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TOPIC: MARRIAGE .

Investigator: Willie.Dari

Informant: Taitusi. S.Koroiwaca.....Nalini, Naitasiri.

(M.67 years old)

In the olden days in the place or area of Naitasiri, the couples to are to have no idea what so ever about their marriage. Marriage is the concern of the parents only. They will decide when their child is going to be married to. Marriage of couples is done usually on relation lines. The parents would look for the partner of their chief from within their relatives. There is very little choise for the child.

For instance, the parents would be looking for a nice woman for their child, but this does not stop them from choosing a woman from another mataqali or village. But as long as the wife to be of their child is related to them. When the parents of the boy had decided on a woman, they would approach the father of the girl and inform him of their wish. At this stage the wish and decision of the girl's father is revealed. The girl would remain at ease knowing nothing of what is going on. The term in which the parents of the boy went to seek the approval of the girls father is called the VAKALAVO.

As time goes along, the girl is brought during this VAKALAVO so that her wish could be heard. But usually in the olden days, the decision of the girls father is wanted only.

After the girl's father had agreed to the proposed marriage, the boys parents would return to their mataqali or clan and inform them

that they had approach a woman to be the wife of their son. The boy's parents would also inform the members of their mataqali or clan that the girl's father had agreed to the proposed marriage of their son. From then on both sides of the proposed couple would be preparing for the TEVUTEVU ceremony.

During all the times before the marriage day, the boy's parents and relatives would be taking gifts to the girl. They would be presenting clothes, soaps food and other things to the girl.

Usually whe a girl is asked for her hand, she would be at the top of the age of fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen would she be approached. The boy's parents and relatives would cater for the girl's need until she is fully grown up probably reaching the age of seventeen, wighteen or nineteen.

During all these time and years of waiting, the boy's parents and relatives would be visiting and presenting gifts to the girl. But on came occasion oron some occasions if something arises which may be of any obstruction to the preposed marriage, both sides of the couples would quicken the marriage. This is just to prevent any mess or shaos done to the proposed marriage. This thing is carefu³lly ~~matched~~ by the parents and relatives of the boy.

When the~~x~~ day of marriage is at hand, all the relatives would come to the ceremony place. The boy's parents and relatives would provide a very big feast for that occasion. They would provide dalo and other food on that day. Also the girl's relatives would be preparing a food too. Their food is brought together with the girl as he comes to the ceremony.

Ceremonies of various kind concerning marriage would be held on that day. The boy ~~and~~ the girl would make vows and the girl's

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parents inform the boy's parents and relatives that they whole heartly give their daughter to them. All these are made at the place where the ceremony is held.

On this marriage day the bedding of the couple would be prepared by both sides of the couple. Mats would nicely spread and the KUMI is brought to be the curtains of their beddings.

Before the couple are going to be married, they would be thoroughly oiled. Each can done at one time and each one of them would be fully dressed in traditional customs and is nicely decorated.

The boy would be dressed in his place (the marriage ceremony place) and the girl would be dressed in another house. After they are dressed, a spokesman from the boy's side would be sent to the girl's parents to request them and the girl to come to the ceremony place because the boy is ready. The girl would enter into the marriage ceremony area and hence the marriage would take place.

After the marriage, two women from the boy's side and two from the girl's side would be at the house during the night of the marriage. The curtain would be drawn down but they would be sitting next to the curtains. They would be awake and they would know what is all to happen that night.

Before the night of their marriage, the couple would be thoroughly oiled. Usually would the girl would be oiled by a so called plant called the CAGO. This plant looks like a curry when pounded. The yasi wood or tree is also scrapped and pounded and this made into an oil. The girl usually use this oil before going to meet her husband. Of course when the girl is oiled up, she really looked and smell nice. This is what the elders used to use in the olden days concerning their marriage ceremony.

The first night of the couple is expected, the night that all look forward too in any marriage ceremony in the olden days. The women who had been with the couple would know exactly what happens. These women would tell the rest of both relative the result of the first night. Through them the people would know if the girl is virgin or has been having affairs before. If the girl is virgin before the first night, the women inside the house would be very happy. They would sing, dance and make all sort of happy noise to show that the girl who is married recently is a pure one or is merely a virgin. The happiness if the women and the relatives would continue until the day the couple are going to leave their traditional bath. But if the recently married girl is seen to be not a virgin, the woman in the house would not be in a happy mood. The news of the girl of not being a virgin would spread like wild fire among the both relatives.

On that day a feast would be prepared. A pig would be cooked in the lovo. As the pig is going to be brought to the ceremony place, it would be presented in a very bad shape. For instance it may be without its nose ears or eyes. The backside of the pig is cut into a very big hole and left opened. The stomach is also left opened.

During the bringing of the pig to the ceremony place, everyone present there would notice this. At once the people would know that the girl recently married is not a pure one.

To the girl's parents and relatives, this is a very big shame to them. Every ceremony which may be held later is not interesting to both sides usually the girl's relatives. Everything which they have been doing happily had turned sour to them when they learnt about the reality of

of their girl. Ceremonies which are done later is done for the sake of doing it, but the real value of the ceremony is not there.

But if the girl is found to be pure, both sides of the couples would be very happy until the end. On the fourth day the girl would take a noke(basket) and go for a bath, merely in a nearby river. It is sommonly said that the recently married woman is going to the river to catch some fish. When the bride goes to the river, the couples of women would be accompanying him also. After her bath, as she comes out of the river, a kamunaga or tabua would be presented to her as the lawa ni nonanoke or the item contained in her basket after coming from her fish catching trip.

After the presentation of the tabua the girl would receive the tabua and go to give it to her MOMO (uncle) mother's brother. In presenting the tabua to her Uncle, the bride would inform that she is happy with everything done to their marriage.

On that fourth day, a feast is also prepared in which both sides of the couples would take part in. This feast is the last ceremony prepared in which both relatives would be saying their farewell to each other.

I forgot to tell you that during the presentation of the traditional wishes, riches or material. Two parts of that wealth is given to the girl's relatives. This wealth is called the KALI NI SUCU and the VOLA. These two categories of riches is completely different from the rest of the riches. This riches is entirely presented given to the mother of the bride. For instance if some materials are given to the brides mother, the tabua is not missing from that presentation. But as for the food which may be prepared for the girl's realtive, this can be showed among the whole relatives of the bride.

After everything is completely done, the girl's parents and relatives would happily return to their homes.

- I wish if you could tell me about the VAKALAVO or TABAILAGO which have been mentioned to me? Who would be going to present this ceremony, and will it be the whole mataqali(clan) ?

Yes the mataqali or clan can be going at this ceremony. For instance if the asking of a girl's hand in marriage is going to be done in the village, the whole mataqali will be going to hear the father's and the girl's decision.

- Who will be the main decision maker in the asking of this ceremony? The girl's father is the main man. If he says yes, it shall be done, Even though if the girl is very young, she would be allowed to be fully grown and shall be the only one for the boy who had already come to her home to ask for her hand in marriage.

- In the asking of a girl's hand, will the boy's parents and relatives be ~~presented~~ presenting tabua in the approaching of the father or they just went in single handed just to know the wish of the girl's father?

Of course the girl's relatives would be presenting a tabua to the girl's father. Before the tabua is going to be presented the girl or wife to be is called to witness about the purpose of the presentation of the tabua. The girl would be there witnessing everything but she would remain silent. In this presentation, after the girl's father had agreed to the marriage proposed, the boy's relatives would outline the programme of the couple's marriage ceremony.

- We have been talking about that if the girl is ~~not~~ under age, the boy and her relatives would wait a bit. For instance if the boy's relative are told to wait for a period of four years so the girl

could be fully matured, what would happen between that waiting period of time, could the young girl and the boy are allowed to meet one another during this waiting period, or just the boy's parents are allowed to pay frequent visit to their future daughter in law. I wish if you could tell me more about ~~this~~?

This would be a very hard case. The girl would be living like she is in prison. During the waiting period the girl's parents and relatives would be taking a very close watch on the girl. They would not allow her to go or walk alone to any place. They would make sure that no other man should come across into her life., but only her future husband. The girl's relatives would take this point very seriously because they know that their happiness and honour depend on the girl. Shame and disgrace can also be brought by the girl if they would not play their part in watching over the girl.

- Let us take for instance if something happens to the girl during that waiting time or waiting period. what will be the reaction of the boy's side? Would they abundant the proposed marriage and look for another girl or.....

Truly speaking I have not heard or come across such situation. As soon as a boy and his relatives had announced their wish for a girl the girl's parents and relatives would make sure that everything would go right. There is not room for carelessness on their part, they would watch the girl until the day of her marriage.

- You mentioned that gifts such as clothes etc, would be taken to the girl from time and then. Who would be taking this? The boy who is going to be the future husband or some one else from the boy's house is going to do that?

The very close relative of the boy could be doing this. Even the

boy's mother or father can do this. Of the boy's sister. But the boy—who is going to be the future husband—will hardly be sent to present gifts to the girl.

- Could you tell me about the asking of the girl's hand, would the boy be going too on that occasion so that he could see and talk to the girl who is going to be his wife or will the boy wait until the marriage hour?

From what I heard from the elders, the asking ceremony is not known to the future couples. They know nothing at all. Only the parents know it, but after the asking ceremony and everything is optimistic the boy's parent would return home and inform their son that they had arranged a girl for him. They would also inform their son about the girl's name and her background. This also happens for the girl's side.

- Could you tell me what will happen if one of the couple refuse to abide with the proposed marriage?

In the olden days, law is a law. Obedience is fully observed by everyone. So if the parents of a child decided upon something about marriage, the child will not go against the wish of their parents. They will always follow what their parents says. The children have high respect on their parents. In the early days, no child will stand on the way of their parents.

- I heard that in Vanua Levu, if a boy's parents are going to ask a man for his daughter's hand, they would do so by saying that they wish to have his daughter to be a help-maid in carrying water for them. Does this sort of indirect approach applies here in Naitasiri or is it different?

In this place there is also a saying which is similar to what you have said. For instance the boy's parents would request the man to allow his daughter so she could help in the household cleaning. This is well known by the girl's side.

- Thank you very much. Could you tell me how the marriage day is decided? Is this solely a decision from the boy's side or from both of them?

In the olden days the boy's side usually proposed the marriage day. Sometimes they would consider each other's opinions on that decision. But as time goes on, the decision of the marriage day would be officially on government notice. The couple's would register their names officially as man and wife, and with in their official document the day of marriage is mentioned. This the relatives of both side would prepare for this notified day.

- I wish if you could tell me all about the ceremonies on the marriage day. For instance how the bride to be is dressed up and how the wedding is going to be done?

The day of the wedding, the bride to be will be dressed up in full traditional customs. She would be decorated as much as she could. The bride would be dressed up as she was going to perform a meke or dance. She would wear kumi and also wear garlands on that day. The bridegroom would not be decorated like the women.

The clothes which the couple wear will be on their waist until the fourth night. None of them will change his or her clothes. The couples would remain in the wedding house without having any bath. They will be oiled continually by the women who are in the house. They can have their bath on the fourth day.

- I heard that in the olden days when a married couple attend for the

wedding feast, they would not be touching the food with their own hands.. Is this practise true in this place over here?

Yes that is true. The couple would not touch the food. There is someone else whos is going to feed them who is going to give them food. One will feed the bridegroom and the other is going to give food to the bride. During this feasting, the couples would sit at the head of the table with nice mats spread underneath them. This is what happens in the traditional feasting ceremony of marriage.

- I also heard that in traditional wedding ceremony, all the eating and cooking utensils would be the property of the girl's side after the wedding. Is this practise applicable over here?

Yes, this also happens over here. Things needed and used in the ceremony can be given to the girl's side if it is plentiful. Once they have taken it, it would be theirs for good.

The preparation for the feast on this wedding day is fully supplied by the boy's side. They would like to see that everything is fine and nothing is short. As for the utensils used by one person, it will not be used by another person. There will be enough supplies of utensils on that day. Utensils already used would be collected by the girl's relatives.

- I wish if you could tell me about the wedding day, will the tevutevu take place on that same day or different day?

Yes, the tevutevu (spreading of mats) would take place on the wedding day. After the wedding day or the wedding ceremony, the tevutevu will be followed next. This tevutevu will take place in the open ground in which both sides of the couples would come and spread the mats which they had brought and show forth to the public.

It would be a marvelous thing and marvelous sight to see women from

both sides of the couple bringing forth different colourful of mats and spread it openly in the open ground.

Each side of the couple would be competing one another on when will bring and shown forth the most mats and nice colourful mats. This shows the working together of the people to try to support the starting life of a couple.

- You mentioned about the ~~man~~ woman from both sides, if the couple - who will be inside the wedding house on the first night of their togetherness. You told me that they will know whether the bride is a pure (or virgin) one or not. Could you tell me how these women will know of ~~this~~? Is there any evidence to show that this is so? Truly speaking the women who remain in the wedding house knows exactly what takes place inside the curtain. They would bring out their attention to hear what is going on. They would listen attentively to everything going on at the couple's bed. For instance, if they will hear the girl's painful cry on the bed, they would know and assume that it is a sign of virginity on the girl's part. Later on the women would check on the couple's bedding for any evidence of the girl's virginity. If blood is seen, it sums up all what they had expected. The next morning, the women will be dancing and singing signifying the purity of the bride.
- I heard that a small feast or food prepared the next morning just after the couple's first night or marvelous night together is called the DOLA NI KATUBA or feast for the door opening. Is this small food preparation observed here?
Yes, that is true. The feast would be prepared by the mataqali or clan.
- Mentioning about the food or small feast after the couple's first night

together ~~ex~~ what do you call the small feast?

It is simply called the VAKATOKALAU (breakfast). This feast is usually provided when the girl is learnt to be a virgin before that night.

- You mentioned that the first day, the couple will not have their bath? Yes. The couple will not have their bath until the fourth night. They will only oil their body as if that is their only means of bathing. They can only bath after the fourth night.

- After the bride or both of them will have their bath, will the fourth night ceremony (BOGIVA) commence then or.....

The couple would have their bath after the fourth night or fourth day. After returning from the river, both sides of their relatives would prepare a feast in which all of them would part take in. This is the last ceremony which brings everything to a peaceful ending.

- Mentioning about the bath at the river after the fourth day, will the men go to or.....

Only the women will accompany the bride on the bathing day.

- You mentioned about the tabua which would be presented to the bride soon after she had her ~~ex~~ bath, could you tell me who would be presenting that tabua and what is the purpose of it?

The tabua which will be presented to the bride is given from the boy's side. After the bride shall receive it, she would then present it again to her relatives.

- I heard a ceremony which is called KAU NI SUCU or KALI NI SUCU (taking away from breast) which is an integral part of the wedding ceremony in the olden days. This also applies to a so called ceremony which is called VOLA (book). Could you explain me the two ceremonies and when it is performed.

The ceremony which is called the VOLA is done when everything is fine about the wedding ceremony.

The Kali ni Sucu ceremony is done solely to the mother of the bride. This ceremony is presented by the boy's relative. The purpose of this ceremony is to request the independence of the bride from her mother. Since the mother had brought up the bride, she had free will over her daughter. So the purpose of the ceremony is cut this will relationship of the mother towards her daughters. In presenting the ceremony, the boy's relative would request the boy's relative would request the mother that she should have no more power over her daughter because she is the wife now of this son or this young man. That is the meaning of the KALI NI SUCU ceremony.

- Mentioning about the kali ni sucu ceremony, could you tell me what items is used or presented to the mother of the bride. Is it a tabua only is presented or.....

Yes, The tabua is the only thing required in this ceremony.

- Mentioning about the ceremony solely for the mother of the bride, is there a small food prepared solely of the girl's mother too?

Yes, a feast ~~will~~ would be prepared for the mother and also gifts of material will also be presented. In the presenting of the ceremony, the yaqona and tabua is initially presented.

- Does this ceremony would be the last ceremony between the relatives of the bride and the bridegroom, or would there be another ceremony? This ceremony is done during the farewell ceremony. As the girls relatives were about to return, the boy's relative would present this ceremony to the bride mother. The mother would give her daughter her full privilege and freedom before she is going to leave her daughter behind.

The girl's relative would return with plentiful of traditional riches. Thank you. We have been talking about the traditional way of marriage or wedding. As you have mentioned or said that as time goes on, different styles of getting married is witnessed, one of these is called VEIDROTAKI or runningaway with a girl to be the wife. Could you explain this style of getting married and how the traditional ceremony had compromise with it?

Today we look at this style of getting married as a simple thing. Today as you go around, you seldom find young man and woman getting traditionally married. Often it is seen that the young prefers to take this simple path of getting married -the veidrotaki - of running away with the wife to be.

In the olden days, this is a very unrespectful practise. It is really dangerous to do such a thing like that. Nowadays if simply a young man meets a young girl at the bus stand, they would decide to get married. Off they will go to the boy's house. It is so simple today. But in the olden days this is just the vice versa.

If a person or a man will do such a thing in the olden days, he would be closely marked by the relatives of the girl.

In the olden days if a man brings a woman to his home in such a manner, the boy's father would at once try to contact the girl's parents and close relatives to let them know that their daughter is now living with his son.

In carrying the message across to the girl's side, the boy's parents would choose three or four good strong young men to present the yaqona to the girl's father informing him that his daughter have been married to their relative. These men chosen to be the mesanger have to be smart in fighting and fast in running. In the olden days, if

the girl's parents do not agree with what have been done to their daughter, they would in turn try to punish the messengers. So that is why the messengers have to be very strong.

But if the messengers are received and the parents are received and the parents are not angry, the messengers would not return home, and if the girl's parents are very agreeable to what have taken place, then they would return quickly to the village to inform the boy's parents of what had happened back at the girl's village.

When the boy's parents and relatives have heard of the girl's attitude they would at once prepare for a ceremony which is called the BULU-BULU (burying). This ceremony is to be done to the girl's parents and relatives. The boy's relative would start collecting Fijian riches for that ceremony. They would decide on a certain day and date in which this bulubulu ceremony is to be done. This day would not be known to the girl's side. It would be a surprise to them when the boy's side would come to perform this ceremony. In the olden days, this ceremony would last for about four days.

In some occasion if the girl's side knew before hand if the day in which this ceremony is to be held, they would empty their house or village on that particular day because when the boy's side will come to perform this ceremony, nobody is there to welcome them. By this the boy's ~~relative~~ relative knows that the girls side is not happy with the running away of their daughter. So that is why ~~the day~~ the day in which this ceremony is to be held is kept as a secret among the boy's relatives.

In the olden days only the men will go to perform this bulubulu ceremony at the girl's place. The women or children will be ~~not~~ told to stay back in the village and they are not allowed to go because it is not known what is the atmosphere of the situation at

the girls' house. So if something is going to happen which is not really expected the men are ready to stand it.

Today we can see how peaceful this ceremony is performed. Men, women and all alike are seen going yo perform this ceremony. X

In the bulubulu ceremony, the boy's side would be collecting mats, & clothes and drums of kerosinaa of which to be presented to the girl's parents and relatives. The boy's side wuld also provide a small feast for the girl's side.

In the bulubulu ceremony, the boy's side or relatives would seek the forgiveness of the girl's side of what their son had done. They would ask for their leniency and ask them also to settle their differences After the boys side had agreed both sides can start talking to each other again. It ould be a big ceremony and a lot of feasting would take place.

This bulubulu ceremony is a new thing today. In the very old days, there is no such ceremony which is called bulubulu ceremony. In the olden days, the young man and woman is traditionally married. Put today the running away method is often seen.

After the bulubulu ceremony, the usual ceremonies which we have when there is a wedding will follow next, such as the VAKABI I VOLA (registration) KALI NI SUCU and what not as I have mentioned before. It would be just like the traditional wedding ceremony.

- Thank you very much. If there is something else you would like to tell us, the young people of today about traditional marriage, you are welcome to do so.

I wish to make a difference about the married woman in the olden days and the ones of today. If a woman in the olden days and she is married today, she just thinks of coming to her husband and having a small

family which is a sort of private.

But in the olden days if a woman is married she knows that and she is ready to serve her husband's parents and relatives and even her husband's mataqali (clan) as a whole. In any ceremony which may be held inside the husband's mataqali (clan) the married woman is willing to carry out the joke of the mataqali and their burdens.

But if the girl is from another village and then married to another village, she knows that she would be carrying out every duty of that village. This is how the new married woman feels towards the husband's place, in the olden days. In the olden days, once a woman is married she is subjected to serve her husband, husband's relatives and place.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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