

TOPIC: DE

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Investigator: JOAPE R. SENIKUNA.

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INFORMANT: ANASEINI VAKANANUWA of MUANA-1-RA, VUNA, REOA. AGE: 67 yrs.

- Our informant, ANASEINI VAKANANUWA, will be telling us about the customs of her people which they follow when someone dies. So, it's over to her to decide what she is going to talk about first to begin this interview.

- For these topics, marriage followed by birth and death, the next one where we have to be respectful and observant is when a person dies. It is taken very seriously and there is no joke or playing around when it happens. Let's say that a young woman or a woman dies but the husband survives with the children. As for husbands, when their wives pass away, they often find time to laugh during those days, talk with other people and ~~they~~ hardly see them crying. They don't really take it very seriously like when a woman's husband dies and just you see the woman's reaction. She is really moved by it and can mourn over him for a very long time. Well... let me tell you something that has happened very often. Before the father or the man can stop wearing his black ribbon or to be seen in black, that is, before the VAKATARA-1-suit, he goes off again and remarry. We don't go into that yet but we'll start from the very beginning.

I'll change our starting around and this time, it will be the husband who has passed away and the wife mourns for him. ~~Well...~~ When the man dies too great people will be involved in the preparation for the funeral and everything done in a death. The first people involved is the dead man's people from ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> mother's side. That is his MATRILINEAL from his mother's side and they are called the TOKANI WATE. The second group of people who will be mourning the Shoro is the husband's wife herself and her people. This is what happens, the woman's MATRILINEAL will get together and decide on what to do. Then they will collect mats, women's teeth and so on. They will get the woman from her home, dress her up in our custom and she is taken to the husband's home where her husband's MATRILINEAL will receive the gifts and remove her costume and then she is returned to our people. After all that, the woman is free to go back to

her people and stay with them and live a free life.

- Thank you. But what I really want you to talk about is the custom observed when a person dies. What is done to him, like

I heard that they have the I REURECU and things like that..

- Well... some mats are spread out and arranged by the woman's side and by those known as the WOKANI-MATE. Then they will wait for the arrivals of the dead man's relatives. When they arrive, the I YAU that they bring is known as the I SOLE for their use. I SOLE is a funeral offering but usually mats are used here. They bring mats like KUMI and other big mats known as the DATI-KI-LOKA. On one side of the room, the dead man's relatives will arrange their mats in a pattern and on the other side, the dead man's wife and her relatives will be doing the same thing. And then they exchange gifts. That is how it is done. If the girl's MATAKAI wants their girl to return to her house if her husband has passed away.

- Well... thank you for bringing that up. What I really want to know is the things done in our customary way when a person dies. I heard that we have this thing called REURECU. And these people who are ~~W~~ responsible for <sup>this</sup> these death prepares some food or a MUKITI

For the people coming to the REURECU. Again, they wait for her many days before the man is buried. Could you talk more on that....

- Yes. After they have exchange this gift, they will take what is rightfully ~~theirs~~ theirs. After that, then they will be given something to eat. If it is

not eating time yet, still, they will be the first people to eat, these people referred to as the WOKANI MATE. They will be given food like

pork, yams, taro, and these food are all cooked. These people will be treated differently from the others who are coming to the REURECU.

When it is time to eat, a food is kept aside for this people and everything good is done for them. They are given excellent <sup>services</sup> ~~staff~~ all throughout the funeral gathering.

- Let me get one thing straight. The members of the YAVUSU just present themselves with their own I REURECU when after they have

been told <sup>that</sup> a member of their YAVUSA has passed away?

- Yes that is so.

- And they are completely different from those referred to as the LOEKANI MATE?

- Yes. That is so.

- Well... Thank you, you can carry on now...

- After they have done the funeral and everything, the wife of the dead man is free to go back to her home. She will take with her everything she owns, her possessions, her mals and other gifts which was presented to her during her husband's death. She will keep an eye on the LOEKANI MATE. She sees that the best food are given to them until the VAKABOAI VA - the fourth night after they have buried the dead man.

- I heard that on the VAKABOAI VA, they used to make a MATAITI. Could you explain what kind of MATAITI that is?

- On the fourth night, we have this thing called the VAKABOAI VA. That is the girl's side will prepare everything for the MATAITI of the VAKABOAI VA. They will have pigs killed, a cow and other things prepared. They will also have taro, yams and other root crops. When all the food are there, they will share it. A MATAITI will be given to the LOEKANI MATE and those who came to the REUREU will also have a share and the third share goes to those of the woman's side.

- Well. Ah, could you say you prepares the food, is it the LOEKANI MATE or those of the woman's MATAITALLI?

- Both sides, the woman's MATAITALLI and those of the LOEKANI MATE. They will contribute to the MATAITI for the VAKABOAI VA.

- Could you say who prepares the most ~~of~~ the MATAITI?

- The most food will be prepared by the woman's MATAITALLI and they are referred to as the TAUKER NI MATE. But for those people coming to the REUREU, members of the YAVUSA mostly, and the LOEKANI MATE, they also bring food with them. These MATAITI which they present to the TAUKER NI MATE is also used during the

funeral gathering.

- Does that mean, that the food brought by those coming to the AEURECIU is also shared out during the YAKABOAI VA?
- Yes. It is shared out with the MAITI for the YAKABOAI VA.
- Thank you. Please continue.
- The lady will be staying <sup>with</sup> ~~at~~ the funeral gathering. After her husband is buried, she will return to the house and she remain dressed in black. On the fourth night, after the things for the YAKABOAI VA had been cleared up, then she is expected to stay in the house, not to go around or seen walking outside. She is not suppose to go out into the garden to plant or to go out into the sea to look for seafoods. She is to remain inside the house and to mourn for her husband.
- Does the manner in which the husband mourns for <sup>his</sup> wife is the same to that or different?
- They are not the same.
- What is the name of the KAMUNIAA presented to the OEKANI MATE that is used to bring the lady back to her home?
- The whale's teeth referred to as the QAVI NI VALEVA and <sup>which</sup> ~~says~~ is presented to the dead man's relatives or the OEKANI MATE is known ~~as~~ that the girl will now go back to her own MAPEALI.
- Is this the same when a <sup>woman's</sup> ~~woman's~~ wife dies?
- No. They don't have this sort of thing when a man's wife dies.
- Thank you. You can continue now.
- When a <sup>woman's</sup> ~~woman's~~ husband <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ pass away, the lady is allowed and free to go back to her own people and back to her village. And they have this thing called the A I QAVI.
- Our story was up to the time after the fourth night or the YAKABOAI VA. From then on, you still count the nights?
- Yes. You still count the number of nights, the woman's husband has been on his grave up to the third month, the woman will go back to wearing black. She will be wearing her black clothes

again and this is done at her husband's home. She will just sit down to eat, takes care of her health and just rest. She will be told to go out to visit her children so that they can cheer her up and make her happy. After that a big MATATI is prepared for her. It will be prepared by her husband's relatives or the IOKANI MATE, the YAVUSA and her relatives or the TUKEI NI MATE.

- One important thing, I've been told, that ~~is~~ the moment of the funeral, when they are going to bury the body. Could you talk about what happened during that time?

- Thank you. The body will await the arrival of the IOKANI MATE. They will decide when to bury the body. When the IOKANI MATE arrives on the spot, with their gifts or 1 REUREAU. The things prepared by the TUKEI NI MATE is removed from the house and what the IOKANI MATE brought with them takes the place of the mats and other gifts prepared by the TUKEI-NI MATE.

All these who comes to the REUREAU, they bring a TABUA each and these TABUA is placed on top of the coffin. That signifies that that ~~is~~ they are paying their last respect to the person is now dead. The person who is now dead will then be taken for burial. If that person was a very kind person and knows everybody and treat them ~~a~~ kindly, he will be highly praised by those, living. Someone might ~~on~~ want to give deliver a speech about him and so on.

- Before they have the BURUA, do they have anything before that?

- Yes, they just count the nights. To us, when it is four nights or five, we do not have anything. Only when the tenth night is over, then we have a large MATATI prepared for this occasion. In ~~this~~ <sup>the</sup> older days, our ancestors when they make this sort of MATATI, they have the root crops like yams, taro and some meat foods to go with it like pork, beef and so on. The TUKEI NI MATE can kill a pig and this is taken to the IOKANI MATE and presented to them. This is on the tenth night and this

is known as the I VAKABOI TINI. Today, we hardly see anyone who runs the shop to have this done. If they had bread in the older days, they can take five to six dozens of bread and present it to the WAKANI MATE as the MAITI for the VAKABOI TINI. But things have changed today. Again, another MAITI is prepared on the thirteenth night. It is also presented to the WAKANI MATE. This will only stop after the day when the MAITI for the BURUA is made and it is only then when everything for the funeral is cleared up and is completed.

- You were telling me something about the BURUA. What can you say about the I KOTIKOTI or when they have this Pains like VAKATARA I SULA?

- No. These MAITI prepared for the VAKATARA I SULA is a completely different one. They have pigs, coas and fish prepared for the MAITI. Also, there is cassava, taro, yams to go with it. The VAOAIA for this occasion is plentiful. Then comes the main thing and that is when she will come and take of her clothes, not the clothes we wear everyday but she will be dressed up according to our custom, like the MASI, and so on. The ladies are there to remove her clothes. After that ceremony of removing her clothes, this signifies that she is now free and is no longer committed to her husband's home. She is free to go to her own home and she is also free to get married. The period of mourning is now over and so is everything else.

- Thank you.