

Major UK museums to collaborate with Fiji Museum

World news story

To mark Fiji's 50th anniversary of independence, the Fiji Museum and four major museums in the UK have been discussing to collaborate over knowledge exchange about historic Fijian artefacts held in the UK.



Civavonovono (composite breastplate of whale ivory and pearl shell); early 19th century, 28cm; Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology (Z 2730). This chiefly breastplate belonged to Tanoa and his son Seru Cakobau, both Vunivalu of Bau, and very likely was presented by Cakobau in 1875-76 to Sir Arthur Gordon, the first resident Governor of Fiji, who later donated it to the Cambridge museum. Fiji Museum has several high-quality breastplates of this type, some of them currently on display in Los Angeles (photo courtesy of Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology).

All four museums in the UK have specific expertise in Fijian and Pacific history. As an important first milestone to completing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), agreement has now been reached in principle to take this work forward.

With the assistance of Professor Steven Hooper of the University of East Anglia in the UK, the Fiji Museum has received offers of collaboration from the directors of the British Museum, the National Museum of Scotland, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, and the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford.

It is proposed that support will include, among other things, providing Fiji Museum with practical and professional advice as it plans the next phase of its development. Fiji Museum staff in turn will provide advice and cultural information about Fijian artefacts held in the UK. For several years British Government-funded research has facilitated collaboration between Fiji Museum and UK museums, one of the results of which is the major exhibition, Fiji:

Art & Life in the Pacific, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which because of the pandemic has been extended until Sunday 2 May, 2021. Fiji Museum, along with several British museums, is a major lender to this exhibition, and is publisher of the associated exhibition catalogue by Steven Hooper.

The next step will be to identify reciprocal activities that will feature in the MoU and develop an Action Plan to ensure swift and dynamic implementation of the agreement. The British High Commission is delighted to support this work.

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