives and publications—depicted “the big headed natives” as “fierce, irrepressible savages, living in a state of perpetual warfare, marked by blood and ravage” (Figure 7, Figure 8).¹⁸ A similar engraving from a photograph by Dufty was used elsewhere to illustrate a claim in the text that “they [the Fijians] have nearly all been cannibals” (Scholes 1882:28) (Figure 9). Thomas suggests that narratives concerning particular mission fields tended to dramatize one or two key practices with which the state of heathenism was identified: cannibalism in Fiji, for example (1992: 373). Throughout most of the nineteenth century, all missionaries, Catholic and Protestant alike, believed that their task was to save the perishing heathens from eternal punishment and give them the assurance of everlasting life (Langmore 1982:108). “The abolition of cannibalism” is the title of a series of engravings that appeared in the *Graphic* (8 January 1887).

It is within this context of colonial endeavor that the photographs have to be placed. Fijian Christian conversion and chiefly organization weighed heavily in Governor Gordon’s consideration of the fate of Fijians. “The colonial administrators saw in Christian converts living peacefully and productively within the colonially delimited boundaries and tasks the key to eventual Fijian civilisation and maturity” (Kaplan 1989). The reading of Dufty’s photographs leads to the question, was there a path to development and success other than through the guidance of religious authority? Was the missionaries’ stance also that of some active lay members of their church, such as the Anglican Dufty? Extremely active in the moral and social development of Levuka, Dufty worked hard toward what is called today the “politically correct”; his work, then, was the exaltation of a social order encouraged by the mission, which as a whole structure of institutions (not just a “house in the bush”) recognized work and social life (Thomas 1992:380).

The indigenous condition was postulated in the absence and lack of enlightenment. Photography distributes “light” in both a literal and a figurative sense to make the world and people better.¹⁹ For photography there was a mission of civilization. It contributed to social homogenization within the bourgeois vision of the world (Freund 1974:22). And it served to reinforce nineteenth-century social conformity. For example, the institution of Christian marriage and the Western conception of the family were encouraged by the mission. The 1870s family portrait of Ratu Savenaca—often reproduced

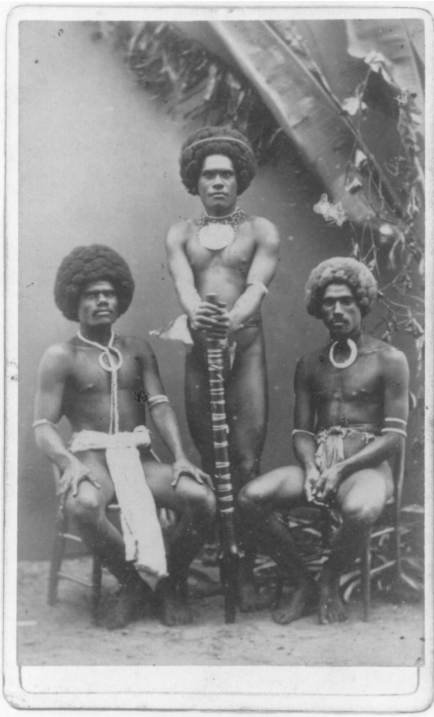
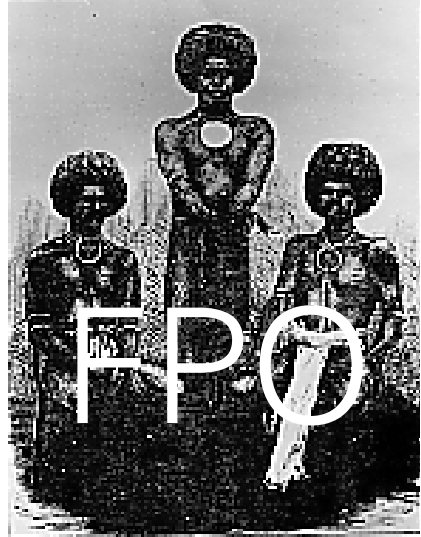


FIGURE 7. **Portrait of three *kai colo*, *carte de visite*. Photograph by Francis Herbert Dufty, ca. 1873.** (C.D.V. Collection, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney)

FIGURE 8 (ABOVE RIGHT). **“Mountaineers of the Ba Country, Fiji,” engraving.** (*Australasian Sketcher*, 17 May 1873, National Library of Australia, Canberra)

FIGURE 9. **Portrait of two *kai colo*, *carte de visite* (glass plate). Photograph by Francis Herbert Dufty, ca. 1873.** (Fiji Museum, Suva)



—is significant because it is the first such portrait in the European style and proof of the civilization and Christianization process (Figure 10).²⁰

One function of photography was to develop the church's propaganda and enhance the conversion of the "savage" through education and care. The task was to civilize as well as convert, as in missions elsewhere. Civilization without Christianity was meaningless: the axiom that a savage in a shirt was no better than one without reflects what the missionaries meant by civilization, "[a]ssociated in their minds with the externals of Western culture, especially . . . clothing. Most Protestant missionaries, although sceptical about attempts to civilise before converting still saw the two as inextricably intertwined" (Langmore 1982:116). Similarly, early missionaries regarded the extravagant hairstyles as verminous symbols of paganism and short hair as the hallmark of a Christian convert. Ironically enough, the Methodist Church later exploited the hairstyle as an exotic vision to attract the attention of its Australian readers (Figure 11)²¹

Church members' collections and albums are the living testimony of the great interest photographs carried within these institutions. The Anglican Dufty's reliable clients from all religious institutions were fond of curios and images.²² The interests of the church and the photographer were convergent, and photographs were a tool for knowledge and propaganda to raise funds overseas: "In view of Mr. Floyd's visit to England for the purpose of raising funds to assist the Church of Fiji, he [Dufty] predicted that their pastor would . . . speak both privately and publicly of matters connected with the colony." Dufty presented Floyd with a series of photographs that "would admirably assist him in description, and help to create an interest in [Dufty's own] work" (*Fiji Times*, 29 March 1884).

The social and influential role of the photographer has been studied elsewhere in the context of Fijian colonial history. Dufty was a strong supporter of the Anglo-Saxon race, the mission, and the social order. He shared with the Wesleyan mission interest in the advancement of all matters calculated to increase the intellectual and moral status of Fiji.²³

In the Pacific region the Methodist Church expanded quickly, and missionaries became photographers themselves. Along with administrators and planters, missionaries liked to make records. To serve the interests of the mission's development, photographs were used mostly to impress readers with the reality of the world of the Pacific, constructed in ways they wanted readers to think about. An early postcard shows a Fiji Methodist dressed in Western-style costume and carrying the Bible. The church used photographs to show the "metamorphosis" of the savage native into a civilized person, for example, in two contrasting covers of the *Missionary Review* (June 1922 and May 1923) with the amazing captions "a mountaineer of Fiji"

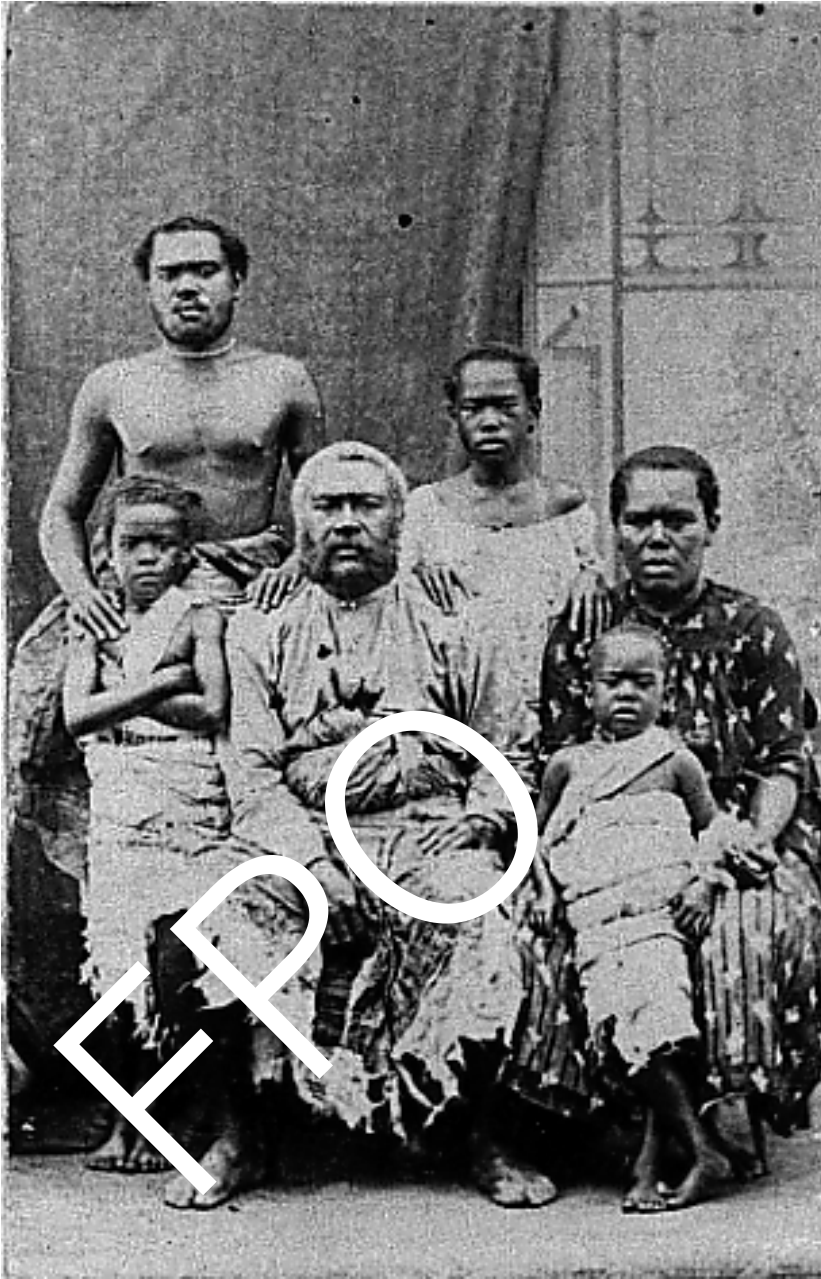


FIGURE 10. Ratu Savenaca and family, *carte de visite*. Photograph by Francis Herbert Dufty, ca. 1872. (National Archives of Fiji, Suva)

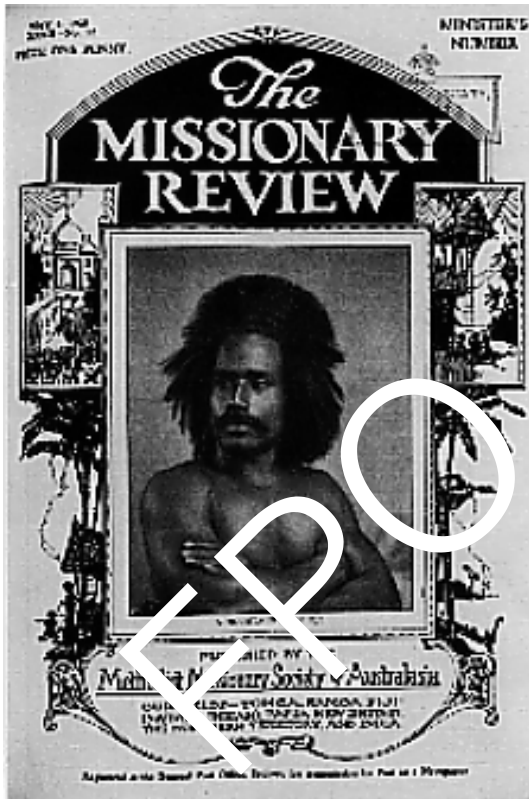


FIGURE 11. Cover, *The Missionary Review*, issue of May 1923. (266/M, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney)

(see Figure 11) and “the real missionary” or two postcard portraits of the Catholic mission ca. 1920, showing the opposition between the “warrior” and the “catechist,” symbolizing through dress and facial expression passage from the state of nature to civilization. One can note the opposition between elements such as formal attire and the shiny naked torso, short and long hair, and the Bible and the club.

By the 1920s, Methodism and other forms of Pacific Christianity had been appropriated by Pacific Islanders and in Fiji was interwoven with the chiefly hierarchy and traditionalist nationalism. The mission was not simply a religious instrument, but rather a total social fact (Thomas 1992:384).

Conclusion

Most studies of photographs from the late nineteenth century carried out by art historians favor an aesthetic approach and thus avoid commercially produced images. Those interested in the latter have worked mostly on the images produced at the turn of the century, when the *carte de visite* had disappeared from the market and the postcard trade was emerging. However, the *carte de visite* is of primary importance for historians because of its large-scale reproduction and consumption, and because it was the first photographic representation of “the other” that became a cultural object in collections.

The photographs by Dufty are ethnographic documents, since their subject matter, symbolic content, and composition have been identified. Photography is a remarkable documentary object in that photographs give guarantees for what they represent. They are also reliable historical documents, for they serve our understanding of the relationships that existed at a particular time in Fijian history. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that the image is the result of multiple choices that are selective; only one part of a certain reality is photographed and thus transformed. Indeed, photography hides as much as it shows.

The photographic compositions under study here are a perfect example of the embodiment of the Fijian reality in the 1870s and respond to the anthropological inquiry relating the viewer to the question of identity in history or “the other” and the self in the problematic of the mirror image (Todorov 1989; Kilani 1996). In fact, interpreting the three photographs of the triptych is to “read history” and to develop an understanding that is revealing about the process of colonization, the birth of anthropology as a new science, and the contribution of photography.²⁴

In the historical context of this study—the building up of the Colony of Fiji—one who resisted this process and its effects through the civilizing action of the mission remained in a state of nature, whereas one who accepted it would reach civilization. Toward this aim this photographic triptych is a perfect statement of colonization, acting like a metaphorical equation.

The ties between photography and Western culture are important from a historical and a social point of view and of essential importance for the study of Western rationality itself. Today, at a time of increasing global interdependency, the comprehension of our culture’s specificity has a practical as well as theoretical importance. Fixing “the other” in a photograph does not mean we know him. Believing we do mostly informs us about ourselves: it is this practice that defines our relationship to the world (Fontcuberta 1996:56). To conclude, let us recall the following words, written from Fiji in the 1870s

by a European: “Are we not a sort of modern [H]ades outside the pale of civilisation instead of outside the Pillars of Hercules—a kind of hedge or boundary between Heathenism and Christianity[,] between Barbarism and Civilisation” (J. B. Thurston, cited in Scarr 1973:161).

NOTES

1. “Ideas are not so important, they are met elsewhere; what is important is the image because one can get into it.” P. MacOrlan, interviewed on *Un siècle d'écrivains*, France 3 (t.v. show), 24 January 1996.

2. There is no record of Dufty being the official government photographer, as Allan Hughan was in Noumea in the same period. Unfortunately, because of space limitations, not all photographs referred to in this essay could be reproduced.

3. Historians and their editors make use of photographs as illustrations to produce more attractive books. Gravelle, for example, includes many photographs without dates or captions (1979), and the recent edition of von Hügel's journal fails to credit the photographer (Roth and Hooper 1989). “Yet most scholars, even experienced historians, do not hesitate to use a photograph without attempting to attribute it to the photographer—the photographer as observer and historian is still a vague concept” (Darrah 1981:199). Edwards notes that “the hidden history comprises those possibilities which the image implies, perhaps through absences within the image, suggesting a historical counterpoint to the forensic. [This is where] I hope to demonstrate the nexus of photography and history is potentially most revealing” (1994:5).

4. The *carte de visite*, invented by Disderi, refers to small and cheap photographs, nearly always albumen prints made with the wet-plate process, that could be reproduced in unlimited numbers and passed on easily.

5. The division between artist-photographer and commercial photographer that aroused so much controversy a century ago led art historians to ignore the *carte de visite* (Darrah 1981). Dufty fulfilled both dimensions twenty years after the *carte de visite* originated in Europe.

6. From 1871 to 1880 it was called the “Victorian Studio”; thereafter it became “Dufty Brothers Studio.”

7. For modes of historical expression, see Edwards 1994:10. The album, linked with the ideas developed by the “Encyclopédistes” (or *philosophes du Siècle des Lumières*), explored the relationship between human beings and a universe based on rational knowledge (Duchet [1971] 1995). Photography will be a new medium to read the world like text.

8. The author attributes most photographs in Figure 3 to Dufty, ca. 1873. The set of *carte de visite* portraits in Figure 3 originated from the Godeffroy Museum collection of photographs in Hamburg. The photographs were supplied to the museum by German expatriate communities. Theodor Kleinschmidt, a German naturalist and collector for the Godeffroy

Museum, was in Fiji from 1873 to 1878 and was acquainted with Dufty. The figure illustrates how photographs in “anthropological archives” were arranged and arrayed in classifications. The figure shown here was assembled from copies made by other photographers, which explains various names and dates on pages of albums. The same photographs have circulated widely and are also part of other collections, such as the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, the Société de Géographie and the Musée de l’Homme in Paris. Photographs that were not created with anthropological intent or specifically informed by ethnographic understanding may nevertheless be appropriated to anthropological ends. The Godeffroy Museum’s collection is the object of Thomas Theye’s doctoral research in Bremen.

9. Disderi created the mosaic card in 1863. Mosaic cards were an excellent form of advertising for a photographer, offering a sample of styles and production.

10. *Fiji Times*, 29 June 1872. I identify the following missionaries: Lorimor Fison, James Calvert, Jessey Carey, Frederick Langham, Joseph Nettleton, Joseph Waterhouse, Arthur Webb, Daniel Wylie, John Leggoe, William Moore, and James Rooney. The phrase “to secure the shadow ere the substance perish” was common among photographers, and Dufty used it in his advertising (see *Fiji Times*, 11 May 1872).

11. A photograph, “Tui Namosi, king of the mountaineers or *Kai Colo*, equally associated to the Devil men or *Tevoro*,” was sent by Thurston in his letters to Hope (Scarr 1973). He is identified on a *carte de visite* in the Ferguson Collection, Australian National Library, and copies can be found at the Bishop Museum (handwritten on the *carte de visite* is “Tui Mousi”) and in the Baron von Hügel Collection, Cambridge University. His image was also reproduced on a German postcard with the caption “Fidschi-Eislander” (Max Shekleton’s private collection, Noumea).

12. Dufty, presumably traveling with the government party, took the opportunity to take portraits when the mountain chiefs and government representatives met at Navuso in January 1875.

13. Dufty took portraits of Cakobau dressed in both traditional tapa cloth and formal European attire.

14. Father Patrick O’Reilly was among the first collectors and researchers of photography in the Pacific region; see O’Reilly 1969, 1978. Recent exhibitions of photographs from the Pacific include *Colonial Photography of Samoa* at the Southeast Museum of Photography, Daytona Beach, 1995; *Images of Trade, Travel and Tourism*, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 1993; and *Portraits Kanak, Paroles Kanak*, photographs by Fritz Sarasin, 1911–1912, A.D.C.K. Centre Culturel J. M. Tjibaou, Noumea, 1995.

15. Head of one set of *bati*, or warriors to Bau, and married into the Vunivalu’s family, he was nevertheless unacceptable as Roko Tui Lomaiviti (Scarr 1984:88, 103).

16. *Fiji Times*, 29 March 1884. The paper also claimed that “the Fijians . . . are rapidly becoming one of the best taxed peoples in the world.” Contributions by Fijians to the Wesleyan church averaged about four thousand English pounds annually (Thornley 1977).

17. Another of Dufty’s compositions juxtaposes the courthouse with portraits of the “House of Delegates.” Renamed Parliament House, it had previously been Levuka’s Reading Room.

18. *Australasian Sketcher*, 17 May 1873. They were described further as having a large coiffure or headdress made of matted hair and living in “a state of perpetual warfare. It was by a tribe of the savage mountaineers that Mr Burns, his wife, family . . . were lately murdered.” Thurston sent this photograph to Hope in a letter with some other portraits of his own, as he was a keen photographer himself. Scarr (1973:98) erroneously attributes Thurston as the photographer.

19. The trade name “Temple of Light” was common at the time. The Australian photographer Besse used it in Fiji in 1879.

20. For example, in France it appeared as “Fiji Islands, the Royal Family,” an engraving by Ronjat, from Duffy’s photograph (Reclus 1889). The photograph was sent to the Société de Géographie, a rich source of nineteenth-century photography. Ratu Savenaca Naulivou, Cakobau’s half-brother, was a minister in his government launched at Levuka in June 1871. A man of decision, he took an active part in the cession of Fiji to Great Britain. In January 1875 he addressed the mountain chiefs at Navuso. He was among the numerous Fijians who died from the measles epidemic in March 1875.

21. Curiosity about Fiji would have been raised in 1922 by a photograph of children captioned “Some queer hair-cuts in Fiji” with a note that “no two children have their hair cut alike” (*Missionary Review*, 5 July 1922). This photograph, attributed to Caine, was also used as a postcard (Macmillan Brown Collection, Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand).

22. The Reverend George Brown was in Fiji in 1875. The importance of photography within the mission became more explicit when missionaries became amateur photographers and photography came to serve as propaganda for the missions.

23. Duffy hoped Fiji would become a thriving settler community like Australia and New Zealand and that it would retain close interests with the Colony of Victoria. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge and the Independent Order of Oddfellows, and was a philanthropist who signed up for various subscriptions for moral or financial support of political or social campaigns. See d’Ozouville 1997.

24. The understanding of photography today and to some extent these three photographs reveal even more today about their own role in relationship to subjects or objects with the contribution of such disciplines as sociology, semiotics, and psychoanalysis.

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