

TOPIC: PROTOCOL

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A VILLAGE PROTOCOL

In a village, or if someone is chosen to be the chief or the leader of all the people in the village, he also have a person called his MATANIVANUA (chief's herald). Apart from this person who is the matanivanua, we also have some other group of people called the NAVULEKA and then we have the villagers under them all.

- Can you tell me more about this person who holds the position of MATANIVANUA?

The MATANIVANUA is the person who makes any decision made by the chief official and also he is the one who lay hands on receiving a gift or something that has been presented to the chief. He also have the power to supervise the people in the things that is to be done for the village and the things done in the village. One of their major role is to inform the people of what the chief wants and he makes sure that everyone in the village get to know of this message from the chief, no one in the village should be left out or in the dark of what is going on. If the chief wants something to be done maybe for the village and the help of the village is needed to help make this effort a success, then the MATANIVANUA will have to wait to the villagers reply and he is going to take back the message to the chief to say whether the people has accepted it or not.

And if the chief wants something from his own people, it is from his very mouth to the MATANIVANUA and then the MATANIVANUA will pass it on to the people in the village and this means every one living in the village.

- Can you tell us about some of the ceremonies or part of our life when we use the TABUA or KAMUANAGA (whlae's tooth)?

When it is known that a chiefly procession is coming to our village the people in this particular village prepares themselves for the coming of this important persons. When these people or this chiefly group arrived, the first thing that they are going to do is to present their I SEVUSEVU to the chief of this village.

It is followed by the BOKA VAKAVANUA which is done in relation to a different case altogether. Let's say, a few months back or a few years back, one of the chiefs' in the village died, but none of these people who are there on that particular visiting day, turned up to do anything for the I REGUREGU or anything, So they are expected to do this ceremony called the BOKA VANUA as if they are now paying their last respect for the chief or person who died, but they did not come to the funeral gathering. They get over with this ceremony of BOKA VANUA, after this ceremony, then they are going to inform the people of the purpose of their visit and do whatever they want to do, that is expected of them and accepted in the village.

The first thing that they are going to do the I SEVUSEVU to the chief in the village. Then the chief in the village present his I SEVUSEVU to this people. In some other villagers and other places, they have this other ceremony called the YAU NI RABE (gifts for the drinking of the yaqona), but here in REWA, we only have

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the ceremony of I SEUVUSEVU and the other one is BOKA VAKATURAGA. After the visitors in the village has done their part, then it is the village's turn to do their I SEVUSEVU. Also we have this other ceremony of QALOQALLOVI which is performed while the visiting chief and his companions are still inside the boat and on the water, and the performed ceremony proceed when they get off the boat to come to the mainland. The I SVUSEVU is done at the place especially prepared to receive the visitors and it is at this place where the rest of the chiefly people and the respected people in the village are waiting for them. When the ladies of the village hears that the chiefly procession is approaching the ceremonial grounds, they take the mats and other things for the VAKAMAMACA and they are going to spread it out on the spot where the chief who is visiting their village is going to sit. It doesn't mean that we have to prepare for it because this might be given to us on a short notice and we do not have enough time to prepare for his coming, so the things we've got we have to feel contented at least we've got something, but only when we go up to this spot to do the spreading of the seta for the visiting chief, we should be extra careful and be very neat in the way we spread the mats out. We should make it look real nice and presentable so as to show that they can always do better despite not having a lot of beautiful things. We would be informed as to who is coming to our village and the position he holds and if are told that he is chief, then we are expected to get all the good things and the best things for him. But it would be determined by the things we've got, if we've got plenty than this is no problem for us. Let's say that the chief of

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Rewa, of the title ~~ROKO~~ TUI DREKETI is paying a visit to the chiefly island of BAU. When the ROKO TUI DREKETI arrives in BAU he is taken straight to the residence of the VUNIVALU's herald to REWA who is referred to as the MATA and that is at VUNIVAU. This is ~~also~~ the house of the ~~MATA~~ of BUREBASAGA to BAU. They are taken to this house and after a while, then they are taken to the place where the ceremony of ~~welcome~~ welcome from the village and of the chiefly place is going to be held. At the ceremonila grounds, all the people in the village are there including the high and respectable people in the village.

- Can you go into details as to this ceremony of BOKABOKA?

If a village has got ny form of relationship with this village or let's say that they are close in the sense of being subjected to one another, then it is right for this person or chief visiting to do something for the BOKA VANUA ceremony. It is also expected from that village that you are going to do something for your BOKABOKA or BOKA VANUA. They also will have something prepared for you when you are going to do yours first. The chief and quite a number of the people in the village knows fully well that you did not turn up when the chief or one of the chief in the village died.

There is ax YAVUSA (a major group of people in Fijian Society inter-related) which is called the MATAVUALE and they live here in Burebasaga. The chief or the VUNIVALU was the one who separated this group from the rest of the people. Also this group known as the MATAVUEE, they are also known as the LEWE NI KURO WAI, in English not generally connected with the meaning it is CONTENTS OF A POT FILLED WITH WATER. They say the reason why

they are called LEWE NI KURO WAI is something to do with what the ladies in the olden days used to do. When the men are ready to go out to build a house for the chief, the women who stays behind, they are going to fill the pot up with water and they place the pot on the fire, then the people will turn up to fill the pot up with food, any type of food. This is where this name for this YAVUSA was chosen from. Also the MATAVULE, they have got another name which is their true identity and that is the MATAISAU. The MATISAU people are the only people that is allowed to build the house for a chief in any village, each village has got its own MATAISAU people among them. The chiefly family has got the right to call any person belonging to this group to come and cut firewood for them any time they want it. This is the group the MATAVULE and when they are called to do this work, they obediently obey and cut firewood as asked by the chief or anyone else in this case.

- What can you say about the GONEDAU (fishermen)?

The people known as the GONEDAU lives in NUKUI. The GONEDAU for the whole of REWA area, they live in NOCO but the GONEDAU or fishermen for the chief or the ROKO TUI DREKETI, they live in NUKUI. But for the fishermen who lived in NOCO and is referred to as the GONEDAU FOR the people of REWA, they are only under the commandship and leadership of the TUI NOCO. Sometimes, the TUI NOCO orders his fishermen to go out and catch some fish and he usually take this fish to the ROKO TUI DREKETI. Only the chiefs of every village and land, they've got their own GONEDAU as for the villagers, if they want to eat fish, then they will have to go out themselves to try and fish, catch their own fish

because the local people do not have the GONEDAU who catch fish for them, only the chief are given this extra attention and service, not the villagers.

This YAVUSA called the MATAVULE, they have been officially written down as another BUREBASAGA people.

- Is there any other group of people with another different title of I CAVUTI (a set of totems) in Burebasaga?

There is also another group of people or YAVUSA known as the VUNISAU, and it is the duty of this people to bury the chief when he die. When it is officially known that a chief in this village die, the people in the VUNISAU clan are informed and it is their duty to go and dig the grave for the chief. They pick and prepare the place where the body is going to be buried. It is their decision to let the other people know that they have picked this spot for the burial ground for this dead chief. Also, they are the only people allowed to jump around on top of the grave after the chiefs' body has been lowered on to the ground for burial.

- Can you relate to us an example of what exactly happens when a chief die?

The people who are greatly responsible for the taking care of the body is the VUNISAU people. The same people are also expected to stand on guard around the chief's body which is awaiting burial time. The body is usually kept at the chief's own home at that time. During this time, the beating of the LALI is going to be heard most of the time and one of the people who is taking care of all the things being held for the death of this chief, he is going to inform the VUNISAU leader that the chief's body is

going to be buried on the next day, maybe. The VUNISAU people are also the people who is going to help in the beating of the LALI. Also, the people will just have to obey them if they want something done. Whatever order they say, should be carried out immediately.

- What happens after they have buried the chief?

When a chief die, the people in the household and also in the village prepares everything for the SOMATE (funeral gathering) and this is done and carried out at the chiefly home. The beating of the LALI continues and the VUNISAU people are informed that the body is going to be buried on the next day. The VUNISAU people prepares everything that they are going to need for the grave digging. A place would be shown to them and the digging starts after the ceremony of SAU is placed. They will dig the grave and then they are going to wait over there until the chief's body is buried. After the funeral, they will all go down to the sea to take a bath. The place where they are going to take their bath, it is going to be a forbidden area for anyone in the village and this is decided upon by the VUNISAU people as to how far from the mainland. When they finished taking this sacred bath, then the people responsible for the things going on in the funeral gathering, they are going to present a YAQONA for them and then they will sit down to feast on the food especially prepared for them. During this time or after that, then the people concern will have to see that the largest portion of the gifts which they received from the people who came to the funeral gathering is given to the grave diggers or to the ~~WATAXXAM~~ VUNISAU

people, the best and the big things are given to them. They say that the main reason why they are given such attention because they handled the chief's bury and they looked after it before they take it away to bury it.

The name of the place where the they take the chief's body to be buried is called the MARA and after they had buried the chief's body, they have to wipe their hands with some food like the DALO or taro because they have been handling things at the sacred burial grounds for the chiefs only. After they wipe their hands with these foods like the dalo, then they journey down to the sea to take this special bath. In some places when the garve diggers go down to take this bath, the water ~~does~~ not have this TABU placed on it. Also when a chief dies, there are three major groups where all the gifts and food which they got from the people who came to the funeral gathering goes to. The first place where a large number of this gifts collected goes to is for the decoration of the cave before they place the body on top. The second one is for the close relatives of this chief who is dead and the third one goes to the VUNISAU people. As soon as they bury the body and return to the village, they try to get rid and over with everything, so they make the ULU which the gifts given to these three diferent groups of people are called the ULU.

- What is the meaning of this word ULU and why it is used to described the gifts given away to the people when a chief dies?

The meaning of this thing called the ULU is the gifts for the people who are related to this chief or the deseased person. They are referred to as the WEKA NI MATE. And the group of people who are going to be very busy doing all the sharing and

deciding as to where should this go, they are referred to as the TAUKEI NI MATE (owner of the deceased person). So when a chief die, they are going to have these things done for the village which is the deceased person's mother's village, and this is known as his KORO NI VASU. But if a commoner dies, they only bury his body and then they return to the village to make the I BURUA and every thing is over. The sharing of the food is only done for the people who went out to dig the grave for this particular person.

- What is the BURUA?

The BURUA is the food prepared for the people who are coming to the funeral gathering. The food which the TAUKEI NI MATE prepares is seen that all the people who came and gone get's equal share of the food for the BURUA. The TAUKEI NI MATE it is their duty to prepare the food for the BURUA. When they have a death there is a particular person who is going to write down all the names of the people coming to the funeral gathering. When it is time for them to make the BURUA, everyone who came is going to get a share of the food prepared. Also they usually have this other thing called the VAKABOGI DARU (hundredth night) and it is up to the people who is running the whole thing whether they are going to have anything for it or not. If they want to do something about it, they are going to prepare some food for just a small feast where the whole family and those invited turn up to make use of it. In this case they do not make any more of those things of presenting gifts and what not, they only prepare food for this occasion. When it comes to the hundredth night, this is when the deceased person is gone for three months, so

just something to remember him by, they have this small food prepared. In the olden days, when they want to know how many nights have passed, all they have to do is to count the number of knots on the string like a necklace around their neck and each knot represents ten whole nights. When they learn that the knots represents thirty knots, they know that one month has passed and going on to hundred nights, they just have to feel as to how many knots they've got. The ceremony of VAKATARAISULU is decided upon by the TAUKEI NI MAEE. At the ceremony mentioned, this is the time when all those relatives of the deceased person are going to discard their black clothes which they have been wearing to mourn for their relatives death. It is the time when they are going to allow themselves to put on ordinary clothes again and all the things which they have been doing before this person died, is taken up again as to where they left off. That is all for the VAKATARAISULU. Also that much I can say about out topic and something about funeral.

THANK YOU.

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