

Rarama, Fiji Periodical

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Na Rarama (The Light) was a Seventh-day Adventist message magazine prepared and mostly printed in Fiji for Fijians in the Fijian language between 1900 and 1955.

Early Stages

Elder John Fulton, one of the pioneer missionaries to Fiji, was instrumental in publishing the early issues of *Rarama* (Light), otherwise titled *Na Rarama* (The Light). It was essentially an evangelistic medium, the columns containing articles about the Advent message that were translated into the Fijian language. He first spoke of it in May 1900.¹ The earliest extant copy, January 1920, is numbered volume 19, number 5.² This does not match a continuous print run from 1900. The periodical probably lapsed temporarily when Fulton took leave in Australia.

Fulton's fellow missionary John Cole, who had returned to America and collected donations for mission equipment, had financed a small press that could print only one page at a time of the eight-page periodical. It began as a monthly with a print run of 800 copies.³ The following year, 1901, Fulton reduced it to a quarterly.⁴ At the Fourth Biennial Session of the Australasian Union Conference (AUC) at Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, in July 1901, he reported that 14 numbers had been issued.⁵



Rarama title page 1908.

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

Avondale Press donated a job press, enabling Fulton to print two pages at a time. He had the print shop in one room of his home in Fiji. His domestic help, young Edith Guilliard, soon learned to set the type.⁶

Fully Established

When Elder Calvin Parker arrived as assistance for Fulton, the periodical began to be printed monthly again. At times Parker served as editor;⁷ other times, Fulton's name appeared as editor.⁸ At a council meeting in Suva in October 1904, a decision was made to allot each Fijian mission district a club of one hundred copies for an annual subscription of one pound.⁹ Copies were mailed further afield to Fijians in Samoa, Tonga, Rotuma, and New Guinea.¹⁰

Mission activities became centered at Buresala with a training school and printing establishment. A good cylinder press was purchased¹¹ and eventually powered by a small engine.¹² Print runs from 1908 to 1910 fluctuated between two and three thousand.¹³ During this period, Alexander Stewart arrived as a missionary, learned the language, and acted as editor.¹⁴ His term saw the printing of *Rarama* temporarily moved to Avondale Press and some Fijian youths serving apprenticeships there before returning to Fiji.¹⁵ The former preceptor at the Buresala School, Annie Williams, became editor during and after the First World War years. She worked from an office in the AUC headquarters at Wahroonga, New South Wales, a convenient arrangement while *Rarama* was being printed at Avondale Press. An annual subscription rate for individuals was set at two shillings, but many copies were given away as free literature.¹⁶ At the end of the war, the printing of the periodical returned to Buresala under the workshop supervision of Semi Vuloaloa.¹⁷

Earliest extant copies, 1920, show that Parker had returned as editor and some pages bore simple illustrations. Most columns were written by Fijians, such as Ratu Meli Salabogi, Nafitalai Navarra, and Mitieli Nakasamai, who later served as a missionary in Papua.¹⁸

The following list of editors is compiled from extant issues:

October 1920–January 1922	Edith (Guilliard) Carr
February 1922–June 1923	Cyril Palmer; associate and printer, Roy Lane
July 1923–June 1926	Andrew Stewart; subeditor, Roy Lane
July 1926–December 1927	Harry Martin; subeditor, Roy Lane
January–December 1928	Septimus Carr; subeditor, Roy Lane
January 1929–December 1932	Roy Lane; assistants: Veivuke, Mosese Dranibaka
January 1933–February 1938	J Septimus Carr; assistant: Mosese Dranibaka
March–April 1938	Leonard Wilkinson
May 1938–July 1940	Gordon Branster

August 1940–March 1941	Arthur Dyason
April 1941–December 1944	Leonard Wilkinson
January 1945–December 1947	Cyril Palmer
January 1948–December 1949	Septimus Carr ¹⁹

When Lane became chief editor in 1929, he established a print shop at Suva Vou headquarters, an enterprise named Fiji Mission Press.²⁰ Fijian national men continued to work on the production line, and college students freely distributed *Rarama* from door-to-door.²¹

Fijian Leadership

Seventh-day Adventist missionaries had found the Fijian people to be very responsive to their message. A team of Fijian missionaries quickly developed, a few being appointed to serve overseas as pioneers in places like Papua. By the 1920s, scores of them were listed in the Seventh-day Adventist yearbooks.²² It was no surprise, therefore, that some would eventually be appointed as editors of *Rarama*. In 1951 Epeli Katonivualiku served as editor until Jokatama Valetini took over briefly in 1953, followed by Situreki Naitau in 1954. During the closing year, 1955, the printing of the periodical was outsourced to Oceania Printery, Suva.²³ The Fijians had always contributed most of the articles. That fact alone always made the periodical very welcome in the Fijian households and was instrumental in persuading many to unite with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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NOTES

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5. J. E. Fulton, "The Work in Fiji," Special No. 2, *Union Conference Record*, July 22, 1901, 21–23.
6. A. L. Hindson, "A Visit to Fiji," *Union Conference Record*, December 15, 1904, 2–3.
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8. "List of Periodicals," *Yearbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1905), 103.
9. C. H. Parker, "Council Meeting at Suva, Fiji," *Union Conference Record*, January 15, 1905, 6.
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12. A. G. Stewart, "The Fiji Mission," Special No. 1, *Union Conference Record*, October 24, 1910, 20–21.
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