

## **WE ARE FIJI**

Rugby, Music and the Representation of the Fijian Nation

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### Abstract

This article uses the DVD version of Daniel Rae Costello's song *We Are Fiji* as a case study in which to explore the sonic and visual construction of Fijian nationhood. It addresses how Fijian national symbols (for example, the national flag and national anthem) as well as a national sport (rugby sevens in this example) are used to forge a sense of national identity between members of its geographically dispersed and multicultural population. This article also examines who is being included/excluded in this representation of the Fijian nation, and how particular sounds (for example, the use of particular languages and musical instruments) and images (those of the physical environment and its inhabitants) are used selectively to reify existing power relationships between Fiji's cultural groups. *We Are Fiji* thus provides an insight into Fijian nation-making processes – a topic that is particularly salient given the political tensions that currently exist between (and within) Fiji's cultural groups.

### Keywords

Fiji, sport, music, nation-making, representation, national identity

### Introduction

The Republic of Fiji comprises around 322 islands (of which 106 are permanently inhabited) and 522 islets. Its total landmass of 18,343 square kilometres (of which the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, comprise around 90%) is scattered over 650,000 square kilometres of ocean. Fiji's islands are home to a multicultural population. According to the 2007 census, out of a total population of 827,900<sup>1</sup>, *i taukei* (indigenous Fijians)<sup>2</sup> comprise 57.3%. 37.6% of the population are descended from Indian indentured labourers imported to Fiji to cultivate sugarcane from 1879-1916 (following Fiji's cession to Britain in 1874) and subsequent Gujarati and Punjabi immigrants. The remaining 5.1% consist of minority cultural groups, including Chinese, Europeans and other Pacific Islanders.<sup>3</sup> *I taukei* attempts to maintain political dominance over the more economically powerful Indo-Fijians, as well as power struggles among *i taukei* based on provincial and regional tensions, have resulted in four coups against elected governments (two in 1987, one in 2000, and another in 2006).<sup>4</sup>

Given that Fiji's multicultural population lives on 106 islands scattered across a wide expanse of ocean, and that the nation has been characterised by political instability

over the past two decades, how has a sense of national identity<sup>5</sup> been forged? The *sere ni vanua* (patriotic song) discussed in this article is significant for both its specific address to this issue and its high profile as the only example of the song genre that has been released as a DVD. This analysis addresses how Fijian national symbols are used to forge a shared sense of belonging to an imagined community in which the members “will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or ever hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983: 15). In addition to addressing how the differences between Fiji’s various cultural communities are elided in the DVD clip, this article probes the identity of the ‘we’ in *We Are Fiji* – a point of particular relevance given the political tensions that currently exist between (and within) Fiji’s cultural groups.

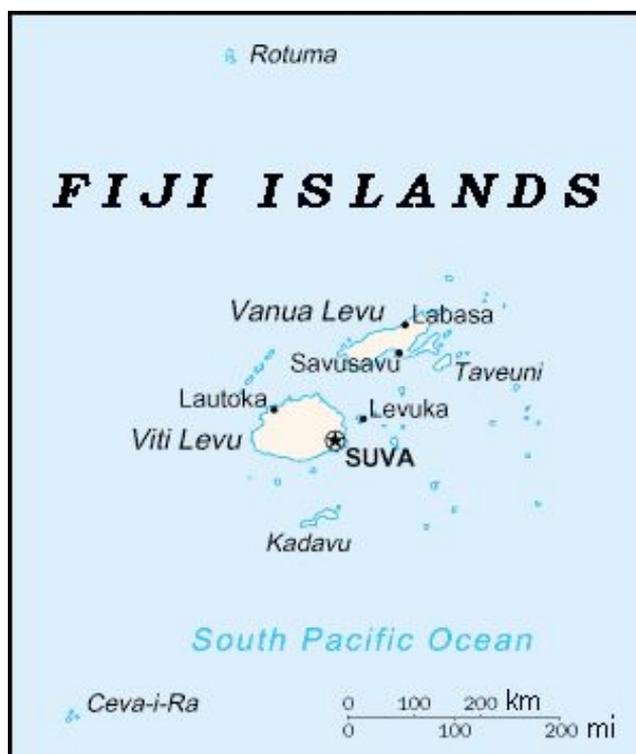


Figure1 - Map of Fiji

(adapted from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Fiji-map.jpg>)

### Rugby and Fijian nation-making

Rugby dates back to the 1820s and its inception is commonly associated with a pupil at Rugby School, in England. The game is played by two teams with fifteen players per side on a rectangular field of maximum dimensions 100 metres long by 70 metres wide. The field has goal lines and goal posts at each end. Players score points by grounding an oval ball over the opposing side’s goal line or by kicking it through the upper portion of the goal posts. Games last for 80 minutes and are divided into halves. Competitive

rugby union began in Fiji in the 1880s in the form of games between British soldiers and members of the Native Constabulary at Ba, on the east coast of Viti Levu. The national organising body for the sport is the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) and the game's national popularity is indicated by the thirty provincial unions represented by it.<sup>6</sup> Rugby sevens is a variant of rugby union. The game originated in Scotland in the 1880s and is similar to its 'parent' in its rules and field dimensions. Its main difference is its reduced seven a side format and its abbreviated length (comprising two 7 or 10 minute halves). Fiji is home to one of the most dominant sevens sides in the world. The leading international competition for the abbreviated form of the game is the Hong Kong Sevens tournament, which was introduced in 1976.<sup>7</sup> The Fiji Sevens team first won the title in 1977 and have since gone on to win the competition eight times. They also won the Rugby World Cup Sevens in 1997 and 2005, and the IRB Sevens World Series in 2006.<sup>8</sup>

The degree of passion for rugby, and Sevens in particular, becomes apparent in any association with indigenous Fijians. On the 20th of March 2005 Fiji won the Melrose Cup after defeating New Zealand 29-19 in the final of the Hong Kong Sevens Rugby tournament, becoming the first nation to win this competition twice. I was in Fiji on the island of Taveuni at the time, and watched the match with my host family and many other community members in the living room of local school teacher and his family. As their television set was one of the few in the settlement of Wairiki, their living room was packed to overflowing with Fijian fans eager to support their national team. As a New Zealander, and therefore a member of the enemy camp, my presence ensured that there was a lively exchange of friendly jibes and banter prior to and during the match. The audience became completely engrossed in the game, the tension mounting and then dissipating. I will never forget the sheer exultation, the screams, shouts and tears of relief and joy when the match ended.

Emotions continued to run high as the audience watched coverage of the post-match activities, with tears flowing freely during team captain Waisale Serevi's speech, and the moment when his son, sitting on his proud father's shoulders, held the Melrose Cup aloft. The following day, some of the villagers were still partying from the previous night. I passed one local musician who was playing guitar and singing a verse about the victorious sevens team (based both lyrically and melodically on the song *Seven Spanish Angels*<sup>9</sup>). An enormous banner naming and praising the victorious players, as well as depicting slogans and logos associated with the team, was erected over one of the local roads. Parents and older siblings used black felt-tip pens to draw team logos, player names and numbers, as well as slogans and messages of support on the white T-shirts and faces of primary school children who were permitted to attend school dressed as their favourite sporting heroes. Fiji's victory in the tournament was the main topic of conversation for several days following the event.

As these events on the island of Taveuni indicate, rugby, particularly Sevens, holds a special place in the national psyche. As noted in one online article, "as the Brazilians are to soccer, the Fijians are to sevens rugby" (unattributed, 1997: online). Writing about Fijian rugby more generally, Tom Bryant notes that:

*In Fiji rugby is taken very seriously indeed – second only, perhaps, to family. On meeting a Fijian, often the first question asked of any male visitor is, "Which position do you play?" The next will be whether they prefer Sevens to Fifteens – something of a running debate among the*

*islanders. Throughout the string of islands, smiling down from billboards, you'll see the face of fleet-footed rugby legend Waisale Serevi, advertising tourist attractions, shopping malls and a host of other products in much the same way that David Beckham or Wayne Rooney promote sunglasses and sports products in the UK. In short, since the game was brought to the islands by British soldiers in 1884, it's been the national obsession. (Bryant, 2007: online)*

Given Fiji's successes in international rugby tournaments such as the 2005 Hong Kong Sevens, as well as the evident passion and enthusiasm that *i taukei* have for the game, it is perhaps unsurprising that rugby is regarded as the national sport.

The utility of national sports as effective nation-making tools has been recognised by the Fijian Government. As government spokesman for the Ministry of Information Viliame Tikotani reports, the:

*Government's strategic development plan and affirmative action recognises that sports promotes [sic] nation building and community development by bringing people of all communities together. Sports moulds better citizens through the inculcation of important values such as goodwill, tolerance, teamwork and healthy living, all vital ingredients necessary for nation building. Government has taken on sport as a strategy to ensure the achievement of its vision of a peaceful, prosperous Fiji. (Tikotani, 2005: online)*

Fiji's 2005 Hong Kong Sevens win was particularly timely for the Fijian Government, who were at that time pressing for national reconciliation and unity. By 2005, three coups had taken place as a result of ethnic tensions. In an attempt to promote reconciliation between Indo-Fijians and *i taukei* in particular, as well as to foster better foreign relations and boost Fijian trade and tourism, the Government desired to promote an image of a unified nation. The 2005 Melrose Cup win was thereby important to the Fijian government, who seized upon this sporting victory as an opportunity to promote their political agenda.

The promotion of the Fiji government's vision of national reconciliation and unity can be clearly seen in politicians' speeches as well as journalists' reports addressing the Sevens World Cup win. For example, Tikotani's article (entitled 'Melrose cup – inspiring unity in Fiji'), which was written a few days after this sporting victory and posted on the Fiji government's website, is characteristic of the nationalistic discourse circulating at the time. Tikotani writes of "Waisale Serevi and his Sevens Rugby World Cup heroes... captivating the hearts of the different peoples of Fiji uniting them as one nation one people in the course of supporting our national team" (ibid). He notes how this win brought people from all different walks of life and cultural backgrounds together, creating "unity in diversity" and instilling "the spirit of togetherness, happiness, patriotism and confidence back into our nation" (ibid). Similar views were espoused by Vice President *Ratu* (chief) Joni Madraiwiwi, who was quoted by Tikotani as saying "what is truly inspiring and wonderful, is the way in which your victory has brought all of us together... As you played each game and advanced in the competition, we followed your progress as one" (ibid), as well as by the Prime Minister Qarase who, in his victory speech delivered on the public holiday declared in honour of the team, said:

*Your triumph becomes ours, your joy was our joy. All our different peoples were as one, sharing in the honour, the achievement and fame you earned for Fiji. We are a nation rejoicing as never before, a nation unified, differences cast aside because of what you have done. (ibid)*

Tikotani asserted that, “we must continue with our fostering good relations as a nation” - a view that was endorsed by Madraiwai, who stated:

*It is my hope and earnest prayer that the happiness and good feelings generated by your win will further national unity. Too often we hide behind our ethnic origins. Too often we think too hard to try and understand each other. Today we are all proud Fiji islanders. (ibid)<sup>10</sup>*

In addition to espousing national unity, Tikotani remarks how Fiji “battled the world at Hong Kong” and notes how the win inspired “some sense of... brotherhood... from the highest office in the land to the common people at grassroots level” (ibid). These statements invoke a sense of militarism, and reveal the patriarchal and highly stratified nature of Fijian society. These themes will be explored in greater detail below with reference to *We Are Fiji*.

#### Musically unifying the nation

The assertion that the Fijian team’s 2005 Hong Kong Sevens Rugby World Cup win unified the nation (as mentioned above in relation to Tikotani’s article) was prevalent in media coverage of this sporting victory. This elision of differences between members of Fiji’s population is also a feature of *We Are Fiji*, which was written by renowned Fijian musician and composer Daniel Rae Costello<sup>11</sup>. For example, in the same vein as Tikotani’s article, the notes on the back of the DVD cover for *We Are Fiji* claim:

*The 2005 Rugby World Cup Sevens victory in Hong Kong united Fiji as one nation like nothing else before. All races, all ages, people from all walks of life came together as one to celebrate the wonderful win from the Fiji rugby boys on the world stage.*

Inspired by the sense of national pride and unity this sporting achievement engendered, Costello wrote a song to mark the occasion. In the documentary segment of the DVD, he explains his motivation for composing this in the following terms:

*If we could get together and put a song of unity together for Fiji, because the rugby win did bring us unity, then it would be a lovely thing to capture visually as well as musically. And at the same time, trying to give back to rugby what rugby has given to us. It’s given us so much pleasure over the years and so much joy. We are so proud of our rugby team. We were all caught up in this victory celebration, and everyone’s in a giving mood, and it’s a nice time to capitalise on that. But more importantly, the visual aspect of this we think will impact our nation. You know, we desperately need all races to come together in this country. It’s a beautiful country, with beautiful, beautiful people, and somewhere along the line we lost our way. And it’s not a hard road; it’s not a big mountain to climb; it’s not a long bridge to cross. It’s quite*

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*simple really, you know when it all comes down to love and giving and sharing ... It was a great pleasure to be able to produce something of this magnitude, to make us all feel proud of our country, and it's a beautiful country we have, beautiful people, and we can forget the past, we can forget our differences, and unite and just move forward. We just try, that's all. And we hope that this DVD and this song will be a little step in just bringing everybody in Fiji a little closer. And life's too short, and we need life. That's the bottom line.*<sup>12</sup>

Costello recruited up-and-coming talents as well as stalwarts of the local music industry to participate in this project. The vocalists included Daniel Rae Costello, Kiti Niumataivalu, Talei Burns, Bill Beddoes, Freddy Kado, Leanne Ah Sam, Seru Serevi, Stevie J. Heatley, Laisa Vulakoro, George Soni and Tulaga Whitcombe. Pupils from the American International Christian School (AICS), the Bulikula Choir, as well as five representatives from the victorious rugby sevens team, provided additional vocals. The instrumentalists included Mike Teraku Reymond (guitar), Seru Serevi (bass), Stevie J. Heatley (percussion), George Soni (sitar), Costello (programming and keyboards), and Rusiate Ralulu (drums and keyboards). All of the artists donated their time, expertise and money, and all of the proceeds received from this album were donated to the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) to assist with the national development of the sport.<sup>13</sup>

Musicians cited their desire to promote Fiji as a harmonious and unified nation as one of the key reasons for participating in the project, as illustrated by the following quotes taken from the documentary segment of the DVD: "You know, the song itself is about unity, about getting every race in Fiji together, and you know, let's all move forward together as one race. And I think I like the concept, I like the idea behind it" (Seru Serevi); "it's about love and unity, and it's actually a great thing, because I didn't realise just how much Fiji actually gelled together as a country, and especially after the rugby wins – I mean everybody was pro-Fiji. I've never seen so many Fiji flags in my life" (Leanne Ah Sam); "people everywhere are feeling frustrated, and its just keep wondering in store for humanity. This song of humanity and unity which has come about is a good way of approaching universally through harmony, concord and peace" (George Soni); "I would like to be a part of something that can bring a nation together. And you know, that's one thing we need in Fiji right now is the, to be unified" (Tulaga Whitcombe); "for me, personally, I thought it was a great opportunity to be part of this nation building, such as making this song for Fiji" (Stevie J. Heatley). The desire to associate with some of Fiji's musical and sporting stars was also cited as a motivating factor. For example, Heatley states: "For me it was a great opportunity to rub shoulders with other musicians and rugby players," while Burns notes: "I couldn't pass up this opportunity to come and rub shoulders with all these fine musicians and do a project this big".

The overarching theme of *We Are Fiji* as depicted in the song lyrics is that of national unity. The lyrics of verses one and two, for example, express that:

### Verse 1

**Talei Burns:** *Now is the time, for all to see  
That we can live, in harmony*

**Stevie J. Heatley:** *From now on, we'll walk together  
Side by side, we are Fiji*

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**Seru Serevi:** *Let's put our differences behind us  
We can do it if we try*

**Laisa Vulakoro:** *Let's start tearing down the walls  
And change the way we look at life*

**Bill Beddoes:** *We'll be a shining light, in the hope  
That our children will follow  
Now is the time to believe*

### Verse 2

**Kiti Niumataiwalu:** *Yes we'll begin, to build the bridge  
That takes us to uniting this land*

**Leanne Ah Sam:** *We'll share a smile, and help a friend in need  
Reach out c'mon, come take my hand*

**Talei Burns:** *We'll fly our flag of freedom, hope and unity*

**Freddy Kado:** *We'll hold our heads up high*

**Seru Serevi:** *We are proud to be*

**Daniel Rae Costello:** *The sons and daughters of three hundred islands  
All races one, we are Fiji*

In the DVD version of the clip (as well as its presentation package), the Fijian national flag, national anthem and the international success of a national sports team are used in order to generate a sense of unified national identity, a unity that nevertheless recognises and builds upon the diversity of Fiji's cultural groups. These features of the DVD clip resonate with and amplify the dominant message of the song's lyrics. The Fijian national flag, an icon of national identity, appears at the top left hand corner on the back cover of the DVD – the place the (Western) eye is first drawn to. The background of the front cover is the same colour as the background of the Fijian national flag and the shading that has been added behind the cover's dominant image gives it a cloth-like appearance. The artwork on the DVD disc itself (as opposed to the DVD cover), is more overtly derived from the Fijian flag, as it features the Union Jack and Fijian shield superimposed on a light blue background. The image of the Fijian flag fluttering in the breeze is also depicted in the song's film clip, after the introductory visual and sonic blast on the *davui* (conch trumpet), as Talei Burns sings the words "we'll fly our flag of freedom, hope and unity," at the beginning of the final rendition of the chorus, and after the shouted "Fiji!" that ends the song. As shown in the film clip, the flag is actually flying back to front, so that the eye is drawn first to the Fijian shield rather than the Union Jack – perhaps to emphasise Fiji's post-colonial status.

Like the Fijian national flag, the national anthem is used to generate a sense of nationalism/patriotism. The chorus of *We Are Fiji* is identical (both musically and lyrically) to the chorus of the English language version of the Fijian national anthem. The melody for the Fijian national anthem *God Bless Fiji* was adapted from a 1911 hymn by Charles Austin Miles entitled *Dwelling in Beulah Land*. Michael Francis Alexander Prescott (b. 1928) won first prize in a nationwide contest to write lyrics for this tune, and his text was adopted as the national anthem upon Fijian Independence in 1970. It is significant that Costello did not choose to use the official Fijian-language anthem entitled *Meda dau doka* (a song that uses the same tune, but is not a direct translation of *God bless Fiji*). This choice avoids reinforcing *i taukei* dominance. Neither did he use unofficial translations of the anthem into any of the other languages spoken by Fiji's multicultural population in order to promote a multicultural nationalism.<sup>14</sup> In *We*

*Are Fiji*, it is the anthem composed and sung in the language of Fiji's British colonisers that remains symbolic of Fijian national identity.



Figure 1 - The DVD back cover

Alongside the use of the Fijian national flag and national anthem, a sense of national unity and pride is invoked through the use of sounds and images associated with the Fiji Rugby Sevens team's World Cup win. The FRU and the International Rugby Board (IRB), two of the sponsors for this project, provided footage of the 2005 World Cup. Teivovo, another of this project's sponsors, provided footage of the Sevens team's homecoming.



Figure 2 - The DVD disc design

Five members of the victorious rugby sevens team (Waisale Serevi, William Ryder, Jone Daunivucu, Neumi Nanuku and Nasoni Roko) were recorded in the studio singing the chorus with the assembled musicians and students from AICS.<sup>15</sup> This material was used during the last three renditions of the chorus. The five team members were also recorded separately performing the hymn *Ni toro mai turaga*, the hymn the entire team sang as they huddled together following their win over New Zealand in the World Cup final. For the final two lines, the team members are supported by the voices of the Bulikula choir (whose voices are also used during the renditions of the chorus). The hymn is sung in *vakabau* (standard/common Fijian) – the only time this language is used to signify an *i taukei* identity in *We Are Fiji*. The use of the *lingua franca* acts as a unifying factor amongst Fiji's linguistically and culturally heterogeneous *i taukei* population. The visuals accompanying the hymn's performance include footage of the team's performance following their win, an image of an altar boy lighting a candle in church, the five team representatives recording in the studio, and 'heavenly' shafts of sunlight piercing the clouds. In addition to the references to God during the chorus and Tulaga Whitcombe's rap, this segment of the song represents Fiji as a Christian nation, thereby potentially alienating Fijians who belong to other religions.<sup>16</sup>

The sporting victory was symbolically important to Fiji, as it signified Fiji's superiority over larger, wealthier and more powerful nations on the world stage. The 'second rate status' of the Fijian Sevens' team's training and equipment was often acknowledged by team captain Waisale Serevi during the World Cup,<sup>17</sup> and was well publicised in the media coverage of the event. Hence, Fiji attained something of an underdog status in the competition due to their lack of resources in comparison with wealthier nations. Fiji's World Cup win did much to counter Fijian islanders' sense of cultural cringe (related to perceptions of Fiji's inferiority, smallness and isolation). Tikotane, for example, states that Fijian Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase "was very vocal about the win and commended Serevi and his team as super heroes of our nation conquering the world" (2001: online). He goes on to list the countries that Fiji defeated in the World Cup, and to emphasise Fiji's other significant achievements on the international stage:

*The team played Japan and Hong Kong from Asia, Portugal and England from Europe, Canada from North America and Argentina from the South America and our Australian and New Zealand neighbours. All in all we told these countries that Fiji has what it takes to be amongst the best in the world. Our sevens team has done it, Vijay Singh is doing it in golf, our peacekeepers are doing it in Iraq and that speaks of standards that Fiji has set for the world to see, relate and personalise it into their individual locations and countries (ibid).*

A clear sense of national pride is also invoked by Costello, when he speaks about the possibility of the International Rugby Board showing *We Are Fiji* on their international television show<sup>18</sup>:

*There may be a possibility that the IRB would like to show it on The World of Rugby, which is great exposure for, not only the rugby side of things, you know, marketing the rugby, but also for musicians in terms of what we can do in Fiji. They probably think that we're this little dot in the Pacific and we're so backward and, but we have a lot of talent, and it's a great country, and we want to show that to the world.*

#### Whose Fiji?

This song's lyrics, the use of the chorus from the English-language version of the national anthem, visual depictions of the national flag, and visual and sonic references to the Sevens victory in the 2005 World Cup all generate a sense of national pride and unity. Yet who is the 'we' being referred to in this song's title? Who is being included or excluded in this visual and sonic construction of Fijian nationhood? How does the structural placement and/or predominance of particular sounds and images reify or contest the existing power relationships between Fiji's cultural groups?

The visual elements of the *We Are Fiji* DVD depict and promote *i taukei* hegemony. The DVD cover is a circumtextual element (Maclachlan and Reid, 1994) of this song, as it constitutes the immediate physical surrounding/container of the text and thereby serves to frame the expectations of consumers. The dominant image on the DVD's front cover (which was designed by Indo-Fijian Prashil Kumar) consists of the hands of three individuals (with differing levels of melanin) clasped together. This motif perhaps symbolises unity between *i taukei*, Indo-Fijians, and English – the three cultural groups whose languages have been recognised as Fiji's official languages since the 1997 Constitution. These cultural groups constitute what Fijian statesman and high chief *Ratu* Sir Lala Sukuna referred to as the 'three-legged stool' whereby Fijians provided land, Indians provided labour, and Europeans provided capital and management (Teaiwa, 2007: 218). All three cultural groups are symbolically represented in this motif, and the clasped hands most strongly suggest the interdependence and linkages between them. Nevertheless, it is also possible to infer that the positioning of the '*i taukei*' hand at the top signifies *i taukei* political dominance due to the association between spatial height and high social status.

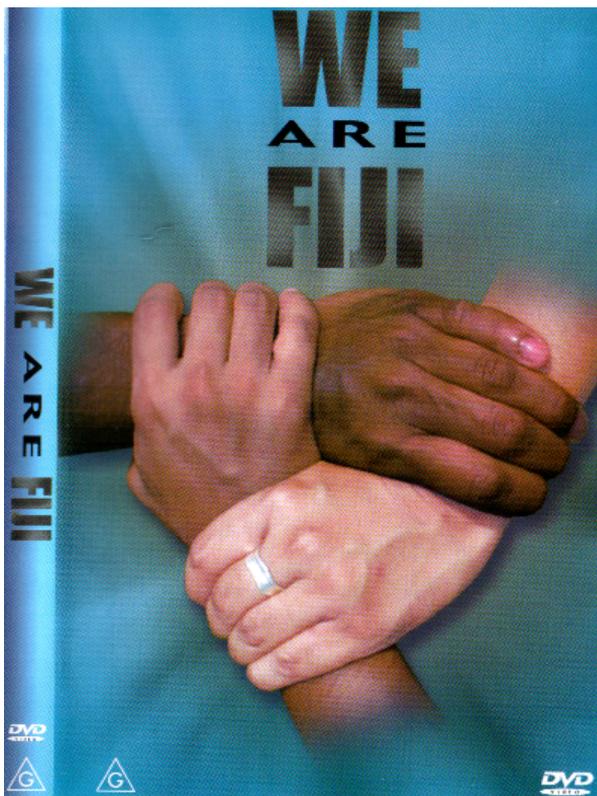


Figure 3 - DVD front cover

Fiji gained international exposure as a result of its Sevens win, and this exposure was seen as a tremendous boost to the Fijian tourism industry and hence the Fijian economy more broadly. Following Fiji's win in 2005, Fijian Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase made explicit associations between Fijian sport and tourism by stating: "you [the Fijian Sevens team] are ambassadors of Fiji, you advertise Fiji. So apart from your mission to achieve, you are also advertising Fiji as a tourist destination, as a country that enjoys sports" (unattributed, 2006: online). Similarly, Tikotani notes: "to a person intending to visit Fiji, the message is crystal clear - it is associated with rugby sevens" (2005: online). At the time when these statements were being made, Fiji had entered a bid to host the International Sevens tournament for 2007, claiming to have support "from the people, from the government, from the Fiji Visitors Bureau, from the hotel industry" (unattributed, 2006: online). The promotion of Fiji as a 'rugby sevens nation' in 2005 can be seen as a strategy to boost tourism earnings and thus contribute towards national economic development.

The film footage for *We Are Fiji* exemplifies the association between sport and tourism, and their combined importance in terms of nation-making. Much of the footage used on the DVD was provided by the Fiji Visitor's Bureau, which was also one of the project's sponsors. Fiji is promoted as a desirable tourist destination through the use of images of smiling male and female *i taukei* resort workers interacting with guests, as well as images of Fijian fauna and geography that depict Fiji as a pristine, pre-modern,

unspoilt paradise. This footage predominantly features images of *i taukei* culture, with a particular emphasis on perceived ‘traditional’ activities such as *meke* (an art form consisting of dance, poetry, costume and music), drinking *yaqona* (known as *kava* throughout Polynesia), sailing on *waqa* (traditional outrigger canoe) and *bilibili* (bamboo rafts), farming and fishing. These cultural practices are seen as unique markers of cultural identity for *i taukei*, and as such, they function as symbolic markers of indigeneity. They are mobilised in this DVD as a means of unifying Fiji’s multicultural population and as a way of differentiating the Fijian nation from the rest of the world.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the sheer prevalence of images of *i taukei* does detract from the inclusivity and multiculturalism of *We Are Fiji* (in terms of its message of unity, the diverse cultural backgrounds of its performers, the inclusion of lyrics in Hindustani and Standard Fijian, and the use of *sitar* and *davui*). Indo-Fijians are the only non-*i taukei* represented in the DVD footage, and even then, there are only two shots showing Indo-Fijian women and children lighting candles and playing *jhanj/manjira* (small hand cymbals).

Images of Fijian warriors dressed in traditional garb, running through the Sigatoka sand dunes bearing carved wooden war clubs, construct the nation as patriarchal – an image strengthened through the use of images of their contemporary counterparts: a modern-day soldier and the Sevens team themselves. Militarism remains a crucial part of constructions of Fijian masculinity and of patriarchal Fijian nationalism more broadly.<sup>22</sup> The contrast in the DVD clip for *We Are Fiji* between the physical, strong, masculine *i taukei* identity, and the young, feminine images used to represent Indo-Fijian culture is notable. Kevin Miller notes that Indian women tend to bear the burden of culture on their bodies (for example, classical dancers are usually female), whereas male *meke* dancers and firewalkers are the archetypical (although not exclusive) bearers of ‘Fijian culture’ in terms of the tourist industry (personal communication, November 2007). In *We Are Fiji*, intercultural relationships between Fiji’s two largest cultural groups are modelled on and perpetuate the power imbalance characteristic of Fijian gender relationships. Just as Fijian men are represented as having greater political power than Fijian women, *i taukei* are represented as having greater political power than Indo-Fijians. Social hierarchies are thereby perpetuated and reified.

Costello’s sonic construction of the Fijian nation differs from that generated via the DVD’s visual elements in that it does not foreground *i taukei* culture. This song is primarily performed in an adopted Anglo-American pop vocal style, accompanied by lead and bass guitar, percussion, keyboards and programmed/sequenced instruments (perhaps constructing the Fijian nation as modern/Westernised). Although Fiji’s cultural minorities are not musically or linguistically referred to in this song, the predominant use of Western pop and the English language (which is a compulsory school subject, and is the medium of instruction throughout Fiji schools, except nominally at the beginning of primary school) minimises a sense of possible alienation/exclusion. These factors also make the music accessible to international audiences. The lyrics “now is the time for all to see that we can live in harmony” and “we can shine our light for the world to see” indicate that Costello is constructing a Fijian national identity for international consumption – a construction of Fijian nationhood that nevertheless also has a domestic impact.

A multicultural group of musicians was involved with this project. Costello, Reymond, Burns, Beddoes, Heatley and Whitcombe are part-European; Ah Sam is of Chinese descent; Kado is Rotuman; Soni is Indo-Fijian; and Niumataivalu, Serevi, Vulakoro and

Ralulu are *i taukei*. However, only Fiji's two largest cultural groups (*i taukei* and Indo-Fijians) are sonically indexed in this song. The DVD clip begins with an *i taukei* man playing the *davui* (conch shell trumpet). The use of the *davui* pre-dates the arrival of *kai vulagi* (foreigners) to Fiji, and sonically invokes *i taukei* cultural roots (although it could also be read as indexing a more general Oceanic identity). Its position at the beginning of this piece establishes the importance of *i taukei* culture to a sense of national identity. After this blast, the guitar and synthesiser are introduced, along with the sounds of waves lapping on the shore. These sounds continue while the *davui* is blown a second time, although the end of the sound of the waves coincides with the end of this blast (at around the twenty second mark). The sound of the ocean is the only element of Fiji's natural soundscape used on the recording, and is perhaps used to reflect and generate an Oceanic identity. At the beginning of verse two, Indo-Fijian musician George Soni plays *sitar* and sings in Hindi using Indian vocal inflections, accompanied by guitar, synthesiser and percussion. Soni's performance is juxtaposed with that of Tulaga Whitcombe (who is originally from American Samoa), who raps the words "people everywhere in the islands of Fiji, come together under God as one in unity" over *tabla* accompaniment. Soni and Whitcombe's performances, which together last for 13 seconds, sonically signify 'the other' (compared to the *i taukei* musical references and the overall pop aesthetic of the song). Out of Fiji's multicultural population, they are the only representatives of the "people everywhere in the islands of Fiji."

## Conclusion

The cover, liner notes, film footage, lyrics and music of Daniel Rae Costello's DVD release of the song *We Are Fiji* construct the Fijian nation in particular ways. The project of representing an inclusive, multicultural society that celebrates inter-ethnic harmony and plurality is an extraordinarily difficult one given the time constraints of a music video clip and, more importantly, the pressures of satisfying the promotional interests of the project's sponsors (in this case, the FRU and the IRB who provided footage of the 2005 Rugby Sevens World Cup; Teivovo, who provided footage of the Sevens team's homecoming; and the Fiji Visitor's Bureau who provided the remaining video footage - excluding the footage of the musicians that was shot in the recording studio).

Due to these constraints, the 'we' used in the song's title does not automatically include all of Fiji's citizens. In the process of defining a national identity, *We Are Fiji* includes and excludes certain cultural groups. Visually, the film clip for *We Are Fiji* reifies *i taukei* hegemony through the predominance of images of *i taukei* culture (including those that establish Fiji as a patriarchal and Christian nation). The only footage of non-*i taukei* consists of two shots of Indo-Fijians (Fiji's second largest cultural group). Only Fiji's two largest cultural groups (*i taukei* and Indo-Fijians) are sonically and linguistically indexed in this song, albeit unequally. *i taukei* political dominance is also asserted via the primacy as well as the overall greater length of time devoted to distinctively *i taukei* sonic elements. Even though the conflict between *i taukei* and Indo-Fijians is elided, *We Are Fiji* still reflects and perpetuates the unequal power relationships between these two groups.

Nevertheless, Costello does succeed, overall, in representing the Fijian nation as being diverse and inclusive through utilising a multicultural group of musicians, and through

song lyrics that strongly emphasise the themes of inter-ethnic harmony and national unity. In an effort to forge a sense of national unity amongst Fiji's culturally heterogeneous population, this DVD mobilises shared symbols of nationhood: the national flag, and the national anthem. It also uses a Fijian sporting victory in an international tournament as a means of promoting a sense of national pride and shared identity. By being predominantly sung in the English language in a Western pop style accompanied by Western musical instruments, *We Are Fiji* constructs a Fijian national identity for global as well as domestic consumption.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.spc.int/prism/Country/FJ/Stats/Census2007/census07\\_index.htm](http://www.spc.int/prism/Country/FJ/Stats/Census2007/census07_index.htm) - accessed November 2007.

<sup>2</sup> More specifically, Fiji islanders of Polynesian and Melanesian ancestry with autochthonous claims to the land.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/fj.html> - accessed May 2008.

<sup>4</sup> In April 1987, a coalition led by Dr Timoci Bavadra, an ethnic Fijian who was nevertheless supported mostly by the Indo-Fijian community, won the general election and formed Fiji's first majority Indian government, with Dr Bavadra serving as Prime Minister. Aiming to restore indigenous Fijian political paramountcy (despite this being guaranteed under the constitution), Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka led a military coup on 14 May, 1987, forcibly removing Dr Bavadra from office. After a period of continued negotiation, Rabuka staged a second coup on September 25, 1987. In May 1999, Rabuka's coalition was defeated by an alliance of Indo-Fijian parties led by Mahendra Chaudhry, who became Fiji's first Indo-Fijian prime minister. After barely a year in office, Chaudhry and most other members of parliament were taken hostage in the House of Representatives by a group of civilian gunmen led by ethnic Fijian nationalist George Speight, on 19 May 2000. Speight claimed that he was acting to restore the rights of indigenous Fijians, whom he asserted were being oppressed by the Indo-Fijian minority. On December 5, 2006, Fiji's military chief Cmdr. Frank Bainimarama staged a military coup to remove Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase from office. He was motivated by his opposition to three contentious bills being considered by parliament: the Reconciliation Tolerance and Unity (RTU) Bill, the Qoliqoli Bill and the Land Tribunal Bill. The RTU Bill was proposing to grant an amnesty to some of the individuals involved in the 2000 coup, while the Qoliqoli Bill was advocating control of seabed resources by ethnic Fijians.

<sup>5</sup> For further information regarding Fijian nationalism, see Foster (1995), Kelly and Kaplan (2001) and Norton (1990, R/1997).

<sup>6</sup> Sources: <http://www.rugbyfootballhistory.com/originsofrugby.htm> - accessed January 2008; <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/rugby> accessed January 2008; <http://www.teivovo.com/history/index.html> - accessed January 2008; and <http://www.mapsofworld.com/rugby/rugby-union/fiji-rugby-union.html> - accessed May 2008.

<sup>7</sup> The Hong Kong Sevens (referred to as Cathay Pacific/Credit Suisse Hong Kong Sevens for sponsorship reasons) is considered the premier tournament on the IRB Sevens World Series in rugby union. It is held annually at the last weekend of March in Hong Kong and is organised by the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union (HKRFU). The tournament lasts two and a half days. (Source: <http://www.hksevens.com/General-Info-FactSheet.htm> accessed May 2008.)

<sup>8</sup> The Rugby World Cup Sevens was inaugurated in 1993, and the IRB Sevens World Series competition started in 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Eddie Setser and Troy Seals composed this song in 1985. It has subsequently been covered by Ray Charles and Willie Nelson, among others.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that when Madraiwiwi was Vice President he hoped to unite the country by bringing together opposing factions. His views in this regard were not representative of the Qarase government.

<sup>11</sup> See Costello's autobiographical entry on his web site - <http://www.danielrae.com/Page30.html> - an extensive range of his songs and videos are also available via the site's splash page - <http://danielrae.com/>

<sup>12</sup> Costello (e-mail to the author 5 February 2008) indicated that he received only positive feedback regarding this song. In conversations that I had with Taveuni Islanders concerning *We Are Fiji* around the time of the Melrose Cup win, reactions were mixed. While *i taukei* I spoke with liked the song, they regarded its message of unity with some scepticism due to continuing inter-ethnic tensions between *i taukei* and Indo-Fijians.

<sup>13</sup> It is briefly worth noting that the visual footage of the vocalists performing in the studio, wearing headphones (as opposed to performing 'live' in an outdoor setting) fits into the aesthetic of projects such as 'Live Aid' and 'We Are the World,' which were also charitable events.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the CD entitled *Chaalo Bollywood*, launched at the Fiji Gujarati Centenary Utsav (the celebrations held at Lautoka, 2006, to mark the centenary of the arrival of Gujaratis in Fiji), contains a Hindi translation of the Fijian national anthem written by Anandilal Amin.

<sup>15</sup> The involvement of the AICS choir (who are pictured singing the final chorus), as well as images of Fijian youth throughout the film clip (eg those that coincide with the lyrics "we'll be a shining light in the hope that our children will follow" and "the sons and daughters of three hundred islands," as well as the DVD's final image of a face-painted child wearing a Hong Kong Sevens T-shirt) represent the promise of a better future.

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the 1997 Fiji Constitution Amendment Act on Christianity recognised: "the enduring influence of Christianity in these islands and its contribution, along with that of other faiths, to the spiritual life of Fiji", online - [http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/database/poplaws/law\\_fiji/fiji\\_004.htm](http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/database/poplaws/law_fiji/fiji_004.htm) - accessed May 2008. The question of whether Fiji should be constitutionally declared a Christian state was a matter of public debate in Fiji, particularly during and following the 2000 coup. For further information, see Ryle (2005).

<sup>17</sup> Waisale Serevi reiterated this point during his speech to the participants involved in the 'We Are Fiji' project, which is featured on the DVD: "The boys have shown, we got nothing in Fiji, I already said it on TV, we got no training equipment, we got second best things, I mean training programmes, and we don't have the numbers in Fiji to go and play with them, but we just had God on our side."

<sup>18</sup> According to Costello (e-mail to the author 5 February 2008), the IRB never screened *We Are Fiji*. He states the FRU were supposed to send the IRB a copy of the DVD clip, but does not believe that they ever did so. Costello was uncertain about how often the clip was screened on Fijian television (but I certainly remember the song receiving heavy radio airplay around the time of the 2005 Rugby World Cup Sevens). The DVD clip was distributed by Morris Hestrom, South Pacific Recording (SPR) and Teivovo.com. SPR retailed the DVD for \$19.95, and heavily marketed it (for example, by using posters in storefront windows and on lamp posts).

<sup>19</sup> Although it could perhaps be intended to be a more inclusive representation of Fiji's ethnic makeup.

<sup>20</sup> The term *yaqona* refers to the plant Piper Methisticum. The roots and stems of this plant are dried and then pounded (masticated in the past), made into an infusion and then drunk

<sup>21</sup> For an example of how indigeneity has been appropriated into national projects aimed at unifying diverse groups in an Australian context see Lattas (1997).

<sup>22</sup> For example, the texts of many *sere ni vanua* (patriotic songs) express a sense of pride in Fiji's sporting achievements (particularly in terms of its national rugby sevens team), and in the activities of its soldiers who have served overseas. The song *Viti noqu Viti* (Fiji our Fiji), with the following lyrics, is a good example of this: *Au na talanoataka na yacamu / E na vei buca ni valu / Rara ni qito ya vitu ko dau kilai tani* (I will tell them about your name / In the battlefield / In the playing field in the sevens game). The Fiji military are politically important. The 1987 and 2006 coups were led by the military, and in the 2000 coup, George Speight was assisted by soldiers from the disbanded Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit (although the role of some Indo-Fijian business people in this coup also remains suspect).

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