

extra translation

TOPIC: FISHING
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SOME METHODS OF FISHING USED BY OUR ANCESTORS IN THE OLDEN DAYS

When people go out to fish in the olden days, there were different ways which they used to catch fish. They used a fishing item called the SA and this is used to catch TONI RAU, a name of a fish. The making of a SA really needs attention and time. When it is ready, they will take it out to the sea. No one is allowed to cross it or sail across it when the RAU is in the water. The RAU is similar to a SA. If the RAU is used the SA will not be used because they don't allow anyone to get hurt. The SA is a spear which is used by men during fishing. But during RAU fishing, the spear is not used. The spear is used on other occasions.

- Any other items used?

In any kinds of fishing, there are special items used. You can't use any of them when you go out to fish.

- During the trip, is there any TABOO?

While the fishing is going on, no one is allowed to ask anything unless you want to point something out. If someone asks a question, they believe that the net is damaged or a shark has spoiled the net. That is why questions are not to be asked. Sometimes, if this is done, someone in the group can get hurt or something bad might happen. So no question is allowed. They believe that if someone asks a question, the VU or gods who watch over the nets will return to the home. And the enemies will break into the nets because there is no one to guard it. When this happens, the elders will be very angry and the result is that someone will get hurt.

- How could they tell the best days for fishing?

Some fishermen will keep a look-out on the weather like the appearance of the waves, direction of the wind and these minor things really means a lot to them if they want to go out fishing. So, when they watch the weather, they enjoy looking at the signs of good or bad weather and learn the best days for fishing.

- Is there any TABOO for fishing?

Children often want to join those who go out fishing and they usually do things their own way. When children accompany the others during the trip, the leader of the fishing trip often tells them to do some little help or to do something but they often disobey them and refuse to do whatever thing they are told to do. The leader wants his commands to be obeyed and his every word followed, so if he says something it should be followed right away. If they don't do it, then something terrible could happen. In that case, children are not allowed.

- How is the RAU made?

This is a Fijian way used for fishing, there are methods used and one of these is TONI RAU. The banana leaves are used to makes the TONI RAU. It is cut down and also some WALAI or creepers are brought together with the banana leaves. These two plants are woven together until you get a 100 yards of it.

Where about is it placed in the sea?

If the weather is not very agreeable, rough seas or strong wind, the RAU is placed along the coast. The RAU is only taken to be put in the sea at high tide, the people will follow to drag it towards mainland until they reach the shallow waters. When they reach shallow waters, the men will use their SA or spears to get the fish into the canoe.

- Could you talk on the preparation made before they go out fishing? What they always do first?

Before anything is prepared or decisions made, they will hold a meeting to decide on what to do. They discuss the things they will need, who to go and what they should do while they are fishing. Each individual will be assigned to something and they have to see that they do it. They discuss all these things carefully so that when they go out to fish, there is no trouble among the fishermen or anyone to slow things down while the fishing is going on.

- Could you talk more about the Chief's GONEDAU?

There are days when the chief wants to eat fish, he will inform his MATA about it and it is the duty of the MATA to go down to the GONEDAU's houses and tell them what the chief wants.

- Is there anyone to lead them when they go out fishing?

The GONEDAU have their own leaders. He could be the eldest son of the oldest person in the tribe. He is the one who will lead the others when they go out fishing.

- Is the RAU used in the night-time?

It is not allowed to put the RAU into the sea at night time. It can be submerged in the water during high tide early in the morning. There are fishes with names and these fishes could be considered to be sacred. In our village, we have got RAWARAWA and it is known to be NAMOLI fish. There are abundance of it around NAMOLI sea. For those people who go out to the reefs to catch fish, they will have to follow the true custom of fishing that our ancestors used.

- Does the GONEDAU have to do anything when they return?

When they return ashore, there is something prepared for

them by the villagers. A MAGITI is among these things. This shows that they are still considered to be an important group in that village. Also, it shows the respect each one makes towards each other especially to their Chief. When the GONEDAU goes out to do whatever they are asked to do, then the villagers will also have to play their part. This helps bringing the two closer together and it avoids any disagreement to arise.

- Who will share out the fish?

When the GONEDAU brings the fish to the island, the person who led the fishing trip and who was responsible for the whole thing that happened is the one who will do the sharing. The big fish are put aside to be taken to the Chief's house.

If anyone hides a big fish or takes one without the leader's knowledge, he could get choked by the bones of the fish. The fish can turn out to be poisonous if the person stole the fish which was supposed to be taken up to the chief's house. This always happens because our ancestors considered this a TABOO.

- There are some fish which can be poisoning if we step on them. One of them is VULA WALU. If an unlucky person steps on it, what could be done about it?

If you step on the VULA WALU, you should quickly suck the blood out, someone can help you with this. This is done to get the blood out, which is known as bad blood, before the poison spreads. There are also some Fijian medicines made for those who get hurt.

- What do they use for fishing in the olden days?
Could you explain more on how they go out to fish? What they use?

In the olden days, they do not use boats but they paddle their canoes. They look at the weather, if the sea is calm, then they will go out, so that it will be easy for them to paddle their

their canoe, anywhere they feel like it. Those who paddle the canoe will get help from the others. Two person will row first and then another two take over.

- What do they take with them if they know that they will be out long?

If they know that they will be staying out late, they will prepare everything they might need, especially what they need to keep the fish in so that it won't be spoiled. They take banana leaves and other leaves to cover the fish in. Others, they cut big drums up so that they could put the fish inside. We could eat some fish raw.

- When is the best time to fish for BALOLO?

The Balolo fish does not appear anytime but a time comes when there are abundance of it. In NAMOLI, we go out to catch a particular fish since there is the time they show themselves. There is a weather for everything. Some fish turn out to be poisonous. This could be due to the fact that it should not have been caught since it is the wrong time for it.

- Could you explain other methods used to catch fish?

There is another method used by our ancestors in the olden days. This is called TUTUVA. The people usually go out to cut down TUVA trees, they bring it back to the village where the TUVA bark is peeled off and tied together until there are about 50 bundles. They will take the TUVA and place it in a pool, a big stone is put on top of the TUVA and they will wait to see what will happen. While you watch, you can see some fish floating up to the top because the strong smell of the TUVA affects them.

- The TUVA tree is poisonous, how is it placed?

The TUVA is placed far away from the shore because of its dangerous effects. It could be placed underneath a reef or

inside a hole at the sea bottom where it is rubbed together so that the smell of it spreads. When the fish smell the TUVA, they will try to swim away from it and most of them go up to the surface. At this time, the fishermen will be waiting for them to come up.

- What do the fishermen use to anchor their boats?

In the olden days, they plate MAGIMAGI or sinnet and after that they tie a stone to it, which is used as an anchor. The only used the TAKIA to go on long journeys. So the anchor for the TAKIA is the platted MAGIMAGI with a big stone tied to one end which is put into the sea and the other end tied to the TAKIA.

- The leaves used in the TONI DRAU. Could you use them again or are they thrown away?

It is a rule that when everything is done, the net is thoroughly cleaned and it is placed on top of a large stone to dry. After that it is nicely kept so that it can be used again on another fishing trip. The leaves used during the fishing are thrown away after use. This is thrown far away, usually at the reef-mouth.

- In Tailevu and Vanua Levu, they use the MOKA. What about in NAMOLI?

Namoli also use this method of fishing.

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