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TOPIC: FISHING

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SUBJECT: THE VARIOUS METHOD OF FISH CATCHING USED IN THE  
EARLY DAYS.

There are various styles of catching fish which are used by our early ancestors in the olden days. The common one which they used is called the SA which is widely used is the catching of the TONI RAU. The SA is being made in a complicated manner.

If the SA is place at the sea, no one is allowed to come nearer or even a boat. The usage of SA is often restricted to some area because of its affect. It may cause injury to anyone coming near it. The SA is made of spears which the men used in fishing. Spears are used occasionally in some places.

- Is there any other tools which the ancestors used for fish-catching, in the olden days?

There are different tools for different methods of fishing.

- Is there any TABU to be followed during fishing?

When fishing is in progress, no one is allowed to question some one else. This should be followed strictly. If some one is found questioning someone, it is believed that the

nets would not closed the entrance of the reef properly and all the fish would escape. It is also believed that if this tabu is broken, somebody would be injured or even be killed. It is believed that the godly spirits would be angry when they will hear somebody questioning somebody else. The godly spirit would not be guarding the entrance and thus the fish would escape.

- Could you tell me, how the ancestors know that it is the right time for fishing?

Some of the fisherman would only know this by just looking at the direction from which the wind is blowing and also the surface of the seas. By looking at these two, the early fisherman would instantly know what the weather would be.

- What are some of the tabu's in fishing?

The tabu is only that, the fisherman should do and follow what they are told. The leader of the fisherman expected his followers to obey his orders and to do what they are told. If this is not done, this would result in the injury of someone.

- You mentioned that the RAU is used in the traditional fishing. Could you tell me how the RAU is made?

As I have told you; that there are two methods of traditional fishing; one is TONI RAU in which the banana leaves is used. The leaves is netted with the WA LAI(ropes) tied at its end. It would be 100 yards or more.

- Where is this RAU used?

If the weather is a bit bad or the seas is rough, the RAU is then taken and left submerged at the nearby beaches when the tide is high. When the tide is going out again, the fisherman would go and drag the RAU to the shallow waters. Then they would use the SA to catch the fish inside the RAU.

- Could you explain what would the fisherman do at the first step before going out to the sea to do the fishing?

The fisherman would have a meeting and the leader would assigned what is to be done by every individual. This would not allow any confusion among the fisherman when the fishing is in progress.

- I heard that there is a chief's GONEDAU or a fisherman assigned to the chiefs needs. Could you explain me about this chiefs fisherman?

The fisherman in the village is all the chief's fisherman. If the chief wants some fish, he would send his MATA NI VANUA or spokesman to tell the fisherman about his needs. The fisherman would then leave for the chief's purpose.

- Is there any particular leader who would head the party during the fishing trip?

Yes there is a leader. This is usually the son of elders among the fisherman.

- You mentioned about the leaves in fish catching; does they use this too in the night?

The leaves or RAU is strictly not used in the night. It is

used during day time; usually itnis left in the morning when the tide comes in.

It is known among the fisherman that there are fish which are caught easily. There are fish which is caught easily in Namoli and we call this fish the IKA NI NAMOLI or the fish of Namoli. This kind of fish is easily caught around the near-by reefs.

- Is there any ceremony done when the fisherman returns from fishing?

When the fisherman returns, they would be a feast prepared for them. This feast is done by the chiefs or elders of the village showing their thanks-giving to the fisherman for performing their duties. This also show the strong ties between the fisherman and the people of the village.

- Could you tell me, who is responsible for the sharing-out of the catch?

The catch is brought forth and shared. The sharing is done by the leader who headed the fishing trip. The big catch are often taken to the chiefs. This is often done by our early fore-fathers.

- There is a VULA WALU which is found mostly around the reefs. It pricks the foot when it is stepped down upon it and thus causing poison. Is there any medicine used in this....?

If any fisherman steps on it; somebody would instantly suck the wound thus to pour the blood out.

- You mentioned about fisherman going out to the sea for

fishing. Is there any particular vessel which they used for fishing?

They often used Fijian canoes with rows. They usually go out at sea when the weather is fine. Thus this would allow easy transport with the usage of Fijian canoes.

- What will the fisherman use in the olden days for the storage of fish if their trip would be long at the sea?

They would cut the leaves of the banana and thus they would cover and wrap the catch. Some fisherman would take tin drums for the storage of fish.

- I have heard about the fish for the BALOIO season. Is there a season in which our ancestors goes out to the sea to catch it?

This fish will come when the BALOIO season begins. There is a lot of fish when this season begins. Sometimes fish are poisonous because it is not the season to be caught or the fish is caught in its rightly environment.

- Can you explain any other method used for fish-catching in the olden days?

There is a method which is commonly used and it is called the TUTUVA. The fisherman would go and cut the roots of a tree which is called the TUVA. The roots are cut into pieces of five and tied together in bundles. There would be about five or six bundles. The fisherman would then take all the bundles and left in submerge in a pond or river. After that, they would wait. After a while, all the fish would be

afloat - ready to be caught. This is the easiest method of fish catching.

- What do the fisherman used for the anchorage of their vessel in the olden days?

The rope of MAGIMAGI is used tied to a big stone at the end. The stone is thus used for the weight- thus its storage.

In the olden days, they usually use the TAKIA for sea - going and the above mentioned anchor is commonly used. The rope end is tied to the end side of the TAKIA or Fijian canoe.

- You mentioned about the banana leaves used for TONI RAU.

Are the leaves used again or are they changed, now and then? After every fishing trips, all tools are cleaned up and dried up in the sun. The tools are often dried on top of a big stone and ready to be used for the next trip. As for the leaves, it would be thrown away at reefs.

THANK YOU.