

TOPIC: Fijian DoctorInvestigator: MiliInformant: Vani Tadrau of Nabuli, Rewa. Age: 68yrs

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A time came when I had something like a vision and I was told that I am going to become a DAUNIVUCU or a dancing master. I saw a man coming towards me and all he said that I will become a dancing master, they danced to me and I could understand the words of the MEKE. After they performed to me, they disappeared again. In the mornign when I woke up, I decided to try it out and see if it really happened to me last night. So I got down to work, I wrote out the words of the MEKE that was being preformed to me that night and I call some young men to my house and I told them that I am going to teach them a MEKE. So, I called them to my house and I sang the words of the MEKE and I was doing the action too at the same time. I wasn't taught by anyone, it was what I saw the previous night that I just followed suit and did it. Amazing how I did it but I did it till the last part of the MEKE. That is the way I started to become a dancing master until this very day. But if someone get's sick and comes to me I can also help them get well. I know things about medicine but not all of it. When they come to me, they had to present a YAQONA to me. I accept it and then wait for whatever thing my devil or my god would say about that person. He talks to me and he reveals to me the cause of that sickness. He would say the cause of his sickness is this or he is suffering from this and that. This is revealed to me after the person seeking for help presents his YAQONA to me. Then I would turn to them and tell them what the

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matter is and the reason for their sickness. And then I would suggest a medicine for it that could make them better. You go and take this and you feel an awful better than now. So they return to their home and they did as they are told, many times they are cured as to whatever disease they are suffering from. When they knew about my knowledge of medicine and all that, people came pouring into my home and we couldn't stop them. I ended up treating Indians, Europeans during those days when I was dealing with the sick people. As you know my village is really far from the road but still people come to me to seek for medicine and advice. People come by plane and then travel on foot just to see me especially. Indians often come to me for medicine. When they return they feel better. There is one disease, the DRIMU and people who suffer from this disease are healed when they come to me and other types of diseases and sickness. It is my god who helped me know the type of sickness a person suffers from and the medicine for it. When a person comes into my house and she said that is she is sick, quickly my god will reveal to me the name of the sickness, he'll say oh... he is suffering from this or that. And you get this for it's medicine. So all that I do is to call my children and I ask them to go and get this particular herb or plant to be given to the sick person because that is the medicine for it. So they just go and get whatever I tell them to get and it is mixed and squeezed and then it is given to the sick person. When they drink this medicine they are eventually healed from whatever they are suffering from. That is how I deal with my patients until the time when I could no longer carry on the work that was given to me. It so happened one time that a young boy became sick

and this was the son of RATU PENI and he nearly died from the sickness he suffered from. So I was called to go and help him, and I went and offered all my help and tried to cure him for two whole nights and I managed to make him get better again. The demons and the evil spirit were all around the house and what I did is that I ~~was~~ chased them away and to leave the kid alone, and so they left and the boy got well again. And he was well from that day until today. But it is up to every individual as to what they want to do to me, if they want to give something to me as a way of thanking me for the good thing I've done, I accept it as for others if they do not want to do anything it is all right with me, as long as I do my part. I do not get angry about it or disagree with what they did, I only want to know that my name is on the clear and that I've done something for my people not the other way around. Same as when I go out to teach the people a new MEKE. When I go out to teach them a new MEKE, they often do something in return for what I taught them. They could present me with mats, and other gifts and they often shower me with gifts when they see that all has gone well, it was like this for so many years before I retired from this work.. Today when some people always come to ask if I could teach them a new MEKE I refuse because I know that I am really getting old and not fit to do the job. That is all.

- That time when your spirit or god comes to you, could you first of all reveals his name to us.
- The name of my god is NAULUMATUA and he is from BUA. This person or this spirit is ROKOMAUTU's son and he is the one who helps

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me with the work all this time. He reveals to me knowledge about the medicine and about the MEKE dance.

- When he comes into you, does he come in the form of something or is there a sign that tells you, he is here and is waiting for me or especially you to ask for whatever you want to ask? What is the sign of his presence?
- He does not come in the form of a human being, he comes just like the way a devil moves, very silently and quietly and you cannot see him except me. He shows himself to me when I am in bed and that is the only time we often share each other's company. He will tell me who my next visitor is and the sickness she's got or his got. We are ~~only~~ only the two people concerned, I will be sleeping there waiting for him and he just arrives from nowhere and we just start with our conversation. Not everybody can see him except me. I can tell that he is inside my house and he reveals himself to me in so many ways that only him and I know of, nobody else. At night times, he can come home and show himself to me and we often spend half of the night drinking YAQONA. Then one day I was really doing extra-ordinary things, which are beyond my power, and it is during this time that I spent most of my time drinking YAQONA in a special house which I built for him and I where we could spend some time together relaxing and conversing. As for other native physicians, they can't do this sort of thing, but since I am dedicated to his commands and his orders, and I do my work faithfully, he paid me back by doing things for me and that is helping me in healing the sick and teaching MEKE's to those who want to learn it. And this is one way of showing the people

what our gods and ancestor's spirit can do for us. They are not all that bad.

- Before you do your part do you make a YAQONA or something like that before you treat your patients or attend to whoever is needing your help.
- No, there is no need for me to do that. When a person comes to see me he will bring the YAQONA himself and they present this to me. They come home with their YAQONA ana make their presentation and the purpose of their visit and then I ask them to mix it and we drink that. Or if the sick person can't come himself, someone can come for him and he will present the YAQONA and he will say, this is the YAQONA for so and so, and he is very sick and she or he needs your help. So after that I will decide whether to go and see that person or to give a medicine to make her better. It is done that way. So, as soon as I lay my hands on the YAQONA that was presented to me, the thing just automatically come into my mind as to what to give and what sickness that person is suffering from. Then all I have to do now is to go and see that person or send the medicine that could make him better. If he had done something wrong that is not right in the eyes of the people then he needs to go and make an atonement with the chief because of the wrong he had done. This is referred to as the BULUBULU in the Fijian language. All these things the spirit who helps me to do this things, informs me about the people's wrong and he tells me what to do in order to help these people.
- Could you relate to us about a particular person who needs help because of the sickness he's got and cannot be cured after

he had seek medical attention?

- There is a case about an Australian who suffered from strokes, and he couldn't move any part of his body on his right at all. During the time he was sick he couldn't walk on his leg because they sort of all numb. So after I attend to him, he told me that he is going to try and walk again. He did just that after a few minutes of rest at his home. All those people who comes to me to ask for help, I always help them and what I do to them is very helpful in the end.
- What exactly did you do to this man Ponijese when he came to you with his sickness? Describe how you treated him.
- About this man Ponijese from Serua, he came to me and I used a medicine which grows wild in this area. He came to me but I was not at home, so after a few days he sent another fellow to come and ask me if I could come to his home because he cannot come himself due to the sickness his got. So, this man came and he spoke for Ponijese so I went with him and I gave him something to drink and after that he felt really better again.
- Could you tell us exactly what you did to him that nursed him back to health and that made all the difference?
- For that, they just made their YAQONA, and the first cup came to me, I received it and I took it while the rest watched me. After the YAQONA ceremony, then I stood up and went up to him. I massaged his body gently and I did this to the whole body. After I did that I noticed that there was really a slight change to him and then I told the rest of the family to bring a YAQONA for him and this YAQONA he was going to present it to his father asking for atonement. This is for he's BULUBULU. So they brought the YAQONA

and I told the sick person to stand up and do his BULUBULU to his father. He did as he was told and that was the only thing that made him well again. The first thing that helped him find relief from his pain is the massage I gave him and the second thing that made him more better is when he did his atonement to his father. And after that, everything is back to normal again.

- After you've done your job of advising them what to do, does it mean that you do not make anything else to your god or spirit who helped you to do these things, or is there something else you do after your job?
- Yes, that is the most important thing, to do a thanksgiving offering to him. And this is referred to as the MADRALI in the Fijian language. This is the YAQONA and I will present this to my god. After I present my offering to him so is everything else.
- Do you do this thing after four nights or.....
- Yes, it could be on the fourth night, but only when you see that the patient is better and is going his duty again. It doesn't mean that you do it after the four nights of your help is over. Because it could be that on the fourth night the sick person is still sick, so only when you see that the sick person is much better than he was when I first came in to see him. I returned to my house after I've done my duty and then at my home, I will make my thanksgiving offering to my god for the assistance he gave me when I needed it. I just come home, I make the YAQONA and I just say 'This is my MADRALI. That person whom I went to see is back to normal.

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- What can you say about this sickness like stomach ache and other body pains. What type of medicine do you give to them to help relieve the pain. Is there also any taboo that you say to them to observe while they take the medicine you give them?
- For stomach pains, the only thing that I normally do when someone gets this pain, is that I just massage them and that is all. When I finished with them, by that time the pain has gone away again. There is no need for a medicine to give them.
- Is there any sickness that you have to massage first and then give them a native medicine to drink to help them in their sickness?
- Yes there are some sickness that I have to massage them first and then give them a medicine to take daily until they are fit again. Some ~~sickness~~ sickness that women suffer mostly from, when they get this I just do my part of massaging them and then I ask someone in my house to go and get the medicine then I take it to them to take it daily until they are better again.
- Could you give some names of the medicine that you give to this people when they get sick and they come to you for medicine? Name some of them.
- We've got the VESI plant and the BUEVU.
- 2 What part of the plant do you use?
- All we have to do is go out and scrape the bark to get the medicine. You scrape some of it and this is mixed with just enough water, not too much and you drink the juice you make out of that. You could scrape a little bit of VESI bark and a little bit of BUEVU bark, then mix them together, then you add a little bit of water and the liquid you make, you drink that as I prescribed to. That

is all I do when I give out medicine.

- He has to take that medicine for how long?
- It is up to him how long he wants to take that medicine. He can drink that until he knows that he is really well and in good form again then he can stop taking it. There is no limited time for that. If you want to get better quickly then make sure you take it as I told you to.
- Is there something done to~~y~~ him like the I SILISILI as some people call it after the four nights are over or what do you usually do after four nights?
- I really do not know anything about the I SILISILI because I do not do this sort of thing after the four nights of my attending to my sick patients. On the fourth night we do not do anything to mark the day or anything like that. When the fourth night is over, if he feels that he can do something for me like bringing me food or anything he wants to give to me like a thank you act, he is welcome~~s~~ to do that but I do not tell him to this thing. He can bring anything he knows that will be accepted by me, anything at all, he just present it to me and that is all.
- What can you say about the rest of the medicine that is left after the patient has got well again, is it returned to you or.....
- No, as for the rest of the medicine left after the patient has got well again, they can keep it or throw it away. They do not return it to me.
- Can we go back again about this thing you first mentioned to me about your being a DANCE MASTER or DAUNIVUCU. You were telling me that you taught the people of the words of the song and how to

perform in that MEKE. Could you say more about this thing and how you usually do it.

- Well this is some of the words of a MEKE that I taught some of my young people.

'So na marama ni noda vuravura, e sega na cagi e sega nâ ua.

Kacikaci tiko ko Ratu ~~Vua~~ gauna, yavala na noda vuravura.

Vakadei na bose e sa rua, vanua ko Viti kau sa taura.

Karua beka na veikunati, ka tauri na bose ka sa searua.

Yavusa ka tu me sa kisi, me rau sa na veiwatini.

Me ra kau mai na gone ni Viti.

Na ose me sa kua ni deikiki, me ra dre ga na gone ni Viti.

Me kuitakiki na gone ni Viti.

Qai vosa tu ko misi nakisi.

Kau cake e dua na i tini sai koya na kovana kei Viti.

Na yacamuni me mai sini, oqo na vosa i Makisi.

And it goes on and on about this MEKE.

- But I would like to ask you about some of the things that you do during your MEKE practise and all that. The time you have your MEKE ~~practise~~ practise and all the people involved know their part by heart. So they are going out to perform and I heard that after this performance they used to have something called the VAKACIRI SALUSALU? Could you describe what they do in this thing and who did it and to who?
- In this ceremony of VAKACIRICIRI ~~SALUSALU~~, they only prepare food, and all of us will come together to make use of it. We prepare the food and we take it out to the beach or somewhere and share it with our fellow performers and those who took part in

the MEKE singing. It is like a picnic for us. So we just sit down and enjoy the food, the performers, the singing group, my demon and I. After that evrything is over and we have to wait for the ~~ext~~ next time someone wants us to perform somewhere.

- What can you say when you teach the people the words of the MEKE and how to perform it. Does it remain known to you up to this very day, or after you perform this MEKE it is all forgotten again?
- Weel of course after I teach them this MEKE it will remain in them and the words of the MEKE is known by heart by these people it ~~is~~ not forgoteen by them. Like one of the MEKE I told you just recently, it is an old MEKE but I still remember the words of it although I taught my boys years back. I taught them many MEKE, how to perform in it and how to sing its' words but since I am old now, I forget things and I find it hard to teach them how to perform at all that, since I am an old man now and is gett~~ing~~ weak very fast. And the last MEKE that I taught is NI VAKAROROGO NA LEWE I VITI. Would you like to hear the words of this MEKE , well here goes.....

'Listen people of Fiji, this is a story of something that is happening now. I entered the WAQA CIRICIRI, and it is like that of a dance hall. So welcome to this room people of Fiji.

We fought over a cup, and it like fighting over a world cup or something, because both ~~us~~ us were dying to get hold of it to be his own, he dosen't want to share it.

After we have a small talk, then I ~~asked~~ the meaning of something he said, and he said that he is seeking the only solution of what he should do in order to help Fiji.

'And then after sometimes, I asked him how is Fiji today.

We should be aware of what is happening today, or Fiji will be really worse in years to come all because of what is happening now.

- What can you say about the clothes or the costumes you wear when you go out to perform in the MEKE you taught the performers. Could you describe the way they dress up and all that?
- The costumes we wear, we've got the VESA and the SALUSALU. We could wear this sulu we have today.
- What can you say about the costumes used by our ancestors? Is it different from what we are wearing today?
- In the olden days, we can just wear anything presentable in a MEKE. We could wear any white sulu or black sulu. Anything goes, there is no need to go into any problem when you go out to perform in a MEKE, you could wear anything that is quite decent. As for the ladies there is really a preparation concerning their clothes and all that, they have to really dress up so that their breasts and all that is nicely hidden from the eyes of the audience.
- Is there some skirt-leaves that they use when they perform in a MEKE, I heard that they used to have this too so could you talk on that for me and make it more clear too.
- Yes, you could have skirt-leaves too. And sometimes, people have the VAU strings tied together or woven together to make skirts and they wear this to go and perform in a MEKE. But mostly we perform in this MEKE known as VAKAMALOLO.
- Is there something else you would like to say so that we can know of because of your duty to the country. I invite you to say

it now, anything you would like to say about this topic we've been going over ~~ix~~ it together?

- That is all about the MEKE and that of the medicine part. Many of the MEKE that I teach sort of has a meaning of it's help and it is up to the people what they can interpret out of it. I hope I've said all the things you want to do.
- Thank you.

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