

FUNERAL

INVESTIGATOR: TORIKA.OVOI

INFORMANT: SAKEO MOCE.....Dawasamu, Tailvu.

SUBJECT: FUNERAL.

- Could you talk to me on the subject funeral. The things done, their meaning and the beliefs behind this?
- When a person dies, just say my wife, I her husband and her children will be very careful of where the news of her death goes first. I will send my sons with a tabua to go to my wifes family and announce her death. A tabua will used, is used as the Tukuni of her death. As the news is being told to my wifes family my children will come back home and prepare the Vakatumiloa for the ceremony that will be taking place. At this time my wifes Mataqali will be called together by their chief and will have a meeting. My Mataqali will be helping helping out with me.

After my wifes mataqali has met they will come over to my place with their Kani Reguregu and present it with a tabua. This tabua shows that, they have come to ask for my wifes body to take and they are ready to do everything concerning the funeral. When this tabua is being presented I and my children have no power over my wifes body. My wife's Vasu, have asked for the body and t they will run everything. Reguregu usually consists of mat, tabua and yaqona. In the olden days tabua and yaqona are the two most important Fijian wealth in this particular ceremony. The KEREI of my wife's body is already presented and the Vasu can please themselves where they take the body. If they think of

Cont.2

- taking it back to her village I have no power of stopping them because the tabua is already presented to me. I, My children and my relatives will all stand bowed to the wishes of my wife's relatives or Vasu.

People will come from villagers to mourn with my family they'll bring their Kani Reguregu this shows their grief and respect for my wife. In the past we dont have any mortuary for dead people this is why we dont have our dead very long in the house. The dead person will then be dressed up by the Vasu. Dead people wear their best clothes and are wrapped with masi and mats. Then the dead person will then lie on the prepared Davodavo. In my village after the dead person is wrapped she is placed to lean on the wall in a sitting position. At times a special chair like seat is made for the dead person to seat on, this is so that everybody would be able to see her easily without pushing in the crowded Bure.

The food that is prepared for those who come to pay their last respect to the dead person are usually prepared by men. Food are cooked in huge tins. In my village the dead body is kept in a Bure. Yaqona drinking and smoking is not allowed in here. The Vakatuniloa accomondates the Yaqona drinking,me. This is also where the Kani Reguregu are brought.

In the past the dead body were not taken to church. A small mass is done in the Bure for the dead person and the body is carried up to the grave.

If my children wants to carry their mother's body they will again take a tabua to their mother's relatives and ask them if

Cont.3

- could only carry their mother's body for the last time to her grave. If their mother's relatives agrees then the children will be allowed to carry their mothers body. If they dont agree then they will present another tabua to the children telling them that they will do it themselves.

After the mass the body will be taken up to the grave to be burried. When the funeral is over the grave diggers and the coffin beareres as we call it now days would go down to a river for a wash. This river is now taboo. No one is to swim, fish or wash in this river until the decided time. A pack or sign shows that the river is taboo. No one is to use the river in any means. The coffin vearers and the grave diggers please themselves on how far the signs are to be planted. Both pegs or signs shows that the water flows between this two pegs is restricted. It is taboo No one is to fish or do anything with it because the SAU is packed here.

In the olden days when our ladies go fishing or qoli when they come across the sign they'll all go on land and when they have passed the second sign of the taboo, that is after two or three miles then they would go down agin in the river to continue their fishing.

Straight after the funeral the coffin bearers and the grave diggers washes their hands and everyone returns to where the ceremony is held. Here the dead man relatives have prepared a BURUA. This magiti is fresh butchere cows, pigs and dalo. This will be distributed to those who came and brought their Reguregu. This magiti is a thank you sign to those who came in respect of the dead person. People will take their share and will go back to the-

Cont.4

- their various homes. Everyone goes back to their various homes except for the BOUTA's who now are called the Bikabika. Their job are to stay home, they wont do anything and they'll be looked after very well by the dead man's close relatives. They drinks, food and clothes will be supplied and looked after by the dead man's relatives. On the bogi 4 or the fourth night the dead man's relatives makes a magiti, butchers cows and prepare a feast. In this occassion I and my sons will make a Ulu to my wife's Vasu. A tabua is presented to the Vasu, this shows that I and my children have given them all the wealth that was brought to us when people came for the Reguregu. The Vasu owes all this because they have come to ask for my wifes body. The Kani Reguregu is theirs and they will please themselves to what they want done with it. If I have a daughter, I will also give my daughter away to the Vasu, saying that she is to be married to one of her cousins from the other side. She is an replacement of her mother. She goes back to her mother side to pay for what her mother has done to my side. This is something like giving my wife back to her relatives. This is also the time when the BOUTA goes to have their bath and come to feast. One thing I forgot is that this old ladies who are doing the Bikabika are not to touch water, bath or get wet. On the fourth night then they are to go down and have their bath in the river. A feast is prepared on the 10th nigh, 50th night and on the 100 th night. Nights are counted in the past this way. An old lady is to tie a string around a pole every night from when the body is burried. The first night the body sleeps outside is the first string tied around the pöle. This goes on to the 100th night. On the 100th night a big magit

Cont.5

- is prepared. On this occasion the relatives will make a big fire (open fire outside) something like a lovo. Then the dead man's possession, his clothes, and whatever belongs to him will be thrown in the fire.
- I refer to what you've mentioned above about money. You say that money wasn't important to buy things in those days. Why..?
- Yes, in those days money wasn't important. When, say my wife dies I will just have to take a tabua go across to someone who own cow, present him with the tabua and ask him for anything I want. When the tabua is presented there is nothing the owner can do but to give whatever I want.
- In some places I see that they prepare a special Davodavo where the dead man will lie. How about ....?
- To prepare a Davodavo is not special in those days in my village. The dead man is dressed and is made to seat or lean against the wall just as a living person is sitting.
- Do they have special costumes for the dead....?
- In the past they dress the dead with a piece of Lavalava and then masi and kumi is wrapped around them. The dead person dresses up just as he is about to be wedded.
- Nowadays I see that the house where the body is brought to or where the ceremony is held are decorated in a special masi how about in the olden days?
- Bures are not decorated. They stay as they are. The place is respected no noise is heard in this place.
- You have mentioned that they are plenty of mats for the davodavo is there any particular or special type of mat used for this particular....?

Cont.6

- In my village there is no special mat for the davodavo only nice mats a chosen or picked for the davodavo. In the funeral this type of occassion the KOMAI sits at the head of the bure or where it is nicely prepared. This is just close to the dead person. The Komai or the chief is treated in a special way. He is not worried if his cigar is finished. The relative of the dead person will see that the Komai has everything he wants.
- I heard that in Nadroga the Komai doesnt touch his food when he is eating. He is being fed. Why is that?
- Yes, in Nadroga the Komai is fed by the relatives of the dead man. He doesnt touch his food because the belief behinde this if he touches his food the Sau will keck on him or to the relatives of the dead person. Komai's are respected they have the Sau and if someone talk against him or over him the spirits give punishment. The Komai's wishes are carried out and no one can go against him.
- In the Ra side they use to have ORE.
- Yes, in my place we have this too. When the dead man will is in the bure the relatives of the dead man will present a tabua to those who will do the Bikabika and those present if any one goes against the set of rules they have laid they will be punished This is ORE. A ovisa or policeman is chosen among the dead man's relatives and he is to see that no one is to go against this rules. If when he sees that some one has go against th4 rule he will give this person the ORE.

The Ovisa Ni Mate would say, for your punishment for not keeping the rules You are to prepare a Lovo for the Bikabika or 10lbs grog for the man to drink tonight. This are some example

Cont.7

- that is given to them.
- What are the type of rules that is ..?
- For the Bikabika none of them are to go back to her home before the fourth night. No giggling or laughing, joking etc. is to be heard in the bures or the compound.

When the punished person has brought his Kani Ore the relatives of the dead man will then take another tabua and present it to the punished person for a thank you sign.

THE END.