

TOPIC: FARMINGInvestigator: WillieInformant: Etuate Veikoba of Kalabu, Naitasiri.Date of interview: 21st October 1982

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SOME GENERAL IDEA AS TO HOW OUR ANCESTORS FARM DURING THEIR TIME

In the olden days, the style of living is completely different from the one we are living today. As for the equipment which they use for farming, it is completely old fashioned compared to the tools which we are using today. But mainly they use their manpower of the type of work they do. The KIA VATU is the axe which they use for digging and for cutting down trees and plants which might on the way while they are planting. They also have the thing called the SAU which they make and it shows that they are really strong and healthy. As for many of us today, they are lazy to go out to their plantation and plant some food like them in their days.

- Can you name some of the things which they use, what do they use for cutting grass and all that?

They have their own methods of cutting grass which I do not know of but it is something which they refer to as BILLIBOLE. If they did not have any knives at the time, I am sure they used their hands to pull at the grass and to get rid of any thing that might be on the way while they are planting.

- Can you name some of the crops which they grow in their plantation?

They plant yams, taro, and VUDI. They did not have any cassava at the time, and they said that cassava came from Noumea before

it was introduced to Fiji. They did not have any cassava at the time.

- Do they have any time allocated for them to go out to their plantation to plant their food or?

There is a part of the year when they go out to clear the place where they are going to do their planting and this is in the month of April, May, June, July and in August, they start to dig up the place where they are going to plant their foods. After they have dug up the plots for the yams or dalo or whatever they wish to plant, then they carry on with the real planting itself. When they plant the yams first and they noticed that it is coming up nicely, they know that this is the time for them to plant their dalo. Then after planting all the things or the crops which they wish to grow, then they plant red reeds on the side to ~~keep~~ keep away the pigs or any other farm animals that might spoil the gardens.

- Could you describe the spot or the place where they keep their plantation?

As for the spot where they are going to plant their yams, they are going to look for a hill and it is on this hill where they are going to do the planting after clearing the place up of course. As for the place where they find a lot of extended plains and slopes, that is the best place they say for planting dalo. They say that water is plentiful here/. But many of them used to go deeper into the bush where they start their plantation because they want to hide from the other people as to what they are planting on that particular time. They do not want to let the whole people know that he is starting

on a garden of dalo or yams. They want it all to be a secret. When it is time for them to bring the seedlings and the other plant parts which they are going to plant, you would be amazed of the number of it which they have already prepared. After spending quite a few years on the same spot then they moved on again to another new spot where they are going to start a new plantation again.

- What can you say about the fruits which they say is only for the chiefs in the village?

As for the garden for the chief, they also take care of it and it is linked on to their own so it would be easy for them to clean it and attend to it everytime they go to the garden. They plan for a date when they are going to take some of their first fruits to the chief as their I SEVUX. This is like their offering to their chiefs. And such fruits which are taken to the chief are always their best and the biggest out of all the crops which they got from their plantation. In the olden days, there is not a time when they live without food, food is always there for all of them.

- Can you explain more about the I SEVU?

The I SEVU, let's take this village, they plan to have the I SEVU next week, they have agreed to have it on so and so date on a particular month. The food and the fruits for the I SEVU is only taken to the chiefs not to anyone else. When it is presented to the chief, it is then the chief to decide where to take it next, if he does not want to share it, it is accepted in the Fijian society because he is their leader and he is the great man of everything that is held in the village and no one

is going to say anything when this sort of thing happens. As I've already said that they only do the I SEVU to the chiefs only no one else besides.

- Could you explain something as to why they do the I SEVU, is there an important reason why they have to do these things all the time when the time for it comes or?

They say that the I SEVU is a holy thing and should be treated as such. Since they say that in the olden days^m people did this act of offering their sacrafices to their gods, so they want to keep up with it and do it also. This is the same idea that our ancestors had when they decided to have this ceremony of offering their first fruits to the chief in the village. So when the time comes for them to offer their first fruits it is taken to the chief's house and placed there/. When they do this thing and they carry it out faithfully and honestly there is not a time when they meet up with a long draught or a hurricane to spoil their crops or anything bad like that to happen to them. They are always filled up with food in their homes and they do not find a time when they go hungry because there is not enough food for everyone in the house. Today, we have noticed that a lot of people die because there is not enough food for everyone. But in the oldend days there is enough food for everyone and everyone lives a happy and a wonderful life compared to us today.

- Do you know of any legend that might link up as to why they have to plant food at a certain time. Or if they have any devils of spirits who help them with their farming or anything like that?

In the olden days, it is not allowed for anyone to go out to the plantation, say he wants to get some dalo, and for that person to go up to a dalo plant and just pull at it anyhow, just to please himself with it. This is not allowed among the people in a family who owns a plantation of dalo. When I go out to pull out a dalo, I have to do it nicely and neatly too, after pulling the dalo out, then I have to clean the outside well and as for the place where the hole is formed because the dalo was growing there, I have to cover that spot with soil and grasses on top. They have gods who help them in farming and underneath this one god there are others which they believe in and then we have the greatest of all gods who live up high in the heavens. He is the leader of all things. As for this one great God, he keeps an eye on all the things that are going on on earth and he knows who is not using the things in their proper usage and who is. So, in the olden days, they do not leave the cleanings of the dalo anywhere, they make sure that they place it somewhere so that it does not dirty the environment and also to keep the place clean. But today, we can see them throwing it anywhere they feel like it and this shows their laziness and not caring at all for other people who want to live in a clean place and where everything is good and disease free.

- Can you tell me as to the place where they keep their yam set or any other food set which they might want to plant on their plantation?

When it is time for them to go out and dig out their crops which are matured, say like the yams, they have to have a shelter build

and this is where they are going to keep all the food which they pulled out from their garden when reaping time comes. This house or shelter which they build is called the LOLO. After they have pulled out all the matured crops from their garden, then it is kept inside this house in groups, like they are rationing it out for each day. And they place another pile aside which is especially for any village gathering or a party they might have in the village. Then they share out the plant set which they might wish to plant in the next planting season. When they build their LOLO, it can also accommodate a person there, so the first week of reaping, they often sleep inside these shelters which they prepared for the keeping of their crops which they pulled from their plantation. And when they build these shelters, they have to make sure that it does not allow any water to drip inside in case the water will spoil all the food which they keep inside this shelter. So, I would say, that they really take extra care when it comes to preparing everything for their plantation and also for their food for the next months or so before they are able to pull at those which they have just recently planted.

- How long could they keep the yams before it goes bad?

They say that this food really last long when kept for a very long time. But we cannot really set an exact date since we are not the big boss of all these things. There is always a law that says that a time will come when all things will rot.

- What can you say about this food called the MADRAI NI VITI or Fijian bread, they say that before it is made, it is buried underground before they make the bread out of it. What can you

say as to the preparation of this food?

I haven't seen the making of this food in the whole of my life so I do not really know as to how they make this food. I've only witness the making of this food called the BILA TONI, as for this food, it is submerged in water for quite sometimes before it is removed and they ~~just~~ **have** to cook it that is all there ~~xxxxxx~~ is to it.

- When the old people want to eat fish, who do they inform of this thing?

As for me if I want to eat fish, I am going to ask my close relative, any one who is close to me, when he comes back from fishing for him to bring some fish for me. After asking him to do this one favour for me, then I go out to the plantation where I am going to pull out two dalo for him. I will have them ready for him by the time he comes back from fishing. I am going to give him this dalo in return for the fish he is going to give me. This shows the relationship between the people in the olden days. But sometimes we just ask them if they could go out and just get some prawns for us from the mangrove swamps just near our shores.

- Is there anything else you would like to say about the way and some farming methods which they use in the olden days?

They plant fruits like DAWA, UTO (breadfruit) IVI, and other types of fruits, and this are just there to make life more pleasant for them or just a past time for them planting all these fruits but later on it comes into use because it provided food for them. Once it bears fruits, or it is on season, all they have to do is pick them and eat them. For some of these

foods, they can broil it over the fire like the breadfruit and all that. They only eat twice a day. And the mani meal it is supper in the evening. So the first meal is in the morning and that is breakfast, then you have to go out to the plantation where you have to work, while you are out there in the plantation you can dig out some wild yams and cook them for yourself and it is nothing really big but you can regard that food as your lunch like what we are having today. As for the meals that you have when you're staying home, there is only two meals for a day.

- You were telling me that they plant the VASILI plant around their garden to sort of keep away evil things which people might place in your garden so that it hinders the growth of your plantation? Could you elaborate on that?

The main thing about people who do these things like planning evil to destroy one's plantation because they are filled with jealousy and hatred for that person. It is started from their envy for the other person who is innocent of all things going on inside this first person. If you see that you have out-placed all the people in the number of food and crops you plant in your plantation, you have to take care of yourself from these evil doers.

- Can you describe some of the things which they used for protecting their gardens in the olden days, so that nothing can destroy the growth of the crops and all that?

These are some of the things which these evil people do to the plantation to spoil it, either they make some leaves and place it near the crops or they throw some things at the plants and

it touches the plants, they can die. But this is all of the work of the evil spirit and the devil that this evil doers worship.

- What can you say if they take this leaf or leaves which they have specially prepared for their evil purposes, what is going to happen to the crops?

They will know that someone has done something to the dalo because it has lost that greenery look from it and also when the time comes for them to pull that plant up, you cannot really accept the fact that after a very long time of growing it, all you get is just that small size of a dalo. You know that something is wrong somewhere.

- Is there anything else you would like to say about this topic we are discussing?

All I have left to say is that if a person has got a lot of land he should try and make use of it, turn to farming and you will really live a veru happy life that way. When you decide to ~~saart~~ start on farming, make sure your mind is set on it and you know what you're doing. When it comes to keeping the rubbish of the food that you pull from the plantation, make sure it is kept in a good place, not just thrown away at any place. This is my advice to people who want to do farming, make sure that you set your mind on it and you do it with all the good faith and the will power that is driving you to do these things. The honesty and the faithfulness that you give to this work of farming, the good results you are going to get when the time comes for you to reap the hard work you've been through.

THANK YOU.

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