58

TOPIC: DEATH

Investigator: Torika Ovoi

INTERVIEWED: Diki Kuva.....8th October, 1982

SUBJECT: DEATH OF A PERSON

Tabana ni Vosa Kei na i Tovo Vakaviti
Institute of Fijian language and Culture
41 Loftus Street, Suva, Fiji

- Say, if one of us here dies our VASU, that is our mother's relatives will arrange, cook and look after those who comes to the funeral. Their say, is carried out during the funeral from start to finish. They may be called the owners of that particular death.

In the olden days this is one of the most important and respected function. When a person dies he'll be kept home for three or four nights even though there was no fridge or motury. During this three nights the dead is at home, old folks would sing Psalms, like MEKE but nowadays religious songs are sung.

A TANOA YAQONA and YAU(goods) is presented to those who are to dig the grave, now this grave diggers will be responsible on the time or day the dead is to be buried. After the dead is buried another TANOA YAQONA is again presented to the grave diggers as a thank you for what they have done.

In the past a separate division of the goods are given to the grave diggers, this is to show the appreciation of the

dead's relatives for what they have done. The grave diggers will do their very best in digging the grave preserving that is keeping the body in the grave and also burying it properly. The grave diggers are required to do their very best in lying the body in the grave.

When the funeral is over the old ladies, those who belongs to the dead man's clan will stay for the BIKABIKA at the dead man's residence. This old ladies are just to stay in the house and they won't do any work.

They will be fed, cloth and looked after by the dead man's very close relatives. This old ladies won't be able to visit nearby houses or go anywhere they are to stay in the house and meditate on the dead man.

On the fourth night a magiti is prepared by dead man's close relatives. A pig may be killed root crops like dalo, yams etc. and greens will be cooked some roasted for the feast. Mats and Masi will also be prepared before relatives of the dead man sits to eat. The same feasting is held on the 10th night, 50th night and also on the 100th night.

This is held respectively as a memory of their dead relative. When the grave diggers after burying the body, goes down to have their swim in the river, the river will be tabu for 100 nights. The last thing done for the dead man is the BOGI 100 or the 100th night. This when his close relatives will take off their mourning clothes and now they can do what they were not allowed to do during the 100 nights mourning.

Cont'd Page 3

- Now if a father of a family dies, his children, his wife, his brothers and sisters and his fathers relatives will tabu. Some of them will not eat a particular food, or won't comb or cut their hair, others will be wearing black dress and ribbons, they are not to go in where there is entertainment or amusement and man will leave their beard to grow. This is a sign of sorrow and mourning and they will keep to this to the 100th night.

On the 100th night all the dead man's relatives who are TABU will dress in MASI and a piece of fabric will tied around their waist, this fabric will be tied on to another piece until the trail behind the person is long. Five or six ladies will be holding the trail so that the fabric will not be dirty. Now each of them will wear a TABUA they can hold if they want to with mats, masi, drums of keresone and tabua they will go up to the VAKATUNULOA(shed) where their VASU, this is the dead man's relatives from the mothers side, awaits them. The TABU side will go up to them and present them with everything they have brought to also inform them that they have kept their TABU and now they have come to take off their mourning.

The VASU will have to await the other side with a magiti. Cooked MAGITI or Raw MAGITI may be a cow and a pig with root crops etc. The TABU side will give them the goods they have brought and the other side will have to present the other

Cont'd Page 4

side with a magiti whether it is raw or cooked. Usually there is a cooked magiti where everyone from both sides will seat to eat and the raw magiti is only for the TABU side.

- What is done after the four night?

A big magiti is prepared on the fourth night. Here all the relatives and neighbours will seat to feast. This is also the time the old ladies can go back to their various homes. The mats, masi etc. brought for the REGUREGU by people who comes to visit the dead man's family, some of this goods will be shared amongst the BIKABIKA. A lady may be given three or four mats and piece of masi. The goods shared to this BIKABIKA will depend mainly on what the divider thinks and also on how much people bring in for the REGUREGU. One cow or two will be killed and root crops like dalo will be shared amongst the relatives.

- Is there any other things done?

On the 100th night a magiti, just a small one will be prepared by the dead man's close relatives and they will only feast them just the relatives of the dead man. This feast is for the relatives to sit together and think of their dead one.

After the 10th night, some don't do the 50th night they are all preparing now for the 100th night when they will take off their mourning clothes and tabu this is what we call the VAKATARAISULU.

- Is there any Tabu that the dead man's relatives are to

Cont'd Page 5

keep that you forgot to say?

During the first-100th night the relatives will be in mourning clothes, the man can wear coloured, they won't drink grog or smoke cigarette also on the fourth night a man from the VASU'S side will cut the hair of those who are to TABU. This cutting will be just anyhow. Sometimes the scissors snips deep twice and lightly four times and thats it. You can imagine the shape of the hair when it is cut like this. The hair is just cut anyhow. On the 100th night the VASU will again cut the TABU'S hair, but now they will trim it properly.

The reason why the dead man's children, his wife, fathers relatives goes to present their VAKATARAISULU to the VASU because to us Fijians when a person is alive his fathers relatives owns the person when he dies they have no more say to the body it is the mother's side who will take over from the first night to the 100th night. Now it is the VASU'S side to boss the person.

- Is there anything else that you would like say before we finish?

I believe that is after the 100th night there is nothing else done for everything is been done that is to be done from the first night to the 100th night.

I believe that is all.