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TOPIC: FUNERAL

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SUBJECT: THE CEREMONIES DONE WHEN SOMEONE DIES

When a person dies, the news of his death would have to be heard by all his relatives. News would have to be taken to his uncles and aunties.

People coming to the funeral will walk a long way, for example, they are coming from another village. The burial will be waiting for all of them to arrive.

All the people and relatives coming to the funeral will be bringing gifts and offered them to the close relatives of the dead one. This ceremony of offering is called the REGUREGU(kissing).

When all people arrived and after their offering ceremony, the dead body is then be clothed. The dead will be decorated as if to be the bridegroom.

Then shall follows the burial of the dead body.

- Is there any material to be wrapped around the body or....?

When the dead body is ready to be buried, it is than clothed nicely. After its clothing it is then wrapped around by big mats and kumis.

It is believed that by wrapping the body with big thick mats

and kumis will prevent the dead body or its spirit walking around the village at night.

After the fifth night, one of the close relative of the dead person will go his grave and pierce his grave with a big long stick to touch his body. This is believed to prevent its spirit to cause any trouble or disturbance to the concern village. By piercing the dead man's grave, the close relative will at once know the reason why he had died. If someone had made a bad spell on him, thus causing his death, will be known when his grave shall be pierce through.

It is believed that if someone is worshipping the demons, he also can pierce the dead man's grave before the fourth night. It is believed that by piercing the dead's grave, will add more super-natural power to his field of work. This is a point in which relatives of a dead man should watch for.

- What will they do, the people or the relatives when they will go for the Reguregu?

People coming for the reguregu will at first presented a dried yaqona root showing what they had brought and also mentioning that they are very sympathetic to hear about the sad news. After that speech, gifts such as mats, kumi and food is presented then infront of the close relatives of the dead.

In respond, the close relatives of the dead will present a

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TABUA or whale's tooth, on mentioning their thanksgiving for what they had brought and the sympathy they had shown too.

- Is there any TABU for the food to be eaten by those people who touched the dead person's body?

It is important to remember ~~are~~ the people who dug and buried the grave. Priority notice is taken about them. After they will come back from the burial, there shall be a feast and gifts especially for them. A yaqona ceremony shall be done unto them which is called their VULUVUIU which means the ceremony of washing their hands.

After this ceremony, they are allowed to touch their food. After the hand-cleaning ceremony, then shall they be allowed to touch the food and their belongings.

After a while, the close relatives of the dead will take forth a TABUA and show forth and announce the feast of BURUA(burial feast) which will take place on such date and time.

In this ceremony of BURUA(burial feast) the relatives of the dead will look for a big cattle and killed it to be shared among the people who had attended the funeral of the dead person. The uncooked meat and gifts such as mats and kumis, will be shared during this occasion.

As for the close relatives of the dead person's only, they will forbid sometime in a solemn respect to their relative who had past away. This forbidding of something will last

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for 100 nights. For example the relatives will forbid themselves from drinking grog or smoking for 100 of nights. Some men even forbid to shave their beard during this period. When the 100 night finished, there will be a feast among them and they could carry on with their normal life again. They are free then.

- Which side of the dead person's relatives will be doing this TABU?

The close relatives, especially from the male's side. When the 100 night come they will go to the female's side relative to announce of their freedom to their TABU. The female's side will provide food and yaqona. This ceremony is called as the LUVALUVA I SULU meaning the undressing of clothe.

- What is taken when this ceremony of LUVA I SULU is announced? Gifts of tabua(whale's tooth), big reel of material or clothe, drums of keresone, coconut oils, mats and so many others.

- To when shall all this items be presented to?

All these gifts shall be offered to the mother's side of the dead person. They are called the VASU, and all gifts shall be theirs.

- Could you tell me what is the real meaning of this ceremony of LUVA I SULU?

This ceremony is to free the dead-person's relatives from what they are forbidding. This ceremony also laid off the burden of sorrow and grief concerning the lost one.

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After this ceremony, everything will be back to normal. In the ceremony of funeral, the IUVA I SUTU is the last ceremony to be done. Sorrow are gone!

The above ceremony also indicates our loyalty and respect to the dead person. Your respect and loyalty can only be shown if you stood fast for the period of 100 nights without breaking your TABU or promises.

- If a person died in another place and brought to his home, what happen then?

Before the dead person enters his own home, a TABUA(whale's tooth) is offered to the chief by the relative to announce and show that the dead person is entering his place of birth-home. When the body is laid there, women will gather around it and mourn continuously. The women will mourn until the dead body is taken to be buried.

After the burial, the women will stay in the house of the dead person until the fourth night. The relatives of the dead person will cater for them all these time. The women shall return with some gifts from the relatives.

- Could you tell me how the grave is prepared?

When a person dies, a message is send to relatives of dead person's mother. They are the rightful ones to dig the grave. But if a chief dies, the BATI or the clan of guards shall be responsible for the grave. So there is a difference when a commoner dies and when a chief dies.

When a big chief dies, every person in the village knows

exactly what he has to do. The person will know at once his traditional duty which is practised by his forefathers. Some will cook, some will dig grave, some will guard and so on. The people are not told to do things when a chief dies. They know what has to be done in his or her category. When a chief dies, the IALI or Fijian wooden bell would be sounded continuously. The conch shall be blown continuously also. All this signifies the sorrow and the grief of the people and the land.

The conch and the lali shows the cry of the people and the land. By this, no one is allowed to cry or raised his or her voice during the ceremonies of the dead.

Only the chief's close relative shall cry and raise their voice; such as his sons and daughter or his wife or his mother. But no one else. If anyone else cried and raise his or her voice, she or he shall be punish severely. This even mean death. So that is why, we should know and understand what our duties are and also what tradition allows us to forbid us to. If everyone knows what the culture of his place is; no mistake like this shall occur.

Before the dead body leaves for the church, a TABUA is offered and announced that the dead person is going to leave his place to head to the church. This is called the LAVETI NI YAGO or the lifting of the dead body. The body is then taken to the church to have his last prayer and then off to the grave.

Before the body is lowered down to the grave, another TABUA is placed upon the dead body and to be buried with it. This is called the VAKASOBU NI YAGO is the lowering of body. Then shall the burying of the grave.

- In the olden days I believe there is no church building, where does they do the church?

It always be done in the BURE KALIO(god's house) where the Fijian BETE or priest worshipped the spirit. During the prayer at the god's house, no one is allowed to walk but stay remain still.

- After the burial, what happens next?

The people will come to the ceremonial arena and have a feast, which after, they return to their homes. This feast shall be provided by the VASU or the relatives of the dead person's mother. The house of the dead person shall not be empty. There will be yaqona-drinking everyday and every night until the fifth day. After the fifth day, there shall be a feast which will be among the people and relatives who attended the funeral.

- As you have mentioned about the witchcraft people who will try to pierce the grave, what measure should be taken towards them?

The close relatives of the dead should be guarding the grave of the dead, every day and night until the fifth day.

In preventing this piercing of grave, the witch-craft person

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who was intending to pierce this grave will be in a real trouble or even death. This witchcraft person will only be at rest **and** be alive if only his desire to pierce that grave is done. If not, he will die.

If some close relatives wants to know the reason for his death, they will go to the grave and call upon his name, and invite him or the dead person's spirit, to ride on the coconut ribs which they will pull along to their homes. It is believed that dragging the coconut ribs to the homes is likewise giving the spirit a ride or hitch to their homes. When the relatives reached home, they will direct the coconut rib to a sleeping person in the house. They will request the dead person's spirit to enter into the sleeping person in the house.

Not long, the sleeping person, no matter who is he or her, will wake up possessed with the spirit. Thus the spirit will talk to the people through that person.

The spirit will speak and explain about his death. After all the spirit will say farewell and he gone. The person talking will be unconscious and cried a little. The person possessed with the spirits does not know anything of what is happening.

The only TABU in doing this spirit-calling ceremony, is not to meet anyone on the road when escorting it to the house.

THANKS.