Culture at Risk | Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo

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CULTURAL SYMBOLS AT RISK

Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo

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Abstract:

This short paper examines the history of Tapa (bark cloth) in order to show that the fifteen indigenous kesakesa designs (symbols) identified as trademark worthy by Air Pacific/Fiji Airways are a significant part of the cultural heritage of the iTaukei peoples of Fiji. It will also show that Tapa and the designs/motifs found within tapa are often shared cultural designs across the Pacific. The position taken is that all forms of cultural heritage expressions must remain the intellectual property of their indigenous owners from whom this knowledge, skills and art forms originate. The premise is that NO COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE can or should claim the right to this knowledge. Nor should they be allowed to trademark, copyright or patent any such derivative of indigenous knowledge. To allow any form of external ownership of indigenous knowledge is the equivalent of cultural genocide and the indigenous peoples, as well as the world at large, will be the poorer for it. The paper concludes with a brief reflection on existing regional policies that clearly articulate the commitment to protection of cultural rights, traditional knowledge systems and all related forms of cultural expression.

Koya, C.F (2014). Cultural Symbols at Risk | Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo. A shortened technical version of this paper formed the scholarly response to the Fiji Airways registration to trademark 15 kesakesa designs in 2013. This e-version is provided on the understanding that when used for academic or any other purposes, that the content will be appropriately cited.
The art of traditional bark cloth making and its ritual cultural use is common across many cultures of the Pacific. The bark cloth commonly known as Tapa was so named by early explorers who derived the term from Tahiti, Samoa and Tonga where the word was used to refer to the white unpainted borders of the finished product. The name Tapa has since become common place with the majority of people using the word to when referring to the finished/painted cloth. Within the Pacific however, the finished product is known by various indigenous terms, specific to each cultural community. Names for Tapa include Masi (Fiji); Ngatu (Tonga); Siapo (Samoa); Hiapo (Niue); and Kapa (Hawaii) to name a few.

Generally the textile or bark cloth is made from especially cultivated Paper Mulberry (Broussonetia Papyrifera: Moraceae) believed to have been brought with early settlers from Asia. Simon Koojiman, the most referenced researcher on Tapa writes: “This plant is not indigenous to the Pacific; it was brought from eastern Asia where it grows almost everywhere in China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea” (Koojiman 1972, p1). His work documents the production and use of bark cloth in seventeen Pacific island countries.

The inks or dyes used in the printing of bark cloth were derived from local plant bark, roots and seeds which through various processes made into long-lasting pigments that when applied to the cloth remained vibrant for many years. Designs were imprinted onto the bark cloth using three main methods: use of design tablets (Tonga – Kupesi; Samoa – Upeti; Fiji – kupeti/kuveti); leaf stencils (Fiji – draudaru); and free hand painting. Other forms of coloration included smoking unpainted barkcloth (Fiji – masi kuoni or Masi kuvui), and free hand painting of designs.

There is much ritual involved from the harvesting, through beating of bark to make textiles, preparation of dyes, printing of bark-cloth and at completion of the finished product. Once completed the bark-cloth is generally either used for an immediate cultural event or stored for future use. The use of bark cloth in pre-contact times fell into three functional categories. These include (a) religious ritual use; (b) daily household use; and (c) socio-cultural ceremonial use.

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1 Koojiman 1972 refers to Fijian designs as Kupeti while Spicer & Me 2004 refer to Kuveti. Both names allude to close relations with Samoa and Tonga where the terms used are Upeti and Kupesi respectively.

2 Literally smoked or steamed bark cloth, Koojiman 1972, p382.
Religion:

In terms of religious ritual use, it is well documented that bark cloth was the primary fabric of the Pacific. It was used in religious rituals in Fiji to communicate with the gods and believed to be the medium through which the gods entered the temple (Bure Kalou) and spoke through a conduit (the priest – bete).

In the bure kalou, the Fijian temple within which contact could be made with the gods, the priest served as medium between the divinity and the believers. The divinity descended into him, took control of his body, and spoke through his mouth. To arrange for the presence of the god, one end of a long strip of tapa was attached to the ridge of the steep roof, where the god was assumed to enter the bure. The strip of tapa hung down along an angle of the roof, and its lower end reached to the ground in front of one of the corner posts, where the priests customarily stood. In this way the masi formed the pathway along which the divinity descended into the body of the priest (Williams & Calvert 1858, p175).3

In some parts of the Pacific such as Rapanui (Easter Island) figurines of the gods were fashioned from bark cloth and painted in their likeness4. Similarly in some parts of Vanuatu, the same practice occurred as well as ritual bark cloth masks5. Kaeppler, Kauffman & Newton write: “materials that elevated chiefs over commoners or linked chiefs with the gods or ancestors were made of cloth. They were regarded as valuables and were usually the work of women” (1997, p86).

Daily household use:

When the early lapita settlers arrived in the Pacific, they found a harsh environment vulnerable to the elements and susceptible to natural disasters. In the absence of other textiles, the only fabrics they were able to produce for all their basic needs and cultural uses had to be fashioned out of available resources. The various stages of bark-cloth production led to its utility. Soft bark cloth were used for medicinal purposes and in the feeding of infants and the elderly, single layered pieces were used as turbans and shrouds against the wind, heat and cold, and strips were used as bandages and lint. Bark cloth was used as clothing, turbans, bedding, house dividers (curtains) and soft mattresses for babies and the elderly. Two sacred or tapu/tabu uses of bark cloth include sanitary pads and in circumcision. Old tattered bark cloth was used as wicks in traditional lamps and as toilet paper6. Contact with the outside world led to the introduction of a variety of textiles and fabrics and soon these domestic uses were phased out as was their religious use with the introduction of Christianity.

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3 See Kooijman 1972, p414.
4 See for example Kaeppler, Kauffman & Newton 1997, pp121-122.
5 Ibid. pp 211 – 213
6 For a more detailed analysis on the use utilitarian aspects of tapa cloth in Samoa and Tonga, see Koya, 2013.
Socio-cultural ceremonial use:

The socio-cultural ceremonial use of bark cloth continues today although its practice has declined in some communities. In Samoa for example, bark cloth exchange has been replaced with the presentation of money and fabrics. In Tonga and Fiji, bark cloth is still a significant part of the cultural economy used to reinforce relationships through their exchange.

Ceremonially, bark cloth was/is used in births, wedding and funeral ceremonies. It was/is used as wedding ceremonial dress and in the gift exchanges between families of the bride and groom. In funerals it was used as an inner wrapping for the deceased as well as the outer wrapping. In many parts of the Pacific, the use of coffins is declining with many returning to the use of bark cloth wrappings. In most significant ceremonies, the bark cloth was/is also used decoratively hanging on walls and as flooring. In terms of cultural exchange, bark cloth exchanges represents the reinforcement of familial and relational ties within and between clans and communities. In general, the quantity and quality of the bark cloth presented at a cultural event symbolically represents the value or closeness of a relationship between the giver and the receiver.

SACRED SYMBOLS | The significance of Cultural Motifs

Anthropological studies provide evidence that shows the motifs or designs found in tapa across the Pacific are derived from Lapita pottery and are markedly similar to those designs also found in traditional tattoo designs7. Gell (1979) found that the systematic design concept found in Lapita pottery, tapa and tattooing were the same. This grid system of designing was

...based on two-dimensional pattern making applied to three surfaces; pottery, bark-cloth and skin. All these were impressed with designs organized according to the ‘zoning’ or ‘compartment-making’ principle. Subsequently, pottery-making fell into disuse in Polynesia (Irwin, 1981) but the design tradition continued in the media of bark-cloth decoration and tattooing (in Gell 1996, pp95-6).

These designs are essentially geometric shapes comprised of lines, curves and dots in a repeated sequence.

Evidence found in various museum collections shows a marked similarity in designs used in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. This is attributed in part to the extent of cultural exchange between these three groups of islands. In some instances the very same design is found across tapa in these three cultural communities. Similar designs are also found in Wallis and Futuna tapa cloth which is not unexpected due to the historical background of that community and their relational ties to Samoa and Tonga.

Recalling that Pacific cultures are oral cultures with no written language, it is not surprising therefore that the tapa cloth was/is seen as a form of textual language where designs told a story or held a message of significance. Certain designs were created as historical markers of a specific time and for specific recipients while others bore general culturally significant reminders of culturally continuity and relationships.

In Samoa, Siapo designs reflect the deep connection between man and nature with many direct references to ancient gods, myths and legends and family totems. In Tonga, a number of Kupesi (tapa designs) are traced to specific events concerning significant members of the Royal family (particularly of Kings), while others are general designs are derived from nature to represent culturally symbolic metaphors and messages. In the Lau islands of Fiji, designs, names and processes are directly correlational to Tonga given their historical connection. In other parts of Fiji, it is also said that the relationship between man and nature is evidenced in kesakesa designs (tapa/Masi designs).

In all three cultural communities, it is generally agreed that certain designs and types of tapa cloth (Siapo/Ngtatu/Masi) are exclusively reserved for use by nobles/chiefs while others are accessible for use by the general community. For this reason, while much information has been documented regarding tapa cloth as a significant cultural heritage art form, a lot still remains closed knowledge, the reserved privileged and sacred knowledge of the women custodians within the community, to whom this knowledge belongs. This knowledge is only meant to be passed on through female blood lines within specific clans and should not be communicated to any outsider to ensure its protection and cultural continuity of that heritage art.

**Closed Knowledge Systems**

Within Pacific indigenous epistemologies, there is a demarcation of levels or layers of knowledge. It is important to note that indigenous/cultural knowledge is categorized as ‘closed’ or ‘sacred’ knowledge; ‘open’ or common’ knowledge; and, ‘negotiated’ knowledge (Bakalevu, 2002; Nabobo, 2002, Teaero, 2002). Closed/sacred knowledge is that knowledge that is only accessible to specific groups of people such as on the basis of clans or gender for example. Cultural arts and skills are included in this category such as boat building, sinnet lashing, navigation, herbal medicines, tapa making and others. Contrastingly, open/common knowledge is that knowledge that is widely accessible and necessary for routine events. This includes for example language, protocol, seating arrangements in the village meeting space and so on.

Negotiated knowledge is less common; but, is a term that has been used to refer to those situations where individuals may request special privileged access to closed knowledge. In these situations, the requestor approaches a closed knowledge holder/community and through the presentation of traditional gifts and ceremony, may be given permission (or rejected) for ‘limited’ access to some aspects of that particular closed knowledge base. This could include for example, a woman who has married into a clan with special ‘closed’ herbal medicine knowledge and has no right of access to this
knowledge. If she wishes to access this knowledge and skill, she would need to follow this protocol in order to access that medicinal knowledge and skill.

It is significant to note that tapa making knowledge and skills is a form of closed/sacred knowledge that is held by women. While men may assist in the planting of mulberry and in tending to the garden as well as in harvesting, it is the women who prepare the bark cloth and paint the tapa ready for its cultural use. It is also the women who present these at cultural events while the men (typically) would be part of the formal kava rituals. While tapa knowledge is shared and common among women of the wider cultural community in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa its cosmological and spiritual significance particularly of designs and their reference stories is closed to outsiders.

Tapa producers (women of particular groups) have access to a collection of traditional motifs which may be seen as a cultural database of designs. They may choose to use any of these motifs in its traditional/original format or as the basis for new creations. The ongoing creation of designs and of the combining of two designs to form new shapes and motifs is common practice and as such trade marking any specific design or its derivative would have far reaching consequences across the Pacific.

**Existing protective measures for the safeguarding of cultural rights and all forms of cultural expression**

Even though Fiji has yet to formalize its legislature on the protection of cultural rights and all forms of cultural expression, there are adequate regional policy references to support the case against Fiji Airways trade-marking these individual designs. As a starting point, WIPO (2008) provides a working definition for the legitimization of a trademark. Section 2.343 of its *Intellectual Property Handbook* states:

A trademark, in order to function, must be distinctive. A sign that is not distinctive cannot help the consumer to identify the goods of his choice. The word “apple” or an apple device cannot be registered for apples, but it is highly distinctive for computers. This shows that distinctive character must be evaluated in relation to the goods to which the trademark is applied (pp.71-72).

WIPO further highlights the counter clause on restriction of exclusive right in relation to wiser public interests in Section 2.488.

In the same way as the owner’s right to use his trademark can be restricted by other rights, his right to prevent third parties from using his mark can be restricted by the legitimate interests of others (p.89).
The SPC (2010) *Valuing Culture in Oceania* report clearly highlights the need to examine current corporate behaviour to address the issue of misappropriation and exploitation of traditional knowledge.

Traditional knowledge is an important component of any work on culture and development in the Pacific as it continues to play an important part in underpinning Pacific Islanders’ interaction with one another and the physical world. Unfortunately, traditional knowledge has been appropriated and exploited by global corporations for profit without permission and without compensation. Hutchings (2007:23) labels this bio-piracy: intellectual and cultural piracy in which the cultural and intellectual heritage of communities and the countries are freely taken without recognition or permission, are used for claiming intellectual property rights (IPR) such as patents, trademarks and plant variety rights’ (2010b, p.33).

The fact that 15 Kesakesa designs are recognizable as clear and direct derivatives of exiting traditional motifs raises the issue of ‘distinctive character’. These designs are far too similar to current motifs and designs used in tapa cloth as well as other contemporary art forms. Further to this, the airline cannot and should not be permitted to apply for exclusive rights which would deprive traditional cultural owners of these designs the right to reproduce or use those motifs and their derivatives in any shape or form they see fit. These designs are seen as cultural expressions which are central to traditional knowledge. SPC (2002) clarifies this in the *Regional Framework for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture*.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Traditional knowledge</th>
<th>includes any knowledge that generally:</th>
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<tr>
<td>(a) is or has been created, acquired or inspired for traditional economic, spiritual, ritual, narrative, decorative or recreational purposes; and,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) is or has been transmitted from generation to generation; and,</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) is regarded as pertaining to a particular traditional group, clan or community of people in [Enacting country]; and,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) is collectively originated and held (p4).</td>
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In that document, holders of traditional cultural rights are held exclusively by traditional owners. “The traditional owners of traditional knowledge or expressions of culture are the holders of the traditional cultural rights in the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture” (Ibid). It goes further to explain the context of use of these expressions of traditional knowledge.

The following uses of traditional knowledge or expressions of culture require the prior and informed consent of the traditional owners in accordance with section 23(1) or 25(5):

(a) to reproduce the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture;
(b) to publish the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture;
(c) to perform or display the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture in public;
(d) to broadcast the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture to the public by radio,
television, satellite, cable or any other means of communication;
(e) to translate, adapt, arrange, transform or modify the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture;
(f) to fixate the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture through any process such as making a photograph, film or sound recording;
(g) to make available online or electronically transmit to the public (whether over a path or a combination of paths, or both) traditional knowledge or expressions of culture;
(h) to create derivative works;
(i) to make, use, offer for sale, sell, import or export traditional knowledge or expressions of culture or products derived there from;
(j) to use the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture in any other material form;

If such use is a non-customary use (whether or not of a commercial nature) (p.5)

In this framework, the use of derivative works require informed consent and some form of compensation to the traditional owners.

If a derivative work, traditional knowledge or expressions of culture are to be used for a commercial purpose, the authorised user agreement must:

(a) contain a benefit sharing arrangement providing for equitable monetary or non-monetary compensation to the traditional owners; and
(b) provide for identification of the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture on which the derivative work is based in an appropriate manner in connection with the exploitation of the derivative work by mentioning the traditional owners and/or the geographical place from which it originated; and
(c) provide that the traditional knowledge or expressions of culture in the derived work will not be subject to derogatory treatment (p.6).

Most recently, the Regional Culture Strategy (SPC, 2012), endorsed by regional Cultural Ministers specifies the need to provide for the protection of intellectual property and Pacific traditional knowledge (p. 18). It explains:

Traditional knowledge still plays a major part in structuring people’s lives in the Pacific, and as such is very much a lived experience for many Pacific Islanders. Unfortunately, the legal protection afforded to Pacific peoples in terms of their traditional knowledge is still rather slight (SPC 2010b, p.33).
Tui Atua Tamasese Efi, Head of State of Samoa is eloquent in his analysis of what matters in terms of traditional knowledge. He argues that we need “…to look carefully at what we have before we dismiss it, to search for meaning and substance within ourselves before going abroad, and to watch for the clutters of life that can unnecessarily impede our focus on what really matters” (2005, p.6).

In the public debate that must take place in the islands, it is important that the value and benefit of culture and the deeply spiritual nature of traditional knowledge must be stressed. It would be a huge injustice to indigenous Pacific peoples all over the world, if culture and traditional knowledge is slighted as mere cultural assets to be commodified in the open market. The role and significance of cultural production and reproduction of traditional and contemporary expressions of traditional knowledge must be contextualized within the cultural conception of the cultural economy of relational exchange and socio-spatial relationships.

ANCIENT SYMBOLS | Evidence of the 15-designs pre-dating 2012

The fifteen designs incorporated within the Fiji Airways (Air Pacific) logo as created by the traditional Masi maker for their use are derived from a rich storehouse of designs within the iTaukei heritage arts. For the airlines or the masi maker concerned to ‘claim’ that these are original designs is a fallacy. These designs are direct derivates of already existing designs which exist in an indigenous repository of cultural symbols held, owned and used by individuals and communities across numerous Pacific islands.

The next section presents each design with published evidence that these pre-date the creation of the airlines logo. An analysis of available literature on bark cloth tradition in the Pacific islands, and in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa in particular, indicates that thirteen of the fifteen designs are direct derivatives. The process of design applied by the masi maker concerned is the age-old process used in Tapa making across the Pacific, where one or more designs are inverted or combined. Only two of the designs are considered distinct enough to be considered ‘original’ designs even though the influence of existing motifs is evident.
**Design 1: Kaova**

The first design titled *kaova* in the airlines press release is found in masi photographed in Koojiman (1977); Leonard & Terrell (1980); Neich & Pendergrast (1997) and in Spicer & Me (2004).

It is important to note that Makereta Matemosi⁸ was a primary contributor to Spicer & Me (2004) and in that collection she names this same design *Vakaciveyadra*⁹ to refer to the knotted X design. When combined with the serrated edge design between two *Vaka civeyadra*, it is now seen as a new combination.

In Neich & Pendergrast (1997) the serrated motif is found in a Cakaudrove piece of Masi while the Civeyadra is cited in a documentation of Masi from Moce (Koojiman, 1977).

The design is a combination of two existing designs which falls in line with traditional tapa design practice and therefore cannot be said to be specifically and only used for the airlines logo.

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⁸ The masi maker responsible for the Fiji Airways logo.
⁹ This is called *Civeyadra* in Koojiman 1977.
**Design 2: Boi Yawa**

This particular design appears to be an original creation by the artist and no previous documented use was found.

**Design 3: Droe**

The third design Droe is a derivative of a design documented by Koojiman (1972) from Somosomo in Taveuni. The design element is clear when comparing between the older motif and its newer version in the logo.
Design 4: Kaso

The fourth design named Kaso in the Fiji Airways listing is a common shared motif found in Samoan Siapo, Tongan Ngatu and Fijian Masi.

In Samoa and Tonga these designs are referred to as Manulua (two birds) while in Fiji, according to Koojiman (1977) it is known as Kamiki in Moce\(^\text{10}\). In Tonga, the symbolism of two birds is an omen of good luck and it is said that the manulua features prominently in funeral and wedding tapa cloth. This design also features in various heritage arts including the sennit lashings (lalava), in carvings and nowadays in contemporary tattoos.

This design is often called the “Vane Swastika” in western writing and is said to be found also in Indonesian bark cloth\(^\text{11}\).

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\(^{10}\) Koojiman 1977, (pp 52 – 56).

\(^{11}\) See for example Kramer, 1914; Buck, 1930; Koojiman, 1972; 1977; Neich & Pendergrast 1997.
Design 5 & 6: Kali and Teguvi

Koya, C.F (2014). Cultural Symbols at Risk | Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo. A shortened technical version of this paper formed the scholarly response to the Fiji Airways registration to trademark 15 kesakesa designs in 2013. This e-version is provided on the understanding that when used for academic or any other purposes, that the content will be appropriately cited.
Designs 5 and 6, named Kali and Teguvi in the Airline listing are derivatives from a single design named Vunisea in Moce (Koojiman, 1977).

In Spicer and Me (2004) Makereta provides the name Vakali ni sei.

Kali simply adds a small border design on left and right edge, while Teguvi rearranges the elements of the original Vunisea motif.

Design 7: Qalitoka

The seventh design listed is named Qalitoka. This design appears in a Masi bolabola from Cakaudrove as documented by Neich & Pendergrast (1997).

This design is also found in lapita and in a number of heritage arts in Tonga. In Tonga heritage arts, this design is referred to as Amoamokofe and is linked to traditional bamboo fence designs.
(Right) Lalava (sinet lashings) showing the Amoamokofe design at the Tupou College beams at Toloa, Nuku’alofa12.

**Design 8: Al Voto**

The eighth design listed as Al Voto appears to be an original design created by Makereta as this is not found in any texts on Fijian or other Pacific Masi. The centre star however is a common Siapo design.

The design which looks like a four armed star or four petalled flower in Samoan siapo is linked to a number of birds. Depending on its size and shape, it may be used to refer to the sandpiper or plover, and the tern13.

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12 Photographs of Lapita and sinet beam lashings courtesy of the author © 2012.
13 See Pritchard 1994, p57.
**Design 9: Makare**

The design listed as *Makere* is a common Masi design commonly taken to be a comb or seru. This design is found in Masi from all parts of Fiji.

There are many varieties of this common motif. See Koojiman 1972, p402 – 405.

Koojiman 1977, p91

Leonard & Terrell 1980, p91

Spicer & Me (2004, p113 - 115)

**Design 10: Qalivanua**

The design listed as *Qalivanua* is found in Spicer and Me (2004, p114-5). It is a derivative of a design found in Koojiman (1972, p400).

Inverted color blocks

Drau drau “O” (Spicer & Me 2004, p114-5). Incidentally this design was named by Makereta who also designed the Air Pacific Logo and features in this book.
**Design 11: Rova**

The design listed as *Rova* is a derivative of at least two designs – the *Vacu ni Tadruku* (Koojiman 1977) and the *Manulua*. As shown in the Masi from Bouma, this derivative of the Manulua has been used in the past.

Outer motifs are derived from “Vacu ni Tadruku” See Koojiman 1977, p53)


Woven sinnet on beams, Basilica Nuku’alofa.

Cakaudrove, 1929 (Leonard & Terrell 1980, p31).

Bouma, Taveuni (Neich & Pendergrast 1997, p114).
Design 12: Su ni lolo

The Su-ni-lolo is another common design with earliest records found in Lapita from Tonga and in old Samoan Siapo (Neich & Pendergrast, 1997).

In the context of Fijian Masi, it is a combination of two designs documented from Moce research conducted in the 1970s. The first a series of lines is called Vetau and the straight X called Vua ni vono (Koojiman, 1977).

The basic design is found in Lapita pottery. See images from Tonga excavation sites.

Samoan Siapo featuring only this design (Neich & Pendergrast 1997, p33)
**Design 13: Yavuyavu**

The design *Yavuyavu* is another design that is comprised of a combination of two pre-existing kesakesa designs.

The outer design is the *Vetau togitogi* (Spicer & Me, 2004) and the inner is the *Seru*, documented in 1972 from Vatulele and in 1977 in Moce.

Outer motifs are derived from “Vacu ni Tadruku” See Kooijman 1977, p53)

Called “Vetau togitogi” by Makereta in Spice & Me (2004, p114-5)

Inner Motif documented as from Vatulele, Kooijman 1972, p403

Kooijman 1977 refers to these as “seru” (p71).
Designs 14 & 15: Uga and Tama

The final two designs, Uga and Tama are found in Fiji Masi recorded by Koojiman in the 1970s and in Masi Bolabola from Cakaudrove in Neich & Pendergrast (1997).

It is also a shared Tongan kupesi referred to as Fakalala. In the Tongan context, this design is reserved for nobles of a particular line of Kings.
CULTURAL WELLNESS | Establishing the 15–kesakesa designs in question as Cultural Heritage for Human Security

As shown, the production of bark cloth is a shared heritage art across the Pacific Islands. Processes, motifs and uses are also markedly similar across these cultural communities. This shared dynamic of Pacific island cultures poses a further challenge to the trademark intent presented by Fiji Airways. Should the airline decide to trademark locally and internationally, it would have wide reaching implications for Pacific cultural producers the world over who regularly use these motifs and their derivatives in their creative expressions.

The fifteen kesakesa designs identified by Air Pacific/Fiji Airways for trade marking is part of a long history of cultural knowledge and closed sacred heritage skills specific to women from specific communities and clans. If the airline were to be allowed to trade mark these designs, this would affect the cultural economy in ways that would ultimately lead to culture loss. Trade-marking inevitably leads to restricted use of designs and this could result in cultural and creative producers no longer having access to symbols and motifs of traditional significance to their cultural community.
The 15 designs indicated demonstrate the age-old practice of reproducing designs within the cultural design database. It must be highlighted that an important part of the process of Tapa production continues to be the rearrangement of these designs into new motifs as shown in a large number of the identified designs. Through the cultural circulation of Tapa, these designs become formalized and other women begin to use them in their creations. In this way, new derivates become common use motifs. The airline should therefore, not be permitted to own the right to these designs as individual motifs because it would affect the livelihoods and cultural heritage of iTaukei peoples as well as other indigenous communities for whom these designs hold socio-cultural and spiritual meaning.

It must also be noted that Contemporary Pacific Island artists would also be affected by the trade marking of these designs as many visual artists (e.g. painters and fashion designs) who regularly make use of these and other heritage designs in their art work. For these contemporary artists, the incorporation of these designs are often used as cultural and identity markers distinguishing their art from those by other artists from the region. These designs are also commonly used by tattoo artists across the Pacific. A question that remains unanswered is how would the trade marking affect these artisans? Would they need permission from the airline to use their own heritage designs?

**SUMMARY | Where to from here?**

In summary, Fiji Airways should not be allowed to trade mark the individual 15 kesakesa designs which comprise the piece of masi they have adopted as the company logo.

While the tapa maker, Makereta may present the argument that she has legitimately ‘designed’ the logo, she cannot lay claim to each of the kesakesa designs. At best, her tapa cloth is a derivative representation of hundreds of thousands of tapa produced in Fiji and elsewhere in the Pacific. While she may claim that the specific arrangement presented in the Fiji Airways tapa is unique, she can only lay claim to the re-arrangement of the said designs. In light of this, it is clear that Fiji Airways owns the entire piece of tapa including the central circular piece that it has taken on as its logo for re-branding purposes. However, the airline does not own the rights to each individual motif or design.

As a complex form of abstract textual language, the attempt to trade mark each individual motif or symbolic representation may be likened to a vocalist who purchases the rights to a song. While the original song writer owns the song and may sell the song in its entirety to a vocalist, neither the song writer, nor the vocalist could in their right mind ever consider their right to stating a claim to each individual word in the song. Kesakesa motifs like words, form individual units of cultural expression. While each tapa cloth produced contains an element of creativity that ought to be recognized and valued, no one person can lay claim to individual designs. As in the simple analogy of the song and the words that are strung together to make up sentences within that song, trademarking individual kesakesa
designs may be likened to the ludicrous act of trademarking individual words thereby denying other song writers from using those words.

What is clear from this preliminary scoping exercise is that the deeper significance of Pacific cultural symbols are poorly understood. For this reason, more public discussion forums are needed. It is also evident that Pacific islanders themselves ought to begin documenting various aspects of their own knowledge to prevent such incidents from reoccurring. In the final analysis, it would appear that what we are struggling with in the islands is the futile attempt to fit a square peg into a round hole. Current western paradigms surrounding copyright and intellectual property originate in developed countries in the global north. Like most development models, they are imposed on developing countries and represent unequal power-realtions. These western paradigms dominate global discourse on the subject.

In the Pacific islands, it is these paradigms that dictate the way we see and value knowledge and creative expressions. These mainstream views are premised on a worldview that prioritizes individualism and knowledge creation by individuals. Pacific cultural knowledge systems on the other hand, are grounded in a collective worldview where knowledge is constructed communally and ownership is shared by members of the cultural community. For this reason, any attempt to simply take on western approaches to the protection of traditional knowledge is doomed to fail. Inevitably, indigenous peoples all over the world, the Pacific included, will be further marginalized and their traditional knowledge systems continually misappropriated. It is critical therefore that in our attempt to uphold the rights of a single entity or individual, we do not in fact, invalidate the collective rights of entire communities.

 iTaukei High Chief, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi’s commentary on blind adoption of foreign ways of doing and being provides a good starting point for debate and deep, reflective thinking. He alludes to the need to reconceptualize our own Pacific mechanisms of cultural protection. The onus for Fiji is on the indigenous themselves to formulate a regulatory system that adequately provides for the use of and the preservation of cultural rights, traditional knowledge systems and all related forms of cultural expressions.

In our headlong rush for modernity, we have been far too eager to embrace foreign constructs in preference to our own. It is only when the reality of the foreign has not met the promise that some of us have begun to take stock and revisit the reservoirs of knowledge and practice that are our heritage (Fiji Times Online, March 20, 2012).

Tamasese is unapologetic as he presents a compelling argument for indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is valid. It is meaningful. And, more significantly, indigenous people should not have validate this legitimacy to anyone. It is their right and as such, they should ensure that it survives.

“What matters in the pursuit of indigenous Pacific knowledges is that it survives – and survives because it gives us meaning and belonging. Everything else is clutter” (Tamasese 2005, p.6).
References


SPC (2002). Regional Framework for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture, Noumea, New Caledonia.


SPC (2010b). Valuing Culture in Oceania: Methodology and Indicators for valuing culture, including traditional knowledge in Oceania, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea, New Caledonia.


Appendix 1

Gallery of images showing the wide range of arts that utilize Tapa (kesakesa) designs in contemporary Pacific communities all over the world.

Cake Decorations

Music

Performing Arts

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14 http://www.flickr.com/photos/38581051@N02/8158405036/
15 http://www.tower.com/born-raised-fiji-cassette/wapi/106153435
Koya, C.F (2014). Cultural Symbols at Risk | Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo. A shortened technical version of this paper formed the scholarly response to the Fiji Airways registration to trademark 15 kesakesa designs in 2013. This e-version is provided on the understanding that when used for academic or any other purposes, that the content will be appropriately cited.

17 http://sphotos-a.xx.fbcdn.net/hphotos-prn1/c21.0.403.403/p403x403/644277_574903662528747_126642623_n.jpg
18 http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aaron-Fiji-Art/193032220778251
19 http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_OY-0d2rKv_Q/TGnh_7QP-Il/AAAAAAAALXs/LjACHzmQykg/s1600/image004-751674.jpg
Koya, C.F (2014). Cultural Symbols at Risk | Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo. A shortened technical version of this paper formed the scholarly response to the Fiji Airways registration to trademark 15 kesakesa designs in 2013. This e-version is provided on the understanding that when used for academic or any other purposes, that the content will be appropriately cited.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masi has formed traditional attire for Fijians from pre-contact times\textsuperscript{24}</th>
<th>Many iTaukei weddings feature traditional masi\textsuperscript{25}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitors to Fiji often make use of this wedding attire as part of their Fiji experience.\textsuperscript{26}</td>
<td>The fashion industry has popularized tapa designs\textsuperscript{27}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Gallery exhibition\textsuperscript{28}</td>
<td>Elegant evening wear\textsuperscript{29}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{25} http://www.fijime.com/romanceme/userfiles/His_1.JPG  
\textsuperscript{26} http://www.yachtaragorn.com/photos/Gallery/BennoAndMagritWedding.jpg  
\textsuperscript{27} http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_MSfAoVkVIYo/TDPv-4h5Vki/AAAAAAAABHE/CoYQUFa4yhws1600/whatiwore_062210.jpg  

Koya, C.F (2014). Cultural Symbols at Risk | Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo. A shortened technical version of this paper formed the scholarly response to the Fiji Airways registration to trademark 15 kesakesa designs in 2013. This e-version is provided on the understanding that when used for academic or any other purposes, that the content will be appropriately cited.
These motifs are part of a longstanding heritage. They are found in museum collections all over the world.

They provide livelihood for local women. They form an important part of cultural ritual.

They are used to maintain socio-cultural relationships and are an important identity marker for indigenous peoples. And will continue to inform newer forms of cultural heritage expression through the creative arts for as long as indigenous peoples and their descendants value their cultures and view these as important heritage markers.

Koya, C.F (2014). Cultural Symbols at Risk | Anthropological evidence of the 15 intended iTaukei Tapa Cloth (Masi) Motifs pre-dating the creation of the Air Pacific/Fiji Airways logo. A shortened technical version of this paper formed the scholarly response to the Fiji Airways registration to trademark 15 kesakesa designs in 2013. This e-version is provided on the understanding that when used for academic or any other purposes, that the content will be appropriately cited.
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Cresantia is a Fiji National of mixed heritage. She lectures in Education at the School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Law and Education, University of the South Pacific in Suva. A secondary school teacher by profession, she worked for the Ministry of Education from 1996 – 2001 in a number of Secondary Schools in Suva. After completing her Masters in Education, she joined the University in 2002 where she has remained since then. She completed her doctorate in 2013 and presented a dissertation on Tapa and Tattoo practice in Samoa and Tonga. Her research and community work for over ten years has been in the area of Education and Pacific Arts and Culture and she has worked with the Ministry of Education and with Fiji Arts Council on numerous projects.

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