

Royal Commonwealth Society,
Northumberland Avenue,
London WC2N 5BJ.

Mm Waix

22nd May, 1976.

I sincerely hope that Honor and yourself have now returned safely to Canberra and that neither of you have suffered any temporary or permanent ill effects by reason of your odyssey to London, in order to explain to Mr. Justice Megarry just what the Banaban system of land tenure and inheritance really is. I sincerely hope that neither of you have had any recurrence of your ills suffered in London, and that you now have your dosages, and the changes thereof, fully under control.

I leave here on Wednesday next by Concorde for Bahrain (where the cheapest hotel room I could get was \$US 60 plus 15% tax!!! I told them to keep it! But it would have been fun to see little Ing's face if I had taken it and made a claim!). Thence I go to Singapore for 5 days, and Hong Kong for a week before descending on Sydney, which I should reach some time during the second week in June. I will certainly ring you from there but whether I shall be able to pay Canberra a visit this time is doubtful. As the doctors here have only just cleared me, I am returning to Fiji very late

(Incidentally, I hear that the FCO made a nonsense of your hotel bookings and/or payments in Mauritius! Anyone who says that they and the Crown Agents are as efficient as they were in our day needs their heads examined)

I gave Nigel Seed lunch at the RCS the other day - I had previously given Ing lunch - and he told me that Vinelott finally stopped speaking last Friday - five weeks solid. Mowbray has started up and at that moment of time there was a Megarry/Mowbray/Vinelott argument proceeding as to what a certain Mr. Maude - a distinguished witness - meant by the word "fair" apropos of Grimble's royalty fixed in 1931 (?). I am having all the transcripts sent to me and will keep you briefed as far as I can on such weighty and crucial matters. I gather Mowbray will take as long or longer than Vinelott and that will end up with the Summer Vacation. We may therefore expect judgment about October!!!

I was very worried to receive a letter from Jean Brown the other day in which she spoke of several visits to their house by Bruce Burne. He was talking of sending back the BSIP archives to the BSIP soon. Walp!!! It will be bad enough if he sends the actual BSIP archives back, but if he sends the WPHC ones too, it will be catastrophic. I shall be out of a job, and those whom I work for (4 at present) will take a dim view of it. Cannot something be done ??? End Bruce's secondment? Let the UK forbid the transfer of archives until all are ready to receive them - or all are micro-filmed.? I am sure it only needs someone nice and sensible (or one of great repute in the Pacific area - Maude?) to talk to these places nicely and tell them that Australia will care for the original archives and let them all have microfilms of their needs, for them to accept with much cheering, and without any cost. I gathered from Patterson (FCO) some weeks ago that there is to be a big meeting in Canberra between UK, NZ and Australia over the Banabans. Cannot you find out from the UKHC in Canberra about it and nuzzle Patterson, who will I should think almost certainly be there - I assume Bullock will be there too, and our old friend Ted Rowlands, now Minister of State at FCO. Throw your weight about a bit and save the archives for us. Their distribution would certainly put paid to doing any work for you in connexion with your bibliography. It is a pity that Bruce Burne is so utterly unsuited to be handling a matter of this crucial nature

I can see that I am going to be back to Fiji that I shall be working a 16-hour day. Incidentally I was surprised the other day to receive a telephone call (when at the RCS) from Jane Roth, who had received a letter from Honor and wanted to know where the letter was. I was able to say either in Mauritius or Australia. She was very upset at receiving the letter after your departure, especially as it seemed to have been dated well before your departure. However I could not solve her little mystery for her.

I am really looking forward to returning to Fiji. This weather blows hot and cold indiscriminately but my chief complaint is that I am putting on weight as I cannot get any serious exercise. Back to the Olympic Pool in Suva will be a real pleasure. Not that it has not been fun staying with Sally, and seeing Hilary (whom I did not expect to see) and Neil again for a second time. He is doing a trade union course at Eastbourne about which I will tell you when I see you.

Again, I do hope both of you are well and have suffered no temporary nor permanent ill as a result of your London visit. My love to Honor. It will be terrific fun to see you again, one of these days and discuss the judgment!

in love Mac

77 Arthur Circle,
Forrest, A.C.T. 2603,
11th June, 1976.

Mr R.M. Sands,
British High Commission,
CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600.

Dear Mr Sands,

Prior to my departure from London on the 18th April I was asked to visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to discuss various matters connected with the welfare of the Banaban people on Rabi Island. At the conclusion of the main interview my views were also sought on the question of the future of the Western Pacific Archives, at present located in Suva.

These I was glad to give, whereupon I was invited to meet the staff members more particularly concerned with the archives for a more detailed discussion. Unfortunately this further meeting never eventuated, as I had to leave London at the end of the week for Mauritius. I believe, however, that you are also concerned with the future of these archives, and I am therefore taking the liberty of writing to you on the subject for any action which you may consider appropriate.

My connexion with the archives is a long-standing one. As an officer of the Western Pacific High Commission I was in charge of them for some years, and prepared several official reports from archival material for government publication. During World War II I assisted Mr C.R.H. Taylor to produce the first report on library services and archives in Fiji (Legislative Council Paper no.12 of 1946) in which he recommended the appointment of an Archivist, the copying of fading or fragile documents and the removal of the Western Pacific Archives from the secretariat. A list of references to this paper and other works concerned with the archives and documentary preservation in the Pacific Islands is attached.

Later, as Executive Officer for Social Development on the South Pacific Commission, I arranged for the secondment of Mr C.A. Burmester from the Commonwealth National Library in Canberra during 1951 to advise on the establishment of a Central Archives for Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission; and later still for the appointment of Mr A.I. Diamond as Archivist. In recent years, as a research historian in the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University, I have worked in the High Commission Archives on a number of occasions.

It was therefore with considerable concern that I learnt from Mr Diamond, and his successor Mr B.T. Burne, that it was proposed either to remove the High Commission Archives elsewhere as an integrated whole or else to divide and disperse the contents. In the latter event it was understood that the documentation relating to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony would be sent to Honiara and Tarawa respectively, while that relating to the New Hebrides, Kingdom of Tonga, Pitcairn Islands and the Consul-General's office would probably be deposited in the Public Record Office.

This concern is shared by all documentary research workers in the field of Pacific studies, to whom the archives ~~are~~ *are by far* the most important depository of historical and other information in the entire Pacific region, covering as they do a major part of the South Seas inhabited by a wide diversity of Melanesians, Polynesians and Micronesians. To historians, anthropologists, political scientists, demographers and other social scientists the value of the documentation which they contain is incalculable, and their destruction would result in an irreplaceable loss of knowledge to the world.

This possibility of dispersal and loss was brought up at the 1971 Unesco Seminar on Source Materials related to Research in the Pacific Area, but was not considered to have immediacy. The matter was, however, discussed informally from time to time at meetings of the Co-ordinating Group on the Promotion of the Study of Oceanic Cultures, and when the Australian Government made a grant last year to assist projects for the preservation of the cultural heritage of Pacific peoples a substantial sum was provided for the purpose of microfilming the entire High Commission Archives prior to their removal. It is believed that further financial assistance could be obtained should this amount prove insufficient.

During my conversation in London I stressed four main points in connexion with the future location of the archives:-

- (1) The first and most important point is that the records should be properly preserved from loss or deterioration. In the tropical Pacific this necessitates housing them in a fire-proof, air-conditioned building or room with adequate shelving, under the care of a trained archivist with the necessary powers to control access.
- (2) Secondly it is imperative that the administrations concerned should be able to consult any document required by certified photocopy.
- (3) Thirdly that subject to any governmental restrictions the records should be accessible to researchers, who should be able to purchase photocopies of any unrestricted material.

- (4) Finally, should it be decided to disperse the records, no document should be allowed to leave its present location until it has been microfilmed in its existing archival series and sequence for deposit of the negative in the Public Record Office.

In considering these desiderata the question of location is clearly of paramount importance. From the point of view of proper preservation and accessibility for purposes of research either the Public Record Office in London or the Commonwealth Archives in Canberra, Sydney or Melbourne would be ideal. A few years ago, when the possibility of deposit in Australia was mooted unofficially, it was understood that the authorities might welcome the proposal, if made, and be willing to house and care for the records free of charge, either as a temporary deposit or on a permanent basis, under such conditions governing access as might be laid down, and to make and forward photocopies of any documentation required by the island governments on request. As air and sea communications are frequent between Australia and the High Commission territories this should enable the administrations to obtain anything needed without delay and without incurring the considerable cost of maintaining their own archives and professional custodians. It is not known, however, if such an offer would be open today.

The conditions for ensuring the preservation and professional care of documentation at the Public Record Office in London are, of course, as good as, and possibly better than, those obtaining in the Commonwealth Archives. The P.R.O. already houses the Foreign Office (F.O.58 and 534) and Colonial Office (C.O.225 and 881) series relating wholly or in part to the Western Pacific, the records of the Pacific Islands Consuls-General, Consuls and Vice-Consuls, and some of the Admiralty China, Pacific, and Australia, Station records covering the same area; and no difficulty has been experienced in having these photocopied for the Pacific Research Libraries. There would, of necessity, be a slightly greater delay and expense involved in the transmission of photocopies required by the island administrations, while direct access by such governments or by research scholars (who are almost without exception resident in Australia, New Zealand or the Pacific Islands) would be virtually impossible. ~~Their~~ ~~the~~ ~~re-~~ ~~duction~~ of an original document is, however, very seldom necessary.

Assuming that the island governments concerned are unwilling to continue the expense involved in maintaining the present Central Archives the only alternative to depositing the High Commission records in England or Australia would seem to be to accede to the requests of the Solomon Islands and Gilbert Islands administrations and separate the archives into three sections: sending those relating to each territory to Honiara and Tarawa respectively and the remainder to the Public Record Office.

The inspection

It is recognized that this may be the unavoidable course for reasons of policy but it is one which, in my respectful submission, should be avoided if at all possible. My objections are that it would necessarily destroy the integrity of the archives, and thus render the task of historical reconstruction almost impossible; that the despatches to and from the Secretary of State often refer to two or more territories, and can therefore only be sent to one in original; and that to dismember the bound volumes of correspondence would be an act of archival vandalism, and scarcely less so to separate items of correspondence within a file (especially when the associated minutes relate to more than one territory). In brief, I suggest that the High Commission Archives cannot now be unscrambled except ineffectively and that the end result will be to destroy them without satisfying anybody. These remarks apply to any separation of the records relating to the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides and Gilbert and Ellice Islands; they are also relevant, a fortiori, to any attempt to separate the Gilbert Islands correspondence from the Tuvalu.

In addition, while one is aware that former dependent territories are apt to maintain that if they are deemed capable of achieving independence they are also capable of administering retrospective (as well as their current) archives, this is not in fact the case; even relatively advanced nations are often neglectful in this regard. In the Pacific one has the example of Tonga, where the main part of the archives were burnt because the room in which they were housed was required for an exhibition, ironically being set up by the Education Department; where even the original text of the Constitution was found to be missing when urgently required, and eventually located in an Australian University; and whence a student recently returned with a suitcase full of archival material apparently obtained from departmental officers.

To judge from the trainee sent to Suva from the Gilbert Islands the calibre of future archivists is not yet high enough to inspire confidence that the work of maintaining the archives will be adequately performed, or indeed that the position is regarded as important. Nor is it possible to provide a level of training up to professional standards through in-service instruction at Suva alone. I have been informed, furthermore, that proper legislation has not as yet been enacted to enable even a ~~properly~~ ^{well} trained and able archivist to maintain the inviolability of the records.

In view of the above considerations perhaps I may be permitted to express the hope that, in the event of it being decided in principle to break up the High Commission Archives and to send the relevant sections to Honiara and Tarawa, the Archivist in charge at Suva should be instructed to refrain from the actual

transmission of any records until:-

- (1) they have been microfilmed for deposit in the Public Record Office, in order to secure for posterity a complete record of the archives as they existed before dissolution;
- (2) adequate fire-proof, air-conditioned, furnished and secure archives have been provided for their preservation;
- (3) approved legislation has been enacted to ensure their protection from loss;
- (4) a properly trained archivist has been appointed, with the necessary status and powers, to take charge of their accessioning and care; and
- (5) funds have been earmarked for staff salaries, and the maintenance of the archives building and its contents.

In conclusion I should like to emphasize that I have no personal axe to grind in addressing you on the disposition of the Western Pacific Archives, since the remainder of my life work will not necessitate any further consultation of High Commission documentation. My sole claim to be heard is based on my long association with the records, both as a High Commission official and a professional documentary researcher and writer; my publications on Pacific bibliography and the documentary sources for Pacific studies; and my continued preoccupation with this subject as founder of, and Honorary Consultant to, the international, inter-library Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, to which the future of the archives is of cardinal importance, as it is to all concerned with Pacific documentary research.

Yours sincerely,



H.E. Maude.

Enclosure.

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