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Tabana ni Vosa kei na Tavo Koro  
 Valenitabarakaraka, Suva  
 Institute of Fijian Language and Culture  
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TOPIC: FARMING

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SUBJECT: CULTIVATING OF LAND IN THE OLDEN DAYS.

- In the olden days when a young man wants to have a plantation of Yams he will firstly go to the village chief and present some grog to him telling him that he wants to have a garden for yams.. When the young man had presented the grog the chief will ask the Turaga-ni-Koro to blow his con-shell bringing all the men of the village to the chiefs home. At the chiefs home the chief will show the men of the village the grog presented by Tevita for a garden of yams. The grog will be mixed and all the village men and also the chief will drink. This shows that they have agreed to help the men weed, dig and plant in the new garden. After the grog has been drank the chief will turn to Tevita and tell him that his wish is granted and the village men will start cleaning up for the garden the next day.
- On the next day when the village men had gone to clean up the spot the men wants his garden to be Tevita's family will be cooking food for the men's return. This food or magiti cooked is called the OCO. When the village men had returned from gardening they will lunch at Tevita's home.

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After lunch they will be having grog provided by that family for the mens drink.

Tevita's garden will be cleaned, plots made and planting of Uvi tops. All men in the village will be taking part in gardening from weeding to planting. This will be done to all men who wants a garden. They will follow the same route of presenting the yaqona to the chief asking him that they wants a garden made and the chief will be responsible for calling a meeting and presenting the villagers the request already made to him. When everyone's garden is planted than the owner of each will take care of his own gardening. Cleaning the gardening, pulling up the weeds and burying new soil around each plant.

Our ancestors are very good in knowing when to start the planting and also harvesting season. They plant during the planting season and harvest during the harvesting season. When yams is nicely matured the biggest yams in the first harvest will go to the chief as the SEVU-NI-TEI. Each men will bring the biggest yams of his first harvest to the chief. The chief will in turn will exchange yaqona to each men bringing his SEVU. A SEVU will be taken to the chief and some to the church elder. There will also have a SEVU-NI-VANUA. This is when all the village farmers after their harvest the families get together the biggest yams, this is beside what they have already taken to them, and they will

all go up to their chief to present their SEVU-NI-VANUA. When the SEVU-NI-VANUA had been presented only then will the farmers store their harvest of yams in the "LOLO" for the family's next years food and also for next Planting Season toppings.

You don't see cassava in the olden days only yams and dalo. Food was abundant and young men listen to the older ones. The harvest was plentiful because men followed the right channel.

Young men in the olden days were very good farmers and because every male in the village were active farmers and young and old women are good garden keepers food was abundant and there was no such thing as famine. The harvest is divided into two one  $\frac{1}{4}$  for the next planting and  $\frac{3}{4}$  for the family's own use.

- When is this planting season?

Planting season is the month of March and April. Between these months farmers help each other planting. One year from the month their yams etc. is planted is the harvesting season. Our ancestors very well know on the month they are to plant.

- How do they know that this is the month of planting?

When they know that it is March or April they will go straight into planting. Yams is planted anywhere that has thick soil.

- What root crop is planted more yams or dalo?

Yams are planted in gardens called WERE.

A man can have two WERE'S of UVI and two WERE'S of dalo

this is why there were no famine in the olden days. When gardens are been planted by village men, the children in that family and the mother of the family are responsible for cleaning the garden for the father will be busy in other village activities.

- I believe there was no spade for digging?

There was no farming equipments like spade etc. used in the olden days. SAU is used for digging holes and making plots. SAU is a branch of any tough tree cut and shaped properly used for digging etc. When planting is in process they will be also chant and shouts as yam is planted. To plant yams the hole for a yam topping will be dug by two young men. The dig is to be deep when the hole is deep enough it will be buried again in the soft soil making a small mountain above the hole where the yam topping is planted. The deeper the yam hole the longer and bigger the yam will grow. The edge of the WERE will be weeded very well and will be kept clean. If the WERE is situated on a flat land, drains will be dug along side the WERE so that water will flow there not allowing the soil to erode.

- Is there any reason why there is chanting and shouting when the planting is in progress?

This is a belief that is practiced from our ancestors to my time. Chanting and Shouting is practiced during planting to keep the men alert and active while it also makes the yam grows faster and big. When the yam topping is planted the

garden owner will cut GASAU sticks and plant it near the topping for the plant to climb up on. One or two big yams will be taken to the chief as the family SEVU. The SEVU-NI-VANUA will take place later.

- What happens when the SEVU is presented to the chiefs?

The SEVU will be presented to the chief and while the chief is having his yams no female is to come close his house or see/look at him while he is eating the yams.

- Will there be anything happens if anyone doesn't bring his SEVUSEVU?

SAU will kick back on those who don't bring in their SEVU. But as far as I know there are hardly any villager who won't bring the SEVU but if there are any in the village there will only be one or two.

- Do ladies do planting too?

Ladies are responsible to look after the garden, weed it and keep it clean. Men only do the big job of planting but ladies are garden keepers. They will have vegetables like BELE to plant and also pandarmus for mats. But they are responsible to keep the garden clean.

- What do our ancestor use to make their crops in healthy condition?

Our ancestors don't use manure or anything it is only the chiefly way they go about before, during and after planting that makes their crop healthy.

- Who is responsible for giving the piece of land where the

crops are to be planted?

Each individual chooses the place where he wants to plant his crop. He will go up to the chief with some grog asking him for assistance from the villagers and will also tell him the spot that he had chosen for his garden. The chief agrees and all village men will go to that place to cut down the bush, clean, dig and plant.

If the village is in famine the chief will be blamed for his idleness, so to keep the village in good order, having plenty to eat, the chief will be active to see that everyone has a garden.

- What is Tavioka used for?

Tavioka is food for pigs in the olden days. When dalo is planted, holes will be dug and before the dalo plant is placed in the hole, shouting and chanting will take place before, during and after the dalo is planted.

- What kind of food does Tevita's family prepared for the men who are doing the gardening?

A pig will be killed and cooked in the LOVO with root crops. When the men returns they will feast on this, drink yaqona after the feasting and Tevita's job is now to see that his garden is to be cleaned and well kept.

That is all.