



SETTLING THE SOUL THROUGH VA' (RELATIONAL) ETHICS: AN EKPHRASTIC REVIEW OF HINEKURA SMITH'S "WHATUORA: THEORIZING 'NEW' INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGY FROM 'OLD' INDIGENOUS WEAVING PRACTICE"

Fetsui Iosefo
University of Auckland
f.iosefo@auckland.ac.nz

Fetaui Iosefo is the youngest daughter of Fuimaono Luse Vui Siope and Sua Muamai Vui Siope. Her parents migrated from Samoa to Aotearoa in the 1950s. Sonny Iosefo is her chosen life partner and together they have two beautiful sons Joshua and Muamai. Fetaui is also a PhD candidate and a teaching fellow with the University of Auckland.

Abstract: This piece is layered unapologetically with indigenous ways of being as the norm. From Fetaui's bio, she aligns herself with Hinekura's decolonization locale. The positioning of the author's parents also connects and honours Hinekura's mother who is instrumental in Whatuora. The migration of Fetaui's parents from Samoa highlights the importance of our Pacific history and where our ancestors both Māori and Samoa traversed our Moana/Vasa(ocean). This migration and positionality is significant in aligning Samoa as respectful cousins to the land of Māori, Aotearoa, notwithstanding the birth place of her parents and of her ancestors bones in Samoa. Her chosen life partner and children are also named and her position within higher education is last. Our whanau/aiga (family) our whenua/fenua (land) are our collective priorities. Our academic credentials are ranked last.

Keywords: Whatuora; (re)claimed; (re)storying; (re)covering

Rigorous peer reviews and anonymous review processes for scholarly publication have been the expected norm in higher education. The separation of the assessor and author of the publication for the sake of academic robustness and validity is the standard process. As I read through Hinekura's (Smith, 2019) chapter an unsettling began to stir in my spirit. It was blatantly obvious that the layers of intimacies and sacredness that "Whatuora: Theorizing 'New' Indigenous Methodology from 'Old' Indigenous Weaving Practices" exuded, demanded an ethical processing that reflects its indigeneity. With this revelation, I sought counsel from my aiga (family) ethics komiti (committee). Collectively, we were all cautious. We spoke of our similarities between Samoa and Māori with the traversing of the Pacific ocean in our Va'a/Waka (voyaging canoes) and how our cosmos is similar; our languaging is similar. However, we could not move from the fact that we are still NOT Māori. The aiga ethics suggested that, to write a response to this chapter without the consent of the author would be counter-cultural to our aiga beliefs of sacredness; va' with Māori. To put it bluntly, we felt if there was no ethical consent and processing with Hinekura we would be no different from the colonisers who had tried to silence the sacredness of Whatuora.

Upon this revelatory discussion, an email was sent to the guest editors of this special issue and I shared with them my thoughts and asked them a few questions and included the following: *"I am mindful of the va' and my own code of ethics in working with indigenous methodologies that our indigenous people have a say in what is being written about them, because, ultimately, my response is not just for Hinekura it is for her people. I am also mindful that I am not indigenous to Aotearoa, but rather a cousin to our indigenous Samoans, so for me, ethically, consent is imperative!"* The freeness to email the guest editors without hesitation was also based on the va' (relational) ethics. In 2016, I had a conversation with Rosemary Riley, one of the guest editors. She gracefully helped language my thinking around my Samoan Indigenous reference (Tamasese, 2007) and its inter-connectedness with my family, land and academia as the "sacred duty." Furthermore, Esther Fitzpatrick, also a guest editor of this special issue is known within our Faculty as an ally with Indigenous peoples, and as expected both editors were very supportive.

Hinekura has since given her consent via the editors and thus the spiritual connectedness and shaping began. Ekphrasis, usually focuses on one visual art piece. However, once again, my soul was not settled, so I copied and pasted most of the visuals from Hinekura's article into a grid with the captions. Then, researched the terms I was not sure of and read and meditated on these visuals. Following this, I went back and re-read the chapter, section by section, writing the key themes that spoke to me and also whispered to our ancestors to speak through me, so that the words written would honour the land of our cousins.

Finally, the first full draft was complete. I sent it through to Hinekura along with the visual grid. Hinekura's response was heart and soul felt. She said that she could see her friend Tia dancing to it. From Hinekura's words I felt the slight settling of my soul. Nonetheless, I could not visualize Tia in full flight of dance, and so the piece sat, still, overnight. In the morning as the sun rose, the words were finally gifted and I could finally see Tia, Hinekura and her people rising up to (re)claim and dance to their tune. That morning I sent the final draft and this was Hinekura's response: *"Love it e hoa. This is a beautiful gift I will remember and treasure forever."* The unsettledness in my soul soared, restored and lifted. The va' (relational space) ethically honoured by all.

Whatuora

(re)claiming (re)storying (re)covering

Crafting manipulates materials
 To create something new
 Whatuora is not...
 Manipulating materials
 For something new
 Rather (re)claiming (re)storying (re)covering)
 Something
 KNEW!
 It is..the restoration
 (re)claiming (re)storying (re)covering
 Indigenous genealogical connections
 With Papatuanuku (mother earth)
 It is...grown by our ra (sun)
 Nurtured by our wind and water
 Harvested by our hands
 Breathed over by our breath
 With every fibre delicately woven
 With every breath our language from our ancestors
 Is spoken
 Spoken out and (re)claimed (re)story (un)covered
 With every textured strand woven
 Another narrative is intimately layered
 Intergenerational weaving

A row of feathers intricately purposefully patterned
Intergenerationally woven
A cloak
Without a dagger
It is a gifting a taonga
It is... A known
A lived way of breathing
A lived way of doing
A lived way
A living, live way
A way that was
Once crafted through colonization and
Manipulated
Out as a NO!
A, no, but...
Our ancestors KNEW better
The colonizers 'no' had
NO
Place in the
KNOWN
For in our KNOWN
We OWN the NOW
Whatuora...
Reclaimed
Restorying
Recovering...

JoFI

REFERENCES

Smith, H. (2019). Whatuora: Theorizing “new” Indigenous methodology from “old” Indigenous weaving practice. *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, 4(1), 1-27.

Tamasese, T. T. (2007). Bio-ethics and the Samoan indigenous reference. Keynote address at the UNESCO Bio-ethics Conference, Tofamamao, Leauvaa, Samoa.