

TOPIC: PROTOCOL - VISIT OF THE CHIEF Investigator: Willie

INTERVIEWED: Siuta Delaibatiki.....Mua i Cake, Vutia, Rewa

SUBJECT: VISIT OF THE CHIEF

Our story will mainly evolved around the people's duty to their land or village. When the village is ready, that means that everything is ready and the people are at their best clothes and they will all be waiting for the chief to get off the boat and come into the mainland. There will be some men and young chiefs who will be waiting to perform the I VAKAISOBU. After the people of our village has performed the VAKASOBU then they will come ashore and the Chief will be taken to the place where the rest of the villages are waiting for him. Once they are inside the house, the people of the village will perform the QALOQALLOVI followed by the I SEVUSEVU. After the I SEVUSEVU, then the YAQONA VAKATURAGA followed by the WASE NI YAQONA VAKATURAGA. After everything is performed, then the Guest of Honour or the Chief will then deliver his speech or whatever thing he was asked to do. ROKO TUI DREKETI or whoever is invited will stand up to deliver his speech and to explain to them the purpose of his visit. Lunch hour, he will go to have his lunch. After he

Cont'd Page 2

has done whatever thing he wanted to do then he will go back or return to his home.

- RATU SUKUNA would be making a visit to a particular village. How is the message made known to the villagers and to the Chief?

We all know the position Ratu Sukuna holds so if he is invited to meet our people, the message will be from the ROKO TUI DREKETI to his MATA. He will send his MATA to us, that is, to the people of VUTIA. He will send his MATA, not the MATA of BUREBASAGA. Usually, if there's any message for our chief and the MATA of BUREBASAGA is taking it, the MATA of BUREBASAGA will come to us and it is our duty to take it up to the Chief. When the chief makes a decision and he wants it to be known to his people, he will send the MATA of BUREBASAGA to do it. The chief will call a meeting and he expects all the villagers to attend. Our chief is also the leader of the TUNIDAU. He is a feared man in his days and when he wants to build a new house, firstly, a man is put to death and is buried for the new foundation of his house. That unlucky man is put into one of the holes for the post of his house and then, the pole or post is placed on top and buried. It can be anyone, he could be an Indian a Chinese or anybody of any race. If there is a crowd of people around, anyone is picked out of that crowd to be put into one of those holes, if the house is ROKO TUI DREKETI'S. When the house-building is in progress, not one is allowed to go outside, or eat anything outside. Everything is done

inside, the people have their meals inside and if anyone wants to visit the toilet, they will have it inside. This kind of thing happened in the olden days. There are two words known today that describe this kind of happenings and it is called the MANA. It shows that it is related with the SAU NI VANUA. This MANA is not the one that is eaten but one that is a sign, a token, which possess supernatural qualities. And usually known as the MANA of the SAU NI VANUA.

- When a message is taken up to the chief or to anyone, the messenger will only go as he is or will he take anything with him when he delivers the message?

The messenger will take a YAQONA with him and he will present it to the MATA of BUREBASAGA with the message. The MATA of BUREBASAGA will then take the message up to the chief. The Chief, after receiving the message will call the villagers to a meeting.

- When the chief wants to hold a meeting, what can you see about the movement of the people and their preparation for that particular day?

What usually happen is that the Chief will call his MATANIVANUA. The MATANIVANUA will report to him and it is the duty of the MATANIVANUA to call the people. When all the noble men and chiefs, villagers and everyone is present, the MATANIVANUA will then announce the purpose of the meeting and what the chief wants his people to do.

- When the Chief's message is made known to his people, what follows. Do they have to wait for another meeting to discuss it or.....?

After the MATANIVANUA has delivered his speech, the discussion will take place soon after that. They will discuss of everything that is to take place and who is to take part. They will choose the person to present what but the VAKASOBU, the MATANIVANUA'S duty is to pick a person to perform the presentation of the VAKASOBU. After the QALOQALLOVI, the I SEVUSEVU and the WASE NI YAQONA VAKATURAGA, the honoured guest or the Chief will then make his speech.

- When a person or a Chief is invited to a place, could you explain more about the performing of the VAKASOBU or why is the VAKASOBU considered to be more important?

The TABUA or whales tooth is used here. This is to show that an important man or a great chief is coming to their village. The performing of the VAKASOBU is only done to people of high status and important people.

- When the VAKASOBU is performed, how many whales teeth are used for the VAKASOBU?

Usually, only one whales tooth is used. It is the same for the QALOQALLOVI too, a TABUA is also used. But these whales teeth used are really large and well-made.

- During the presentation of the VAKASOBU, who is the person from the village will be doing this important role?

Most of the time, he is a member of our tribe but since there are two high chiefs in our district, then it can be someone else. Since one of the chiefs lives at MUANA I CAKE and that is the TUNIDAU while the TUBU or another chief occupies MUANA I CAKE

- Could you tell us the way that person who is performing the VAKASOBU go about doing it. How he is going to do it and what he's going to say?

This is what he usually say: "OQO NA KEMUDOU I VAKASOBU NA TURAGA, E LAILAI SAKA TIKO, NO DOU VOSOTA." or This TABUA is for your coming to visit our land. It is not enough for your presence but we asked you to accept it." This is what he usually say.

- Where is the VAKASOBU usually done. Is it done at the beach or when the ship is near to the shore?

When the boat arrives at the beach, we will say our TAMA. We will be waiting at the beach, and those people in the boat will reply back to us. "To the chief of KUBUNA, the TUI KABA or To the TUI NAYAU..... and it goes like that.

- When you are going to say your TAMA, how do they answer back? When they hear the people from the mainland saying their TAMA, the people in the boat will answer back only if they know whats happening. We usually call out "DUO....." and those on the boat will answer....."O000." Those people in the RA area used "O000..." in both cases. That's what usually happen if both sides know what to say. We people of REWA use "DUO....." O000" pairs and it has been used also by those from the olden days. After the VAKASOBU, the Chief or the honoured guest will be escorted to the meeting or where the other ceremonial things will take place. The QALOQALOVI will be the first one done and then the YAQONA VAKATURAGA follows. After the YAQONA VAKATURAGA , the presentation of the WASE NI YAQONA will take

place. After that, the Chief guest will then make his speech.

- What is usually done or spread out on the ground for the Chief to step on? In some places they use GATU for the Chief's path to the guest-house or where the people are waiting? All the old ladies will sit near the length of the GATU. We also use the GATU for the chief's path and this is known as the I BUTUBUTU. The lady of BUREBASAGA will be seating at the head of the GATU, at the right side and another lady will be seating opposite her. After the Chief had used his BUTUBUTU, the MATANIVANUA will have the responsibility of keeping the mats and the GATU.

- Is there a particular tribe or a group of people who's duty is to guard over their chief or to see that the village is in order and no one creates any disturbance?

In REWA, we have two groups or NATAQALI that guard over the village on special occasions. The men of NAQAVOKA will take over when the honoured guest lands at the beach and they will be standing their with their spears. They will escort the chief to the place where he will be welcomed traditionally. Reaching that place, they will return to the place vacated for them. The men of TUI WABU will take over from there. Those are the two groups of people responsible for the escorting of a chief guest and watching over the entire village to prevent any disturbance that might spoil the Chief's visit.

- In the olden days, there is a particular tribe or group who is known for its role they play in a village. Does it change as new generations come up or the descendants of that tribe

carry on the role of their elders or ancestors?

In this case, the descendants of that tribe or group continues their ancestors' role. There are people who carry war clubs and there are people who keeps the war-clubs. People know the role they hold in their village and what's expected of them.

- What is the duty of those people who guard over the chief and the people present?

They will stand around and watch everything that is happening and their voice will be the only one that is heard. When the guest is there, no one is allowed to say anything and there is to be complete silence. If you want to say something you have to whisper to your partner. You are not allowed to stand up and if do so, you will be met with the force of the club being whacked on you.

- When the guest has reached the place where he is going to rest or the BOLABOLA, will they have to do the TAMA again or... In the true Fijian custom, the men who are escorting the guest or the Guest's MATANIVANUA will be expected to do the TAMA and then those waiting for them will answer back.

- Could you explain the purpose of the QALOQALLOVI and the person who performs it?

There are books written that describe the QALOQALLOVI, the I SEVUSEVU, and the WASE NI YAQONA VAKATURAGA I won't be able to say much about this. After the QALOQALLOVI, the SEVUSEVU will then take place. This signifies that the whole village is doing this for their guest. After the I SEVUSEVU, it is followed by the YAQONA VAKATURAGA. The YAQONA is presented

while the people chant and its presentation to the Chief or guest will be made in a Fijian way of dancing, and that is the MEKE. After this, the MAGITI for the chief is then presented. The food for the MAGITI are a big pork or a whole pig baked in an underground oven and the taro, usually the large ones.

- Since the QALOQALLOVI is done and it's followed by the YAQONA VAKATURAGA, would you explain more about the things done during the YAQONA VAKATURAGA?

The bringing of the TANOVA or the bowl in which the YAQONA will be mixed will be someone's duty. After it has been placed before the person who is going to mix the YAQONA, the persons who is to get the water ready for it and who is going to spill the water in will stand by ready for action. They will have to remain sitting until the time for the YAQONA mixing. The TANOVA or the large wooden bowl for preparing YAQONA is placed down and the cord with cowry shells tied to the lip is stretched out towards the chief and the person responsible for the water will have it ready by then. They will wait for the chanting by the people before the ceremony begins. The person who is mixing the YAQONA will raise it often so that the MATANIVANUA will see what's going on and whether the YAQONA is strong or weak and the amount of water to be added. After that, the MATANIVANUA will call out VESU and the mixing will stop.

- As you've just said VESU, what does it mean and what word has replaced that word today?

This word VESU refer to the VAU or native strings used for mixing of the YAQONA. It is this VAU that is tied up to signify that the YAQONA mixing is over.

- As you say that the water for the YAQONA will be up to the MATANIVANUA. Which MATANIVANUA, the one who is waiting with the people or the one who is accompanying the guest?
It will be the duty of the MATANIVANUA who came with the Chief but the one who is waiting from the mainland will remain silent throughout.
- What about the person who will perform the "MEKETAKI YAQONA" or the manner of performing the YAQONA presented to a chief, where will this person sit?
Four people will be sitting around the YAQONA bowl but not with their back to the Chief and another five behind this four people. The person who will take the YAQONA will sit near this five people. When the villagers or those picked to chant the words of the MEKE start, he will stand up. He will take the cup and he will move towards the TANOVA in a hobbling fashion. With both hands, he will hold the cup with the YAQONA inside and then he will go up slowly while the people chant. He will do this until someone say "DUO.....SA, YA TU YANI KI CAKE LE". He will then stand up straight and move towards the chief who is sitting up front. When he gives the cup to the chief someone will call out "CIE....." all the people will clap until the chief finishes the drink and then a person will say "BIU" and then they all reply "IA.....E" showing that it is now over.

- During this occasion, how many people are expected to take part in the drinking of the YAQONA?

It will be up to the numbers of guests present. After the ROKO TUI DREKETI receives the cup someone will drink YAQONA second, i.e. after the chief. Often, only four people drink the YAQONA VAKATURAGA.

- When the YAQONA is presented usually someone will be beating the LALI. Is it only done to people with important status or to anyone?

It is only done once to signify the chief's receiving the YAQONA. When the beating of the LALI is heard, this shows that the important man is drinking his YAQONA.

- Could you describe what the cord with decorative cowry shells tied to the lip of the YAQONA bowl or TANOVA?

They believe that it is something to do with the SAU or it is a sign of respect and the stretching out of this cord is considered as a token of their receiving their chief and their honouring him. The cowry shells are also considered sacred and this shells are tied to the string or cord. Everyone will remain silent while this thing is taking place and you can only talk when its over.

- When the people are singing or chant about and clapping their hands, would they also be performing or could you explain what the people of REWA usually do?

The chanting of the YAQONA at REWA is not also performed by the people while it is going on. There are two ways of doing this. One is used by the BUREBASAGA people and one is used

in LOMANIKORO, REWA. The one used by LOMANIKORO is not performed but only the one who is taking up the YAQONA for the chief will be performing in the manner expected.

- After the performing of the YAQONA VAKATURAGA, the WASE NI YAQONA VAKATURAGA follows it. Would they present this while the things used for the YAQONA VAKATURAGA is still there or do they have to remove these things first before they present it?

After the YAQONA VAKATURAGA, everything will be cleared away to the back of the people who is doing this ceremonial acts. After that, then they will present the WASE NI YAQONA VAKATURAGA.

- The things, usually it's food, used for the WASE NI YAQONA, it is always cooked first. What is done do it after it has been presented?

It will up to the guest's KATANIVANUA whether to take everything or leave some behind. We know that we have done everything expected of us and now it is their duty to take care of the things done to them.

- When the WASE NI YAQONA is done and it is taken away, the guest of honour will then make his speech. I heard that after he had delivered his speech, someone will comment on his speech. Is this so?

The chief's speech will be commented on or whoever is the chief guest. After that, a minister of the church will stand up to say a prayer.

- Could you talk more on how a person comment on a chief's speech. Sometimes they used to say "VAKAVITU".... VAKAWALU.. "

could you explain the meaning of this gesture?

In the olden days, there was a family in which there were eight brothers. They were asked to perform in a race and the eighth brother won the race. The saying of these two numbers, seventh and eighth, signifies the importance of the chief's speech. This had been done from our ancestors' days up to this generation.

- When everything is over and the visitors are ready to return home, how are they going to let their friends and the villagers know that they are ready to leave?

The chief guest's MATANIVANUA will clap his hands and he will then announce their departure. And the villagers reply with confirmation saying that they've enjoyed their visit and may they have a good trip back.

- Is it similar to the VAKATALE?

The I VAKATALE is different. After the I TATAU then it is followed by the I VAKATALE. The visitors will present a TABUA or whales tooth for the I TATAU and we will do the IZ VAKATALE also by presenting a whale's tooth. After all these, then the VAKASOSO is prepared which is taken to the boat. It is usually food like yams and some food. And then the MATANIVANUA and his chief will leave with those who he came with.

- Where do they usually stay when they are in the village? Is there a special prepared for them where they can keep their things?

If it is a meeting, it will be our chiefs duty and his NATA

NI VANUA to organise a place where the visitors will rest.

- After the visitors had taken leave, is there anything else done in the village or any celebration of any kind?

When every visitors have gone, we will be making the BULU WE and a MAGITI is also prepared for this. If we have strong-will chiefs, then the ladies will go out to fish so that we could have another day's celebration.

- Would you like to say more about this subject?

If you would like to know more about this thing and some of the questions which I haven't answered more clearly, you are always welcome to see any of my close relatives.

THANK YOU.