

iTaukei Indigenous Fijian *masi* as an education framework: Retaining and adapting tradition in epistemology and pedagogy for a globalised culture

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iTaukei (Indigenous Fijians) are experiencing rapid social transformation through urbanisation and globalisation. Indigenous knowledge is being quickly eroded by its conflicts with modern Western knowledge and values. To counter this decay, there is need, in the school curriculum, for teaching methods that can help students achieve, in their own understanding, accommodations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous concepts, between modern values and expectations, and the emphasis being placed by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs on the importance of preserving traditions.

This paper proposes an innovative iTaukei pedagogical and epistemological framework based on the traditional textile masi (tapa), with design and motifs used as metaphors to facilitate better understanding of the conflicts between and the potential for reconciling or accommodating “outside” (Western) and “inside” (Indigenous) knowledge. At the centre of the design is the learner who must critically reflect on the possibility of a symbiosis of Western and Indigenous knowledge. The masi framework could prove a powerful tool for educators dealing with the dilemmas of social change in an oral culture like the iTaukei.

Keywords: iTaukei Indigenous knowledge; Yaubuliti framework; pedagogy; epistemology; melding; educational tool; social change; reflexivity

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a framework of *masi*¹ (*tapa*) design as a metaphor to demonstrate the impact non-indigenous knowledge systems have on Indigenous knowledge (IK) in formal and informal settings. The different motifs in the design help learners and teachers understand the flow of knowledges and the strategies to adopt to control the nature and scope of change or to reconcile and possibly synthesise concepts in indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge. Using the *masi* can be useful for in- and pre-service teachers, curriculum developers; and can help guide learners to make decisions on what they believe is culturally and environmentally sustainable, strengthen inter and intra-relationships, and provide life-skill security in modern living. The framework is the sum of Indigenous and Western pedagogical and epistemological understanding, which are often viewed as disparate information and difficult to understand by the iTaukei. A *masi* design and motifs, can simply and logically explain the importation of non-Indigenous

¹ The word *tapa* is Polynesian in origin; *masi* is the equivalent Indigenous Fijian word.

values and ideas that need screening and filtering for the purpose of melding for sustainable living. It is intended to encourage agency to “take action knowingly and intentionally” (Sewell & St. George, 2008, p. 205-6).

Indigenous Fijians have long had the options of preserving tradition, a choice that has been encouraged by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs since colonial days. In all facets of life, however, Western ideas and values have either been adopted or hybridized with traditional culture, a practice that has been part of Indigenous history since first contact with outsiders – even before the arrival of the first Europeans (Hau’ofa, 1993). The *masi* framework can help learners ascertain whether certain values, concepts, ideas and practices are Indigenous and relevant to the sustainability of learner’s everyday lifestyle. Such knowledge gives the learner ownership and empowerment to retain what is important or adapt to modern demands.

Masi is a traditional tapestry that is “constantly reworked” in response to social changes (Colchester, 2001). For both teachers and learners, the framework condenses and simplifies the understanding of epistemology and pedagogy. The visual representation of concepts can help individuals become potential social agents. In an oral and non-reading culture, like the iTaukei, motifs of the *masi* design offer an educational tool to help learners understand the complexity of cultural changes. It is also an art work deeply embedded in reflection.

As an iTaukei, and a member of the *tokatoka* (clan) Yautibi/Valebiliti in Natewa village, the tapa designs owned by my *tokatoka* have personal meaning for me. This set of motifs is part of my traditional identity and I have been concerned about the danger of it being lost under the impact of the vagaries of modern life. The best way to ensure preservation is to be creative in its applications. I approached the elderly women of my *tokatoka* – who have the authority to decide how, where and when the designs are used – and explained my request. I took this step to ensure the design and motifs are not lost or abused. Making it available in the public domain should authenticate its *tokatoka* identity and its ownership. As Agrawal (1995) has argued, “no knowledge can maintain its vitality and vigour” unless (in situ) the owners of knowledge have authorised others to decide how to preserve and use the knowledge and who should use it (p. 429-32).

Before discussing the epistemological and pedagogical aspects of the *masi* framework, the paper will place *masi* under the “lens” of an anthropological theory of art which considers “the production and articulation of an art object as a function of its relational context” (Gell, 1998, p. 11).

COLONIAL CONTEXT

The iTaukei view of tradition since colonial days has been to assert the virtue, even the supremacy, of their culture and the importance of its preservation (France, 1968; Macnaught, 1974; West, 1967). This mantra has long been a subject emphasised by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (formerly Fijian Affairs) in many of its official visits and utterances in rural villages and in the media (Moceituba, 2015; Rabaleilekutu, 2015; Sauvakacolo, 2015; Silaitoga, 2015). However, much of the content that was and is taught in schools is oriented to the British Empire with little relevance to the local context (Ravuvu, 1988). While outside the classroom culture preservation is encouraged, inside the classroom the superiority of European knowledge and values is emphasised. IK is

always historically viewed by the colonialists as inferior and backward; this view has “rubbed off” on iTaukei themselves, wittingly or unwittingly. To redress this mindset should be a major educational challenge.

Since 2009, the government has introduced measures to counter the erosion of iTaukei culture, such as the mandatory teaching of Indigenous language in schools. The teaching of Hindi is also mandatory, with the aim of countering the iTaukei nationalistic rhetoric of cultural supremacy that had been strongly asserted since the first military coup in 1987. The iTaukei dominated government today aims to treat the major ethnic groups equally, while reigning in the persistent supremacist views of many iTaukei.

The hegemonic position of the iTaukei in terms of demography, land ownership and political power since independence, contrasts starkly with the situations of Indigenous peoples of the First World. The Indigenous Fijians do not share the history of violence, dislocation and dispossession that the Indigenous people of the First World experienced, the impact of which they are still facing today. Indigenous peoples of the First World have been deprived of most of their land, and lost much of their culture and language through often oppressive contacts with the white settlers. They became deprived minorities in their own land. By contrast the iTaukei of Fiji rarely had any cause to feel aggrieved about their privileged position and are now nearly 60 percent of the population.

However, many iTaukei believe that their privileged position is now in question. Under the 2013 constitution and the various decrees imposed by the coup-based regime during 2006-2014 to quell resistance—mainly from Indigenous Fijians—the political situation is at present calm and stable. Ironically, however, the current predominantly iTaukei government is viewed by many iTaukei as being biased towards non-Indigenous people. Mandatory teaching of vernacular language has not dampened the iTaukei perception of such bias. Yet, aside from rhetoric about the importance of “preservation”, Indigenous Fijians themselves have not made much effort to preserve IK.

Fiji in transition

The impact of globalisation in the Pacific Islands has often been rapid and powerful, creating a dilemma for Indigenous youths to deal with conflicting values of tradition and modernity. The study by Macpherson and La’avasa (2009) discussed the changing consumer behaviour and attitudes of the Samoans and argued that social transformations have been strongly influenced by three ideologies: Christianity, capitalism and colonialism (p. 101; see also Besnier (2011) on Tonga). Similar studies in Fiji have highlighted profound changes (Lal & Vakatora, 1997; Nayacakalou, 1975; Overton, 1989; Ravuvu, 1988). The transformation in Fiji, as in Samoa, has altered traditional chiefly authority in fundamental ways, although aspects of traditional hierarchy in both countries remain strong.²

An important factor inadequately recognised by writers on social change in Fiji is the influence of Christianity, mainly on the Indigenous Fijians, who are 90 percent of Fiji’s Christians (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Urbanisation and the growth of new

² The current government has abolished the Great Council of Chiefs which had acquired considerable political influence. The government hopes to contain whatever (weakened) power the traditional chieftainship has at the local level.

religious groups, mainly Pentecostal charismatic churches, have contributed to rapid changes in the rural villages (Ernst, 2006; 1994; Newland, 2006; Ryle, 2001; Varani-Norton, 2005). The teachings and practices of the new churches, according to Ernst (1994), are accelerating the deterioration of traditional lifestyles and social cohesion which have long been supported by extended kinship obligations and wider reciprocal relationships (p. 274-5). The old web of social relations is often weakened by religious differences as many of the new churches detach themselves from village functions and commitments. A recent editorial comment in the iTaukei vernacular newspaper, *Nai Lalakai*, attested to the changes and new divisions in the lives of the villagers resulting from the different ethics of various churches (Ravula, 2015).

Ernst (2006) claims that, while some churches see their role as a prophetic voice in society, others, especially newer churches, promote “a form of social ethics that challenges the individual by emphasising industrious living and divine blessing in the form of economic advancement: the Gospel of Prosperity” (p. 733). This new ethic is evident in the improved dwellings in remote villages where new roads have been built to encourage development. According to Peterson and Taylor (2003), house ownership is a good indicator of the modernisation of the domestic moral economy of the Aboriginal Australians, often with a weakening effect on the sharing that has been intrinsic to their social life and to the working of their kinship system (p. 108). This seems also to be now the case in Fiji.

MASI AS AN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

Concepts, such as the holistic world view; the respectful interconnectedness of animate and inanimate objects; life viewed in perpetual movement from past to present and future; and life and death as aspects of the same thing, are all basic premises of IK that are central to the discussion in this paper. However, the main emphasis will be on Indigenous Technological Knowledge (ITK), which is knowledge reconciliation, rather than IK in general.

Mwdime’s (1999) definition of knowledge includes characteristics such as tools and techniques for assessment, acquisition, transformation and utilization of resources. What most distinguishes IK from Western knowledge is its deep rootedness in its local environment and history, and the holistic nature of its epistemology. Misra (2007) highlights this contrast, arguing that the epistemologies of Western scientific knowledge and IK are very different in terms of foundations, methodologies and operational contexts. Sillitoe (2002) describes the differences as IK lacking in grand repositories and having no coherent theoretical model, though the knowledge is shared locally.

The contrasts between the universality of Western values and culturally local IK create contradictions that need managing, perhaps by partly integrating or synthesising the two. While Thaman (2013, p. 111) raised the importance of an appropriate solution at the interface through research on Indigenous and global knowledge, Nabobo (2013) argues for aspects of Indigenous culture that should be incorporated to inform the work of educators. Neither author has considered possible ways of accommodating and integrating knowledge at the interface. Some melding is crucial at the interface to prepare students who must learn to live in both their traditional culture and to equip themselves with skills needed for successful lives in the modern economy.

The interface between profoundly different knowledges in a complex and fluid society like contemporary Fiji is highly vexing in the experience of many iTaukei. Human rights values, for example, create angst or empowerment amongst the young and the old. Although they clash with traditional communal values, the ideals of individualism are welcomed by many youths. A detached anthropological perspective can, perhaps, help resolve such confusion (Brouwer, 2007; Sillitoe, 2002). However, in a situation where fusion has already occurred, an ethnosystem approach based on scientific criteria can help scholars explain the concepts and behaviour of indigenous communities, especially those that result from the historical processes of synthesis (Slikkerveer, 1999, cited in Posey, 2002, p. 28). Combining concepts from the universal and culturally specific knowledges both validates IK and is essential to knowledge building (Hertzfeld, 1989, p. 18). Melding, for example, has always occurred in iTaukei society in pre-contact days when other Pacific Islanders settled and intermarried with locals, yet the concept of multiculturalism is now viewed as a “foreign flower” when Indigenous Fijians feel threatened by the presence of non-Indigenous people.

THE ESSENCE OF MASI IN OCEANIC CULTURE

Thomas (1995) observes that while *masi* has cultural affinities across the South Pacific region in its preparation and as an everyday expressive activity, its significance throughout Oceania was not so much in its general aesthetic quality, but in the “meanings of motifs that arise from the contexts of circulation and use” (p. 132). Gell (1998) agrees, arguing that studying art for aesthetic reasons is an “interior mental act only” and ignores that art objects are produced, circulated and sustained by a social process such as exchange, politics, religion and kinship. Gell questions the judging of non-Western ‘art’ according to a Western institutional definition which evaluates art objects simply aesthetically, without taking into account their production and circulation in a particular social milieu. He highlights how art objects have meanings which can be part of language as graphic signs, and emphasises aspects of Indigenous art such as *agency, intention, causation, result* and *transformation*. These are all features of *masi*. Gell (1998) sees art as active, sometimes “with the intention to change the world.” Indigenous art is, therefore, best understood from an anthropological perspective because of the “practical mediatory role art objects play in the social process.”

Masi design has undergone many changes since the arrival of Europeans, and museum pieces not only reflect localised tradition but also ideas borrowed from garments worn by Europeans and especially patterns promoted by missionaries (Thomas, 1995). In Tonga, for example, motifs incorporated bicycles, ships, and clocks. Common motifs, such as crowns and lions, still remain as emblems of both Tongan and the British royal families. As Colchester (2001) explains: “barkcloths do not belong to a fixed historical index or a specific era, but are continuously reworked in the present, which marks organic processes of reproduction, death and growth” (p. 194).

THE YAUBULITI FRAMEWORK

The manufacture of *masi* is especially important in the village of Natewa, the chiefly village of the Vanua of Sovatabua. Knowledge production by *masi* making is controlled by women, called *marama ni draudrau*, who manage the intellectual property of the design and patterning (Colchester, 2001). The artistic work of designing, patterning and

stencilling of motifs is kept secret and, once stencils (cut from banana leaves) have been used, they are quickly destroyed to prevent anyone copying the patterns.

The *masi* framework (Figure 1) I will now discuss is derived from *masi* patterning and motifs of the *tokatoka* (sub-clans) of Yautibi and Valebuliti in Natewa village. The overall design is called *bolabola* and a motif is called *draudrau*. The framework is called *Yaubuliti*³ because the design, including a set of (four) motifs, are properties of the sub-clans, passed down through generations.



Figure 1: The Yaubuliti framework masi

I consulted two women experts, assisted by two young women helpers.⁴ My request for a piece of circular *masi* for an educational purpose was received with ambivalence as they had never made such a *masi*, the traditional shape being always rectangular. Changing the shape and retaining the cross at the centre without infills were the only two changes I requested. Every other pattern and motif on the *masi* is traditional. The change to a circle is intended to reflect the holistic worldview of the iTaukei people (Tuwere, 2002; Ravuvu, 1988). Obtaining the women's authorisation and then informing the sub-clans signified the sub-clan's approval.⁵

³ I have combined, with the women's permission, the names *yau* and *buliti* to form the name of the framework. The idea of using *masi* as a framework in teaching and learning was conceived during my stint teaching Indigenous Education at the University of Sydney.

⁴ These two young women were the only people who were taught the secret Yaubuliti pattern.

⁵ Their consent is recorded in the minutes of a meeting which this author attended.

Major divisions of the *Yaubuliti* framework

The framework has two major divisions, distinguished by two bands of ochre colour called *qele* (Figure 2) or ‘soil’ (band 6 separates the two divisions; band 2 highlights the significance of the outer edge concentric circle and its role to the rest of the framework) with motifs: *drau ni vutu* (leaf of vutu tree) (Figure 3) and *se ni vutu* (flower of vutu tree) (Figure 4).⁶ The first division represents non-Indigenous knowledge, mainly Western knowledge and the second division stands for Indigenous people and knowledge.

Figure 2 : *qele*



Figure 3: *drau ni vutu*

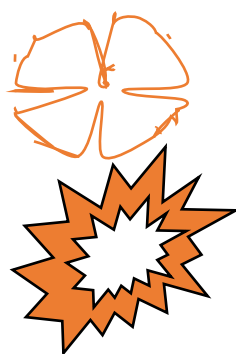


Figure 4 : *se ni vutu*

The first major division of the framework (see Figure 5) is called *uluna* or head. It starts from concentric circle 1 with *kalokalo*, star motif, and extends to the fifth concentric circle. The second division, called *lewena* (literally translated ‘flesh’) begins from the second *qele* on band 6 and extends to the core of the framework, the square with a cross and eyelet.

The centre of the framework includes the two motifs, *drau ni niu* (coconut leaves) and *covu*, (the square with a cross and an eye as the core). The core represents the learner. The word *covu* refers to an octopus’s hiding hole. One of the women explained: as one looks into the *covu*, the “eye” of the octopus is the first thing one should notice”, represented by the white spot at the very centre of the framework. The entire framework is built around this core, the learner within their cultural environment of conflicting knowledge systems.

⁶ *Vutu* is the *Barringtonia asiatic* tree which grows mainly along the coastline.

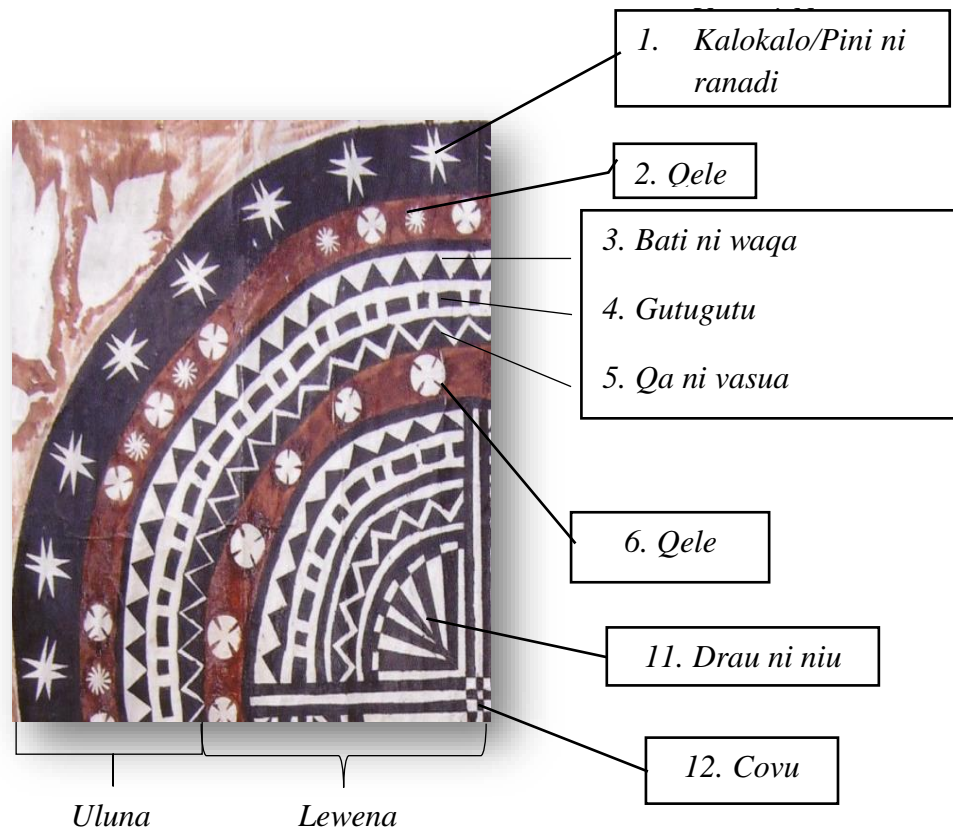


Figure 5: Framework section

What distinguishes the *uluna* from *lewena* is the first band with infills of *kalokalo* (star), sometimes referred to as *pini ni ranadi* (pin of the great lady) (Colchester, 2001). The other distinct motif in the head division is the *se ni vutu*, flower of the *vutu* tree (see second band).

Draudrau ni Yaubuliti (Yaubuliti motifs)

The two major divisions, *uluna* and *lewena* share a common set of three different motifs (see framework section), called *bati ni waqa*, prow of the boat, *gutugutu*, baggage, and *qa ni vasua*, clam shell. The set of *bati ni waqa*, *gutugutu* and *qa ni vasua*, bounded by the *drau ni niu* (coconut leaves in the tenth concentric circle), are Yaubuliti sub-clans motifs.

The Lewena – Indigenous Vanua

The set of three motifs in the *Uluna* (Head) division are duplicated in the *lewena* division (bands 7 to 10). This signifies the learner must go through the same process of scrutinising the “baggage” of new knowledge in order to filter. This process is necessary in the Indigenous *vanua* because the wider society is multiethnic and multicultural. Conflicts and tensions at knowledge interfaces within it are unavoidable. As new ideas are “imported” into the indigenous *vanua*, they are scrutinised and “filtered”, altered if need be or rejected. Knowledges within are also examined, critiqued, analysed and filtered to produce a product that works for them. The “infills closest to the visible edge of [a] cloth were especially important” (Colchester, 2001, p. 91). The two divisions inform each other because one cannot exist without the other. As both the *uluna* and *lewena* affect each other, both are especially amenable to change, allowing adaptation or retention, or creation of new knowledge for the strength and sustainability of the learner’s life skills.

The *Yaubuliti* framework core

The core consists of the *drau ni niu*, coconut leaves and *covu*, the learner or student. The *drau ni niu* is the “closure”, of the preceding process. Included with the coconut leaves is the image *gutugutu*, explained below. The coconut leaves motif represents the end product of the process of examining, reviewing, selecting, assimilating, elements of non-Indigenous and IK. There is a saying in iTaukei language, *Vinaka vakaniu*, as good as a coconut (tree). The coconut cannot be underestimated in the lives of the Pacific people. It is considered in the Pacific islands as the “tree of life”. The coconut tree is the source of nutrition, cash income, materials for construction, weaving and fuel. On this *masi* framework it represents the truth and strength of the process just described.

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE *YAUBULITI* FRAMEWORK

The first two concentric circles of the *uluna*, the star (*kalokalo*) and the *qele*, with the leaf and flower, represent non-Indigenous knowledges, mainly Western knowledge. The *qele*, as already explained, means soil or land, marked by the coastline tree *barringtonia asiatica* or *vutu*. *Qele* is physical material that one can hold but it can also be referred to as *vanua*, an important and complex concept for this paper. But as a concept, *vanua* has social, cultural, ritual and spiritual significance to the Indigenous Fijians as, explained by iTaukei anthropologist Ravuvu (1988):

The term *vanua* has physical, social and cultural dimensions, all interrelated. It means not only the land areas with which people are identified, but also the social and cultural systems—the people, their traditions, customs, beliefs and values together with other institutions established to achieve harmony, solidarity and prosperity (1988,p. 6).

Two *qele* circles represent different *vanua*(s). They are similar only in the presence of the *vutu* leaf. The *kalokalo* or *pini ni ranadi* in the first band, according to my informants, represents the brooch of the Queen of England. It can also represent the Queen’s crown jewels (Colchester, 2001, p. 106). The presence of the band of stars (or the Queen’s brooch), and especially the presence of the *vutu* flower on the second (*qele*) circle indicate the allure of the non-Indigenous knowledge; indiscriminately adopting Western ideas and materialism at the expense of traditional values only encourages the discarding of what is socially valuable in tradition.

Traditionally, the motif in the first band has always been the turtle, symbolic of the chiefs, who also embody spiritual gods (Hocart, 1952). Through the colonising and missionizing process, the symbol was changed from turtle to star. It can be inferred that the star also stands for the “Star of David”, the symbol of the introduced religion, Christianity. It can also be deduced that the new religion and its culture, represented by the Queen’s *pini* and chiefly status, are folded into one, one subsuming the other. The prominence of one of them will depend on the context.

Non-Indigenous knowledge, represented by the first two concentric circles, is “transported” or transmitted by the motif *bati ni waqa*, prow of the boat, to the second *qele*, which represents the indigenous *vanua*. The new knowledge goes through a process of learners’ scrutiny that recognises that its “baggage”, *gutugutu*, necessitates “filtering,” just as the *vasua* (clam shell) filters to select what food is best and reject what is harmful.

Processes of transmitting, scrutinising, filtering, and selecting to produce a valuable knowledge end product should be recognised by educationists as important for meeting the learner's needs. For example, to apply the process above to the ideology of human rights, important questions that guide research or activities based on what, why and how, should inform learners to take actions individually or as a group to reconcile, whether its knowledge building, behavioural or psychological changes.

The meaning of the *vanua*

Knowledge building can start from the three aspects of *vanua*: social, cultural and physical. In the iTaukei language, the people of the land are referred to as *lewe ni vanua*, literally “flesh of the land.” Their identity is deeply intertwined with the *vanua*, and exploitation or protection of the land must only be for the benefit of the *vanua*, its people and customs (Ravuvu, 1988, p. 7). As the *vanua* is communally owned, the benefits are for the Indigenous community. Knowledge building on the basis of the *vanua* concept today must first challenge its traditional definition, to help the learners “create space” to build authentic knowledge that accommodates non-Indigenous and Indigenous members of the wider community. What is crucial is the ability of the learners to *connect discourses within and between communities to open new possibilities for barrier-crossing and mutual support* (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2003). \

The cultural aspect of the *vanua* includes the belief and value system, the “share and care” ideals that might be harnessed to maintain harmony and solidarity in a culturally diverse community (*Fiji Times Online*, September, 29, 2016).⁷ These aspects shape how people think and behave. To create new knowledge, iTaukei people need to think “outside the box” of the traditional *vanua* to be more inclusive and to make a concerted effort to increase the cultural capital of the wider society.⁸

The third, physical, dimension of the *vanua*, the land itself, is linked to the meaning of *lewe ni vanua* as conduits for how land is exploited or protected for the benefit of its people and customs and for the preservation of the environment. To the iTaukei, land is “something of divine ordination, something that was created to control him through life” (Scarr, 1980, p. 76, quoting Ratu Sukuna) and to sustain environment and life.

The bedrock of the iTaukei epistemology

The concept *lewena* as a division in the framework and its strong link to *lewe ni vanua* (flesh of the land), is a possible conceptual reconciliation of different knowledges. As a multicultural and multiethnic society, Fiji poses the question of how the Indigenous Fijians might be able to perceive their non-indigenous neighbours as *lewe ni vanua*, by questioning and modifying the meaning of the concept *vanua*. Because the concepts *lewe ni vanua* and *vanua* are deeply intertwined, their definitions need to be problematized to

⁷ Feature Article, Karan, Sashi, “Peace which is true” is an Indo-Fijian experience of what it means to belong to a *vanua*.

⁸ Cultural capital are assets, both tangible and intangible, that give people social mobility and power. They are the value that the society places on non-financial assets that could be shared between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples such as the national name “Fijian” or the right to wear iTaukei women’s customary attire (*chamba*) or *sulu* for men.

challenge learners to examine the concept and whether it needs to be redefined and the ramifications it may create. Tuwera's (2001) understanding is a good starting point:

One does not own the land; the land owns him. Man and land are one. He derives his name and therefore his constitution as a human being from the *vanua*, which means both turf and people. (2001, p. 49).

This definition of the traditional concept *vanua* probably articulates the views of many iTaukei. But there are equally many who see the value of land in modern terms as open to individual ownership and have distanced themselves to a certain degree from the literal and symbolic traditional meanings of *vanua*. In challenging the traditional meaning, learners need to be open to other interpretations or views. The central focus is the accommodation of non-Indigenous people in the merging of the new-and-old conceptual understanding, to advance the frontiers of knowledge as learners see fit (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2003).

The *Yaubuliti* framework aims to discern and interrogate the foundations of different knowledges with the intention of either retaining traditions that sustain the iTaukei identity, or reconciling or transforming knowledge concepts. The approach should involve "complicated conversations" that answer questions such as the what, why and how of education for a desired future society. This requires planning to ensure that the interface is inclusive of the diverse nature of the society.

THE PEDAGOGY OF THE YAUBULITI FRAMEWORK

The *draudrau* or motifs are infills of the framework that help to explain the social meaning of *masi* in the iTaukei culture. *Draudrau*, in the iTaukei language, is equivalent to *vakadewa*, which has three different translations, depending on context of use (Capell, 1941, quoted in Colchester, 2001, p. 58). *Vakadewa* means *the spread of information like a disease* by the agency of art or by a person. *Vakadewa* can also mean to translate, but also to filter. These three active "transmissions of information" are deeply intertwined in the pedagogy of the *Yaubuliti* framework. Active transmission of information involves both teachers and learners as they collaborate, exchange and accommodate their differences at the interface.

Within the two divisions of the *masi* are two features that have important functions in the *masi* tapestry and in pedagogy: *viroci* and *peo'o*.

Viroci

Viroci refers to the duplication of the three motifs, *bati ni waqa*, *gutugutu* and *qa ni vasua*, as infills in both the *uluna* and *lewena*. In the Natewan dialect, *viroci* means to retrace or revisit. In pedagogical terms, the concept can mean to review, re-examine, re-analyse, re-assess, re-evaluate or just simply reduplicate. The motifs represent the need for the learners to evaluate whether whatever they created is to their satisfaction. Thus in the making of *masi*, *viroci* is a phase where women pause to critique their handiwork, consult each other, assess and amend, learn from flaws and make a consensual decision on the next step. Throughout the making of the *masi*, there is collaboration and mutual correcting and reminding among the participants. Much reflection is involved. In her analysis concerning elaborated *masi* with re-duplicated bands of motifs, Colchester named the imagery of production as the "axis of reflection." Reflection at this stage is called

“epistemological reflexivity, which encourages [learners] to reflect upon [their] assumptions about the world at the knowledge interface, or in the course of researching” (Willig, 2001, quoted in King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 127). Self-reflection is essential in both teachers’ and learners’ everyday practice.

Peo’o

Peo’o, are thin black or white circular lines that separate the concentric circles as far as the *drau ni niu* motif (see bands of black and white around the coconut leaf, Figure 1). They distinguish each band of motifs as far as the eleventh circle, but also “glue” them together to create a holistic picture. *Peo’o*, like the process of *viroci*, is embedded in reflexivity by the teacher and the learner. There is reflexivity in regard to the knowledge content, concepts and contexts. Each step of the teaching and learning process is reviewed as is the method of reviewing itself, to ensure there is flow and harmony of the different parts. One of the women explained to me:

Raica me rau lako vata tiko na draudrau kei na uluna [Ensure that what you have just printed (*draudrau*) synchronises with the *uluna* (the first band)].

The first concentric circle (with star infill) constitutes the encompassing field against which other components of the design are set (Colchester, 2001, p. 106). Colchester refers to the *peo’o* lines separating sequences of motifs as “intervals of light and efflorescence” (p. 112). Each step of the process involves critical reflection as learners collaborate to come up with the best outcome. The end product is represented by the *drau ni niu* or coconut leaves. Collaboration between learners and teachers should ensure that the end-product of their exchange should be culturally sensitive and context-relevant (Chilisa, 2012).

The student/learner: *Covu*

Four thin white lines hemmed in with black emerge from the *covu*. These strips stand for self reflection or personal reflexivity which “involves giving consideration to the ways in which our [personal] beliefs, interests and experiences might have impacted (or not) upon learning activity” (Willig, 2001, quoted in King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 128). The last band of *gutugutu* (baggage), circle nine, represents the learner’s critical self-observation on her contribution and also her evaluation of her belief and interest in the issue discussed. The learner’s reflexivity as a constructor of knowledge is not only an inward “examination” but also an outward approach of social interaction and co-construction with others (King & Horrocks, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The mantra of government since colonial times emphasising cultural preservation has discouraged critical self-conscious awareness amongst the iTaukei. There has long been a large gap between what is asserted to be ideal and people’s lived reality. The social meaning of *masi* motifs and design can be useful as an educational tool for conceptual understanding and knowledge building in relation to identity and diversity. This paper has proposed an epistemological and pedagogical approach using a holistic *masi* framework to help learners reconcile “the best-of-the-old with the best-of-the-new” supporting (McKay, 2013, p. 6). The framework, with its divisions representing the flow

of information from a non-Indigenous to an Indigenous *vanua*, depicts a process of scrutinising the “baggage” of new knowledge to filter out ‘ill-fitted’ aspects that are discordant with the old, or to reconcile the old and the new. The process involves epistemological reflexivity to ensure the outcome is sustainable. This process also requires the learner to self-examine by questioning her motives, beliefs, experiences, and interest.

An interrogation of any knowledge context, content, and concepts, is critical to answer the what, why, and how, to ensure that the curriculum is the outcome of a process that shows concerns for the future of the society. This requires planning and formulating objectives that accommodate the diverse nature of learners as teachers, and learners to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes. Central to this is the need for teachers and learners to acquire the exercise of reflexivity as a lifelong skill.

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