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## Pattern

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**TEXTILE TERMS: A GLOSSARY**  
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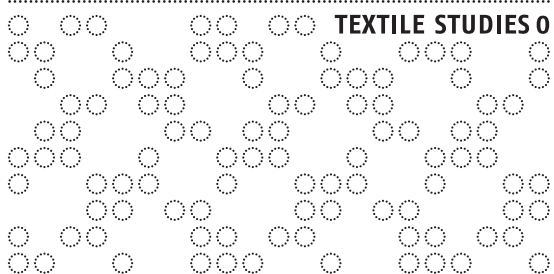




Fig. 39 Draudrau, a stencil used for the decoration of barkcloth, shown on a woven mat in a house in the village of Tukavesi, Vanua Levu, Fidji, 2014, photograph: Virginia Gamna and Sara Martinetti.

Irregular or geometric, lively or inanimate, always dizzying, the pattern, despite many scholarly attempts, remains intrinsically difficult to classify. It is invariably governed by one principle: the pattern is a model. Historical, lexical, and etymological research highlights this aspect, showing that the word itself comes from the Old French *patron* and *patroner*, two words derived from the medieval Latin *patronus*. The word *patron* refers to an influential and exemplary person who is responsible for a given community, and, by displacement, to an object, namely, a drawn, cut-out, or carved template used by the artisan-artist to produce forms. Appearing in the English language in the early fourteenth century, the *patron* gradually broadened its meaning and, from 1588 onwards, applied to a design, understood as a repeated ornament that constitutes a decorative theme. From the material to the conceptual, the quality of the pattern as structure and type confers an abstract value upon it, which lets it designate a habit, arrangement, or scenario.

If patterns can apply to an infinite number of media and materials, prints—engravings or books—are the primary means to circulate its models. The large category of pattern books used for decoration purposes and, in the case of textiles, for printing, embroidery, and weaving, is an essential part of the workshop, and hence of the artistic literature, as evidenced by the bibliography compiled by Arthur Lotz (1933). These books, produced by different agents according to the era, fulfilled several functions in artistic exchanges: disseminating a new style while protecting oneself from copies, providing a source of income, tracing artistic genealogies, etc. The printed materiality of models and types of drawing (outlined, blackened, checkered, etc.) provides information on transfer practices, some manipulations of which are documented from as early as the sixteenth century: for an embroidered cloth, it is for example possible to use the printed model directly for pouncing or tracing.

Another type of pattern-object, the stencil, has the ability to merge design and tool, giving the model the power of a matrix, which is illustrated here by a *draudrau* (Fig. 39), an openwork ornament cut from a Pandan leaf and used by Fijian women to decorate bark cloth. Common throughout Oceania, this material is produced from the phloem, the inner bark of trees such as the paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), which is felted with a wooden beater so as to obtain a fine, supple, soft, and white surface. Combining several of the qualities of textiles and paper, bark cloth was used for clothing and various domestic purposes, and today remains very present in traditional societies for ceremonies and rites of passage. The decoration of *masi*

*kesa*—the Fijian name for bark cloth—is unique in the Pacific region precisely for its use of stencils, which is said to have been inspired by Tahitian techniques of impressing plants on cloth, or by geometric marks on the garments of European sailors. After the *draudrau* is placed on the blank surface of the bark cloth, the *kesa*, a pasty black dye, is applied with a *tata*, a sponge formed of bark fibers. Based on the matrix pattern, the operation is repeated so as to obtain linear chains that create contrasting and powerful visual effects, the repetition of a single element being the main construction mechanism of the pattern. The stencil illustrated here, which was used to form the first frame lining the outside of the piece of fabric, belongs to the group of *vetau*, which comprises single or parallel lines. While the patterns, derived from prehistoric Lapita ceramics, are mainly geometric, Fijian material culture—combs, fishing nets, traces left by crabs on the sand—also informs this vocabulary (Kooijman 1977).

Caught in a web of historical and geographical circulation, these patterns, which were passed on among women, represent Fijian culture and communities. At the time this photograph was taken, they were subject to a polemical debate after Fiji Airlines had asked a well-known *masi* maker, Makereta Matemosi, to design its new visual identity and, in January 2013, filed a trademark application for fifteen patterns (Koya Vaka'uta 2013). While the contemporary usage of the patterns on the wings of aircrafts was not being questioned, the attempt at auctorial and mercantile appropriation of these signs undermined the traditional economic regime of *masi* motifs. This legal episode highlighted another definitional property of the pattern, namely, mediation, understood as the process that enables a more or less free and creative transition from a model to its application by means of transposition, adaptation, interpretation, or hybridization.

The regime of the pattern was able to upset workshop practices and played an important role in theoretical debates on aesthetic experience, the circulation of ideas, the doctrine of imitation, technical reproducibility, etc. Several of these issues were expressed and contrasted in the art of the nineteenth century, particularly in Victorian England. The publication of *The Grammar of Ornament* by the architect and theorist Owen Jones (1856) marks the culmination of a conception of the pattern as a universal language, whose formal alphabet is here condensed into twenty chapters of chromolithographed plates created by a designer-decorator and subsequently to be applied by a worker or a machine. At the other end of the scale, William Morris, the founder of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, revived artisan patterning practices of the glorious Middle Ages for his wallpapers and textiles and put the physical engagement of the body at the center of his attempts to revitalize the ethics and politics of decorative arts (Arscott 2008).

Beyond art-historical considerations of style, the pattern, through the challenges it poses to scholars, is transdisciplinary to many fields: the arts as a whole, but also sociology, anthropology, philosophy, life sciences, engineering, systems theories, etc.—to such an extent, indeed, that its historiography seems unlimited. Interestingly, the contemporary period—the era of cybernetics and network theories—witnesses a paroxysmal resurgence of patterns, as evidenced by the development

of architecture, where they tend to cover the structure or even become the structure itself, as opposed to classical ornament, which was limited and supplementary (Picon 2013).

Despite its generic value and lack of predetermined application, the pattern nevertheless entertains an intimate relationship with textiles, which are conducive to the display of designs magnified by the textures of fibers and the colors of dyes. By shifting the gaze from the surface to the depth of the woven fabric, it is possible to highlight other types of patterns operating in the intersections of warp and weft. This kind of transition can be found in Fijian patterns, which are visually reminiscent of textile wefts, even though bark cloth is a non-woven textile and the loom was not known before the arrival of Europeans in the eighteenth century (except on Caroline Island and Banks Island). It is easy, then, to paraphrase the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's (1994, 107) observation that «everything here is woven from fabric» by replacing the word «fabric» with «pattern.» From the very heart of the fabrication and visuality of patterns emerges a form of «textility,» to borrow a term coined by the English anthropologist Tim Ingold, the author of a comparative study of lines based on examples in art, writing, architecture, and music. Ingold (2010, 91) explains that «the forms of things arise within fields of force and flows of material; it is by intervening in these force-fields and following the lines of flow that practitioners make things. In this view, making is a practice of weaving, in which practitioners bind their own pathways or lines of becoming into the texture of material flows comprising the lifeworld.» In this perspective, which reaches from the drawn line to the material thread, textiles no longer appear merely as a properly woven material but as the construction of an arrangement involving a technique, a structure, a motif, a metaphor, a concept, a process, and finally a pattern.