

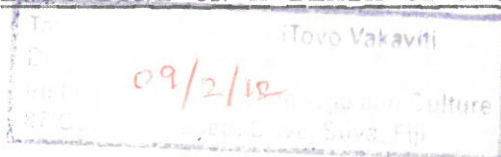
TOPIC:



Investigator: Torika Ovoi

INTERVIEWED: Ratu Meli Kuruvoli... Daviqele, Nabukalevu, Kadavu

SUBJECT: RESPECTIVE THINGS DONE ON A DEATH OF A PERSON



- In my place that is in Nabukalevu, Kadavu the funeral of a chief is treated differently from the funeral of Villagers. When a chief dies his body is kept home for three nights and during this three nights con-shell will be blown non-stop through out the day and night in respect for their former chief. The clan Bati are responsible for this and also for digging the chief's grave and handling his body from home to his grave. No one, whether his wife, his children or his very close relatives is allowed to wail loudly. If they may cry they will only shared tears but no weeping or wailing is heard. There is a BETE or priest amongst the Bati who will be responsible for allowing how many people are to enter the SAU-TABU (chiefs grave yard). When he sees that there are in enough people in the SAU-TABU. He'll stop those outside from coming through the gate. This Bete will jump on the chief's wrapped body as the body is placed in the grave, to make sure that everything is O.K. before the burial.

Five days from the funeral ladies will Bikabika at the chief's residence. They'll be looked after well by the former chief's family. During this five days of Bikabika the clan of Davuiqele are responsible for looking after people coming, going and staying at the house where the function takes place. On the fifth night all ladies will go down to the river and sea to net fish. Men will make VAKALOLO, cook magiti in Lovo. The clan Nabukelevu are responsible for the Burua that will shared amongst the people present at chiefs funeral.

Ladies will cook their fish and people would sit together and feast to think of their dead chief. After this feasting and sharing of the magiti people may go back to their homes. Funeral of villagers is just slightly different. Somethings are done. Burua is held on the fifth night but the con-shell is not blown and the Bati are not responsible for digging his grave. Anyone can do that.

- . - Who is responsible for taking the news of the chiefs death?
There are Mata or Representatives who will be picked to take the news of the chiefs death to the nearby villages. A Mata from here will take the news of the chief's death to the next village and the Mata from that village will pass it on to the next, the Mata from there will be sent down to inform the next village and that is how the other following villages are informed.

Many times when the news of the chiefs death is heard in the next village, that village chief will call his villagers and they will discuss and put in things to bring as gift that is Reguregu to the mourning village.

- What is the former chief dressed in?

In the olden days our dead are dressed in Masi. As time has really changed a lot now they wear the sulu, shirt, ties and coats and their head is turban with masi.

- Is there a clan responsible for guarding the chiefs body and where the function is taking place?

The Bati will be responsible for the grave, beating the Iali; blowing the con-shell and also guarding the dead. When the con-shell and Iali is heard people will know that the Guarding of the Chief's body is in process.

- Is there a particular tribe who will spread his Davodavo (beddings)?

They chiefly clan is responsible of spreading the mats for the chiefs bedding. This is where he will lie for three nights before he is taken for burial.

- I believe in the past they don't have motury where is the body kept for preservation?

Yes it is true that they wasn't any motury. We keep our dead at home. We don't mind if the body starts to smell and rot during the three days. People will be patient with the smell as they go about doing their various tasks.

- What would happen to the body if there wasn't any coffin?

The dead body is wrapped with mats and masi and after three days the body is carried from the chiefs home to church.

Lali and the con-shell will be blown during all this time.

From church to the SAU TABU where the chief will be buried.

- Who is this Bete?

The Bete is the only one who will be touching the chiefs body. He is from the clan Bati and he is the chief in this field when it comes to the burial of a chief.

- Is there anything given to the Bati?

Bati have a special of mats, masi etc. This is known as the YAU-NI-KELI BULUBULU. When the chiefs body is carried to church and to the grave Bati will be guarding along side the body bearers with their Fijian war clubs (wau).

- What is next?

After the funeral the Bati will go down to the sea for a wash. This is because we believe that only the sea can wash away the chiefs SAU(power) from the hands of the Bati. From when the chief dies to when he is buried, the Bati will be eating with Pork. They are not to touch their food using their fingers.

- How about if one of the Bati doesn't go to wash his hands?

Everyone will blame the Bete for that because the Bete is suppose to see that everyone goes down to the sea to wash

their hands. Someone can die of this. From the olden times to this day fathers will tell their children what they are expected to do during this and that function. What they are expected to do and what people will expect from them. This is why no one goes wrong any way during this kind of function.

- When the Bati had washed their hands in the sea is there any tabu they are to keep?

After the Bati had washed their hands they will pack two sticks along the sea bank to represent the spot where no one is to use for any purpose. In between this area is the Tabu no one will touch it for 100 nights before people may not fish in there again.

- Who are this ladies doing the Bikabika?

If the house is small only a few women from that particular village will stay for the Bikabika.

A Vakatumuloa is built outside where the con-shell will be blown.

- I heard that in Vanua Levu, villagers will dress in VASII I leaves skirt, as they go to the chiefs funeral is it the same with you?

No, I have not heard of any such stories from my ancestors.

I believe we don't do that?

- Is there a Tabua presented for the DOLANI KATUBA, (opening of the door) after the door is closed when the body is

brought out through that door?

When a villager dies the yaqona is mixed only once for the DOLANI KATUBA. When a chief dies the YAQONA VAKATURAGA is mixed twice for the DOLANI KATUBA. This grog is mixed by the villagers.

- How about if the house where the body lies is dirty?

The house where the chiefs body is kept is not cleaned, swept or tied until the funeral is over. This is a respect shown to the chief. If this rule is broken one of the cleaners will kick the bucket. The chiefs SAU(Vu's power) is strong.

People who go against the Village Rules will get it. Even though we are converted to Christianity it is always safe to follow our customes and Religion after because Religious people live in the Village land.

- Is there any food that is tabu when a chief dies?

No there is no such thing, only the Bati are not to eat with their fingers and after funeral they are to go down and wash their hands in the sea?

- Does it have a meaning?

Bati are to wash their hands in the sea because the sea only can weaken the strength and power of the Chiefs Sau that can attack the Bati. Sea is known as the DRANUMI. In the past there were devil worshippers, after their worship with the devil they would go down to the sea and wash themselves.

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This is because the sea only is able to wash the magic of the devil from them. If the devil worshipper touches his wife, children or a tree before washing his hands that particular thing or person will die. That is why devil worshippers also wash their hands to take away the devil's power from them before they go home.

- Is there anymore that you would like to say?

The feasting on the fourth and tenth night is just to for the remembrance of the dead one.

I believe that is all.