

Daily Traditions



Sevusevu

The sevusevu is a traditional welcoming ceremony in Fijian traditional (*vakavanua*) culture. The entire ceremony is centered on respect and the togetherness of Fijians. The visitor brings gifts to provide the chief, generally *waka* (the roots of *kava* plant) suffices and a formal ceremony involving the blessing, preparation and drinking of *yaqona*.

A speech is spoken by the *turaga ni koro*, the appointed headman of the village, and generally involves reaffirming shared values that Fijians are 'like family' and serve God. The speaker will often also start with 'on behalf of', indicating his belonging to the larger group which in itself is symbolic of the whole Fijian custom of sevusevu; it frames every interaction as one between two Fijian parties.

Once the speeches are finished, the *yaqona* is prepared. The chief will drink first followed by his spokesperson (*mata ni vanua*), then by the leader of the visiting party. Once the *yaqona* has been drunk in descending levels of hierarchy amongst the elders, the rest of the village may also drink.

Reguregu

Reguregu is the ceremony that precedes the burial of a member of a community. It is an opportunity for friends and family to pay their respects to the recently deceased through offering gifts of woven mats, *tabua* (whales tooth) and *yaqona* to the deceased. For prominent members of the community, a chief for example, a parade may take place to surrounding towns to offer opportunity for people to pay their respects. The gifts brought to commemorate the death are placed over the burial site. As with most traditions, each province has its own variation on proceedings.

Bulubulu

Bulubulu is essentially a 'forgiveness' ceremony, the word itself roughly translated to 'cleansing'. Similar to the other ceremonies, the *bulubulu* is centred on gift giving from one party to the other. These gifts are again traditional items of value such as mats, *tabua*, *yaqona* or food. *Bulubulu* has real value in close-knit fijian communities where a strife would seriously affect daily proceedings of a village. On a practical level, the *bulubulu* assures the restoration of harmony to the dealings between families and villages.

A common event for a *bulubulu* to take place is between families who are associated with a young couple who have 'run off' in secret to be together, or when an unwedded woman bears a child in a relationship. The ceremony will involve the 'forgivee' visiting the village of the forgiver often accompanied by family members and other members of the village (who come along for the party). The gifts are presented and words are spoken from both sides and once the ceremony is finished, the 'misconduct' is wholly forgiven.