

Fiji

Island Feminisms with Māhea Ahia

Fiji

- 300+ islands
- Lapita culture (Polynesian ancestors) in Fiji from 3500 BCE to 2500 BCE
- Independent island nation
 - former British colony: 1874 - 1970
 - Republic of Fiji: September 28, 1987
- has been categorized as both Polynesian and Melanesian
 - most populous inde nation after Papua New Guinea: 905,460 in 2021)
 - most militarized
- indigenous Fijian (over half of population)
 - Indo-Fijian - East Indian indentured laborers descendants
- crossroads for shipping and air routes



- Mataqali - land unit ('āina-Hawai'i, aiga-Sāmoa, Marshalls-bwij
- 1880-1940s land registration and land tenure changes (// Hawaiian māhele) to mataqali landholding units (vs. individual property titles)
- unsuccessful rubber plantations in 1800s
- mid-20th c- 20thc: mines established to extract gold and bauxite

University of South Pacific at Suva

USP was foundational to development of Pacific literatures

Albert Wendt, Epeli Hau'ofa, Subramani ("From Myth to Fabulation"),
Grace Mera Molisa

1973 - South Pacific Arts Society
published the *Pacific Islands Monthly*

1974 - *Mana Publications* - publishing house

1976 - *Mana* - arts & lit journal

Tell Me a Story
by Tagi Qolouvaki

He vows I am planted beneath the Frangipani
Promises I am seeded beneath the Bua.

He has his father's tongue,
Owns his mother's languages.
They sing honeyed songs together.
He has even tamed the palagi one —
It rides his tongue
And his fertile with story.

Deftly, he weaves tales
Like the finest mats
Constructs memories
Tapa-tapestries
Stained in soil and
Colored with song.

We store them.
Cultural currency for the next birth
Death and wedding.
We carry them
To make us
Real.

He is a teller of tall tales, Talanoa

But what are stories if not lies
Though sweet as vakalolo
Cleaved to our fingers
Floating our souls
In the fat of coconut?

What are memories if not construction:

The storyteller as tattooist

Marking,

And not marking,

Brown skin.

And They say

If your pito-pito is unplanted

 You will wander

They say

If it is unplanted

 Home will elude you.

Well mine is buried in story

Planted in a tall tale

And I wander

Yes,

And home is a story

Home is a story where the Frangipani flowers.

Teresia Teaiwa

“On Women and ‘Indians’: The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Militarized Fiji”

- Preferred supplier of peacekeeping personnel for the UN Assisted Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Guard Unit
- Second, it has become a reliable source of military recruits for its former colonial ruler, Great Britain, with over a thousand Fiji citizens serving in Iraq and Kuwait under the British flag in 2016 (Kelsey 2016; Maclellan 2016).
- Third, it is a dependable provider of personnel for multinational private security firms en

Teresia Teaiwa

“Same Sex, Different Armies: Sexual Minority Invisibility Among Fijians in the Fiji Military Forces and British Army” in *Gender on the Edge*

- terms: vakasalewalewa // fakaleitī, fa’afafine, māhū
- Teaiwa summarizes *Na Ivolavosa Vakaviti* (2005, 759) as an identity as one having two spirits - both masculine and feminine, or being a male who has feminine assigned duties (Teaiwa 272)
 - other (archaic) terms that have circulated (Teaiwa 272)
 - vakayalewa, dauyalewa, vakamocetagane - “males with feminine behavior or sexual orientation toward other men”
 - vakatagane, dautagane, vakamoceyalewa to “refer to females with masculine mannerisms or sexual orientation toward other women”

Teresia Teaiwa

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- “The primary qualifications for national military service are often framed around full membership in a society (i.e., citizenship) and full capacity to serve (i.e., able-bodiedness)” (274)
- “Armies have not always welcomed, and still do not welcome, all citizens of the nation. Observing military recruitment and admission policies is one way of understanding how nations implement a graduated concept of citizenship. When a military restricts service to one sex, one race, one religion, or one sexual orientation, we learn which identities are privileged in that nation” (275)
- “The case of Fiji is particularly interesting. It is an ostensibly heteronormative society that is in the unusual position of having its citizens eligible to serve in two different armies: Fiji citizens are currently serving in both the FMF [Fiji Military Forces] and the BA [British Army]” (275)
- Erasure of sexuality in media coverage of death of gay soldier by fellow Fijian (268) - sexual politics

Teresia Teaiwa

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“Encourages the invisibility of same-sex orientation, as does the ethnic and cultural dominance of indigenous Fijians within the force—sexual minority identity becomes subsumed under the ethnic identity of indigenous Fijians” (280)

Summary:

- 1) terminology
- 2) invisibility related to institutions and cultures of military
- 3) although difficult for researching, valid reasons for invisibility like maintaining safety and privacy of individuals
- 4) silence of activists, intellectuals and researchers, ie. lack of debate surrounding women and sexual minorities in the military (284-285)

“I Can See Fiji” sound poem by Teresia Teaiwa

- [https://soundcloud.com/hinemoana-1/i-can-see-fiji?
utm_source=clipboard&utm_campaign=wtshare&utm_medium=wid
get&utm_content=https%253A%252F%252Fsoundcloud.com%252
Fhinemoana-1%252Fi-can-see-fiji](https://soundcloud.com/hinemoana-1/i-can-see-fiji?utm_source=clipboard&utm_campaign=wtshare&utm_medium=widget&utm_content=https%253A%252F%252Fsoundcloud.com%252Fhinemoana-1%252Fi-can-see-fiji)

Letter to my people (for Palestine)
to those of us
i-taukei
for whom 3 decades
of fujian
UN “peacekeeping”
in the middle east
has brought for israel
our eyes and mouths

once the world told florid tales
of our warriors’ courage
war clubs carved from vesi

ivei na neimami yaloqaqa?
where is our spirit
now?

show me
the bravery
in speaking for
the powerful

show me
the courage
in looking away
from the tearing of people
from their vanua
children from mothers
farmers from orchards
fishermen from the deep sea

have we forgotten our own
removals
lost land, birthright

to british & native elite allegiances?

i-taukei sold, exiled

indentured laborers

on our own lands

the vanua turned

sugar teat to suckle settlers

where has our spirit fled?

in pieces

with remittances

western unioned from Sinai

Lepanoni

the Golan heights

to morris hedstrom

shopping centers

in suva, nadi,

navua, ba...

where has our spirit fled?
sacrificial burial
beneath the yavu
of homes a nation
bought with Israeli shekel
and gaudy romances of lost tribes

defiling the vanua
disrupting our mana

to those of us
i-taukei
for whom over 2000 palestinians dead
over 500 of these children
in just
one

summer
is justified

once, newly independent
of british colonialism,
our people rose
a forest of vesi
warriors for a nuclear-free pacific
against the combined forces of french,
american and british imperial powers.

once, we sang songs in solidarity
around kava bowls all night
with black south africa
against an apartheid regime

ivei na neimami yaloqqa?
where is our spirit
now?

when israel kills
little boys gone to the beach to play
bombs hospitals bursting with wounded
shells schoolrooms sheltering the lands' orphans
erects apartheid walls between kin
forbids gaza's fishermen rights to their qoliqoli
uproots centuries-old Palestinian olive trees
by the thousands

ivei na neimami yalpqqa?
where is our spirit now?

once ratu sukuna dreamt of sovereignty
restored through battle
the people's spirit triumphant in a national military

but
before we were soldiers
we were fishermen
before we were soldiers
we were farmers
before we were soldiers
we were warriors of the vanua

ivei na neimami yaloqqa?
where is our spirit
now?

Discussion Prompts

- military in Fiji (British Army and Fiji Military Forces) then expand to include thinking about military in other island contexts
- How does diaspora affect indigenous islanders? What does it mean to write from other indigenous lands? What is kuleana to someone else's indigenous lands?
- memory - writing about your homeland