



The happy couple in Fiji's wedding of the year. Photo: AAP.

**Married:** In Fiji's "wedding of the decade" uniting two of the country's noblest families, Ratu Epinisa Cakobau and Adi Frances Loloma.

The wedding took place on Bau, the traditional home of Fiji's paramount chiefs. The bridegroom, a 26-year-old civil servant, bears one of the most famous names in South Pacific history and is the eldest son of paramount chief and former governor-general Ratu Sir George Cakobau by his second marriage.

The bride, 23, is third of six daughters of Ratu Josaia Loloma of the island of Batiki.

More than 1,000 official guests (and several hundred unofficial ones) made their way to Bau by motor canoe.

A fleet of more than 20 of the "water taxis" were on stand-by on the wedding day earning up to A\$260 apiece for their owners which resulted in a boatmen's party later. It was reported to have outlasted the official one.

Up to a dozen dignitaries, perspiring in suits and ties, crammed into each of the tiny, leaking canoes for the rocky 12-minute voyage from the mainland.

The official guests included the governor-general, prime minister, ambassadors, high commissioners and a veritable Who's Who of Fiji society.

The 45-minute service was traditional Wesleyan and was conducted wholly in Fijian. The stone and brick church on Bau seats only about 500 and many guests sat outside on chairs and mats to hear the service relayed by loudspeaker.

Later, the official guests sat down to a wedding feast for which five cattle, eight turtles, 12 pigs, 150 chickens, 150 crabs and about 300 fish were cooked in a "lovo".

The 24-dish meal was washed down by bottles of Australian white wine.

However, the feast was staid compared with the eve-of-wedding party on Bau when the

island rocked to the boisterous singing of the Bau and Batiki clans each trying to outdo the other.

The ceremony of *Tevutevu* or the giving of wedding gifts by the bride's and groom's families, preceded the party.

The result was three Bau buildings filled with a vast variety of gifts, enough to last the happy couple a lifetime on their return from a honeymoon in Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii. — Jim Shrimpton, AAP.

**Appointed:** Secretary-general of the SPC, Palauni M Tulasosopo for many years assistant to the American Samoa governors.

Tulasosopo was a contender for the secretary-general's position in 1971 but lost out when Fred Betham of Western Samoa and Oala Oala Rarua of PNG tied in the voting.

Rarua later withdrew in favour of Betham. Tulasosopo has had a long association with the SPC as American Samoan delegate.

**Installed:** As chief of Ulawa, Solomon Islands Governor-General Sir Baddeley Devesi.

The ceremony took place on the last day of Sir Baddeley's tour of the islands of Makira and Ulawa.

**Training:** As a sumo wrestler in Japan, Tongan-American John Fele'unga.

He is known in Inazawa by his sumo name, Takamioo. Fele'unga, from Hawaii, is the son of Semisi Fele'unga formerly of Vaotu'u.

His interest in sumo came from watching it on television in Honolulu. However, he did not know he would have to undergo the initiation rite of *matawari* in which apprentice wrestlers must sit with their legs wide

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Stan Delaplane

# The Day of the Giant Turtles in Fiji

KOROLEVU, Fiji—The beach resorts at Korolevu are halfway between the capital of Suva and the crossroads airport at Nadi.

It is a pleasant, long stretch of palm-fringed beach. Coral and sharks make it chancy for swimming. But the sun is bright and the sea is watercolor blue.

There is a certain British stiffness. The food is fair; it could be improved tremendously. Fijians cook on eight kinds of charcoal. That gives a flavor we cannot duplicate no matter how much mesquite, applewood and sassafras we use.

Guests used to sleep in grass shacks called *bures*. They had modern plumbing and mosquito nets, and the sea breeze made them comfortable. Now there are several up-to-date resorts.

★

"You should go sometime to Koro and see them call the turtles," said the man from the Fiji Visitor's Bureau. (Tourist bureau people always try to send you somewhere else, I find.)

"The men of the village dress in a certain way on certain days. They put on ceremonial wreaths of flowers. All the ceremonies are quite secret.

"One thing about all South Pacific

ceremonies—they usually involve staying away from women and coconuts. This is very difficult in the South Seas. We don't have much else.

"Anyway, ceremonies are performed. And they call the giant turtles.

"You can hardly believe this unless you see it. Dozens of these turtles (they're as big as a dinner table, you know) rise from the sea and swim to the land.

"The natives turn them on their backs and, eventually, eat them. Quite delicious, turtle steak."

★

Fiji has more than 300 islands. About 100 are populated. Most are as primitive as the days when Fijians were serving boiled New England dinners—boiled whaler was the entree.

On one island, women call the turtles.

"The women wade into the water from the island of Kadavu, quite nude, you know, except for a flower crown. It probably has some interesting sidelights for social study. Many South Pacific cultures believe pregnancy comes from being splashed with sea water."

The women wade in, calling the turtles.

Just what they say, he did not

know. Probably an ancient chant with magical properties.

★

In any case, turtles soon come popping up like bad debts. They swim to land and wind up fricassee.

I asked if the lady turtle callers had to stay away from anything to prepare for this giant event.

The man from the Visitor's Bureau did not know, exactly. He suspected it would be coconut. Coconut is *tobu*; whenever you are pulling magic or calling on the gods for cooperation.

In many islands of the South Pacific, women are forbidden certain kinds of fishes. Mainly fishes that have magical properties for men.

"It is well known that women steal a man's mana, his power. Therefore, they must not have anything to do with magic properties."

Something like taking their mink coat away. Only, of course, in this climate, you'd look silly, calling turtles in mink.

★

Korolevu is the center of the Coral Coast. The Naviti Beach Resort runs \$58 for single rooms, \$64 double. The Hyatt's single rates range from \$67 to \$77, double rooms \$83 to \$96. A 5% tax is added.

Fiji shopping isn't the greatest. In Suva a couple of dozen Hindu tailors "make you a nice suit in one day, sir." They will. And it looks like it.

Kava bowls are good souvenirs. They're carved in the shape of turtles. The more legs on the bowl, the better. The eight-legged bowl is best. Tortoise-shell work is very good, and some filigree jewelry.

You can buy a big four-pronged "cannibal fork."

Suva's open-air market is colorful: piles of squirming crabs and lobsters in green baskets woven of coconut leaves. Little piles of shrimp. Banana leaves piled with fishes fresh-caught this morning.

Long ropes of tobacco in neat coils. Five-gallon tins of powdered *yaqona*, the pepper root that makes Fiji's national kava drink. Fruits and vegetables and spices all neatly displayed.

There are modern supermarkets, but the native shopping center is more fun.

THE TURTLE AND THE TORTOISESHELL INDUSTRY

BY N. LEVY.

(Read 30th November, 1942)

It is perhaps not commonly known that it is *Turtles* and not *Tortoises* from which such a great variety of articles is manufactured.

There are two types of turtle in Fijian waters, one being called the Greenback or "Vonudina" and the other the Hawksbill or "Taku." The Greenback being a vegetarian is excellent eating, but the shell is useless commercially as the flakes are only of paper thickness. The Hawksbill is carnivorous and is not such good eating but the shell is of high commercial value. It is, therefore, to this species of turtle that the following remarks will be confined.

The back is covered with large scales or flakes, numbering thirteen, consisting of five crown or centre pieces and eight side pieces. The edge pieces or hoofs, number twenty-three. The thickness and size of the flakes and hoofs vary according to the age of the turtle.

Some of the turtle's habits are interesting. For instance, the female makes her way above high-water mark on a sandy beach, and after scooping out a hole in the sand, she will lay approximately 150 eggs, covering them over and disturbing the growth for some distance surrounding the nest, as a camouflage. She will also make four or five false nests in a similar manner as a further means of protection to the real nest. So well does she carry out her deception that it is only by means of pointed sticks speared into the sand over the disturbed areas, that the native in search of eggs, is able to locate them, as when the nest is struck the yolk adheres to the point of the stick.

The eggs, which have a covering of a leathery nature, are round, similar to a ping pong ball in shape and size, with a dent in one side. They require approximately four or five weeks to hatch. The young turtles wriggle through the sand to the surface, and immediately make their way towards the water. For them it is the commencement of a perilous journey, as they are preyed upon by sea birds. After thus running the gauntlet, they are met the the water's edge by the adult turtle who devours them as they come within reach. The few who manage to get past and are fortunate enough to escape the fish, make for driftwood and leaves, under which they shelter to avoid observation. They are very slow growing, and when full grown measure approxi-

mately three feet in length. The small turtles are an exact replica of their elders, though they have proportionately longer flippers. The shell of the young turtle is transparent, and thickens as it grows.

During their breeding season, the Government of Fiji protects the turtle by having a closed season for four months, from November to February.

The shell of the Hawksbill is exceedingly beautiful, with a variably mottled pattern, in colours ranging from black, through deep red, to honey colour and blonde. This mottled colouring forms a protection, affording a likeness to the coral and rocks when viewed from the surface of the water, while the belly of the turtle is blonde in colour and resembles the light on the surface when seen from below.

The methods of capture are varied. One is with nets made of strong fishing cord, having a twelve-inch square mesh. The nets stretch for hundreds of yards, and the fishermen have to be smart when they get a catch, for their old enemy the shark soon gets busy, and the net is ruined.

Another method is that of spearing.

The author has also heard of a Fijian coming across a turtle asleep on the surface of the water, and by quietly swimming up and turning the turtle on its back he is able to keep it in this position until a canoe comes alongside and takes it aboard.

A rather interesting method of capture is practised in the Torres Straits and in the West Indies. The sucking-fish, or Remora, is in this case pressed into the service of the fishermen. Taking advantage of the fish's natural habit of swimming towards, and adhering fast to, any larger floating object, fishermen go out with specimens kept alive in small wells in the bottoms of their boats. When in pursuit of turtle, a long light line is attached to the fish's tail; and coming within sight of the turtle, the fish, with an abundance of slack or pay-out line, is thrown in the direction of the turtle. The Remora immediately swims towards and adheres firmly to, the under surface of the shell of the turtle, when it will suffer its body to be torn asunder rather than let go its hold. Both the fish and the turtle are dragged with the line back to the boat.

The natives detach the flakes from the back of the turtle by means of steaming, with a sack dipped in boiling water. Beautiful shell may be ruined by lazy methods of placing the shell near a fire to get the heat. In this way it becomes badly scorched and useless.

Apart from exporting turtleshell in large quantities to other parts of the world, we have quite an industry here in Fiji, manufacturing articles such as toilet sets, cigarette cases, jewel boxes, watch bands, and other goods too numerous to detail, right down to the humble saltspoon. In England, very expensive toilet sets

are manufactured, being richly inlaid with platinum or gold, the prices running into hundreds of guineas. The author had an instrument case to repair which was made in England over 100 years ago, and it had withstood wear particularly well. When repaired and polished it looked almost as good as new.

In concluding, little insight into the manufacture of turtle-shell goods may be given. The shell, with treatment, will take a beautiful and lasting lustre. The application of heat renders it ductile, thus enabling it to be worked into all manner of shapes. The making of a cigarette case may be described.

First, a piece of shell of suitable colouring is selected, for no two pieces of shell will be found to have the same marking and colouring. As the thickness of the shell varies, the first step in the manufacture is to bring it to an even thickness. If an extra large case is being made, it necessitates the joining of the shell by a secret method. The piece of shell is then placed in a double mould, one half is convex and the other concave. The shell and the moulds are next subjected to heat which makes it ductile. Pressure is then exerted on one half of the mould, causing the shell to take shape. Both the mould and the shell are then cooled off. After removing the shell from the mould it retains its shape. The same process is repeated to form the other half. The two halves are then scraped, sand papered to a fine degree, and roughly polished. The edges are trued up to receive the hinges and catch, the fitting of which requires an expert tradesman. The case is now given its final polish. This completes the manufacture and is followed by a thorough inspection of all parts before being offered for sale.

P. O. Box 1451

Labasa  
Fiji Island  
17. 11. 92

George H. Balags,  
Honolulu,  
Hawaii.

Dear Sir,

bulu Vinaka! Expectings once  
again. Aloha! Sir I would like to  
thank you so much for the t-shirt  
(from Aussie) and the valuable  
information about turtle. I have  
given some to our fisheries department  
here and they're really glad. The  
bad news is that I can't wear the  
t-shirt because I will be a hanging  
stock of our town. His people know  
that I'm the only one who is  
responsible for catching of many

turtles around here.

So sir we are two opposite people but I'm so very glad that you and your associates are preserving turtles because at times I just want to stop on all this. I really feel pity about them but I really have no choice. I'm hoping to find another job and to work with you to preserve the turtle and to be on the same side as you are. Only then I can happily wear my +- shirt.

I'm glad that we're having ~~that~~ ~~take~~ season for turtle, it will only last 4 months!

P.O. Box 1451

Labasa

Now, regarding the turtle. It was a really healthy one. I think it was sleeping when I saw it. That place alone, if I can recall well, I think I've killed more than 50 turtles there. It is sandy at the bottom with plenty sea weeds, it will be better if you come and see it for yourself. There are plenty turtles caught around here. Sir, I have special hook made to catch turtle.



Here we have 3 common turtle, green  
turtle, Loggerhead + Hawksbill. Only a few  
years ago one leatherback was caught. This  
is a rare species here. Most of us saw  
it for the first time in their whole life,  
if not all. From the information I gathered  
only one was caught long time ago in  
Viti Levu, a few hundred miles from here.  
The most common turtle is the green turtle.  
The Olive Ridley + Flatback are not so many  
like other three.

Sir, I want to thank you for the  
chat about turtle and the information as  
well. I gave some to our local fisheries and  
they're so glad. I'm just wondering if I have  
to write to Angie Grecomans of SPREP, may be  
you can help me with this sir.

This is where I have to say Ni sa moce  
sir, believe me, I'm so glad that you cared about  
turtles and I will be always glad to help you.  
If you need more information, sir, you can  
always count on me. God bless!

Pero. Wapabulabau

Table 33 Species Composition of Aquatic Non-Fish Products(%) Sold at Municipal Markets, 1979

Market	CENTRAL DIVISION					WESTERN DIVISION						NORTHERN
	Suva	Nausori	Navua	Tailevu	Nasinu	Sigatoka	Nadi	Lautoka	Ba	Tavua	Rakiraki	
Total in Tonnes	852.65	140.37	5.81	10.7	3.12	38.57	32.15	86.33	122.68	23.02	23.41	46.42
No. of days Surveyed	190	111	76	36	126	42	94	188	144	79	50	88
Crustaceans												
Ura (Prawns)	0.3	0.06	2.41		5.77							
Moci "	1.03	0.21			14.42	0.05		0.01	0.01			0.49
Urau (Lobsters)	0.07	0.04			1.28		0.15	0.07	0.15		0.04	0.06
Qari (Crab)	1.80	4.49	4.48	1.49	81.86	1.40	0.12	0.08	0.22		0.13	0.56
Kuka "	2.85	2.67	0.17	0.47	0.96	0.23	3.08	1.5	3.5	6.95	6.75	36.06
Lairo "	1.08	0.92			0.64	0.05	0.65	0.05	0.94	2.69	2.09	0.54
Mana	2.94	2.35			4.49		0.68	5.76	0.20	0.87	0.21	1.44
Molluscs										0.04	0.04	0.39
Vasua	0.22			1.68		0.10	0.71	4.18	0.83	0.82	2.05	0.52
Kai (fresh)	64.9	74.55	70.74	68.6	7.37	82.5	80.09	75.2	84.94	67.2	77.6	26.80
Kaikoso (sea)	20.69	10.86	15.49	25.58	2.24	14.13	2.08	3.76	6.06	12.73	6.32	22.53
Octopus	0.37	0.01					1.68	0.95	0.19	0.91	0.32	0.88
Squids	0.06						0.75	0.31	0.33	0.61		
Sigawale	0.06	0.13							0.05	0.30	0.30	
Shells	0.68	1.65	6.71	0.56	0.96	1.22	2.71	1.42	0.41	1.30	1.62	0.52
Cone shells	0.32	0.46		0.33		0.31	1.03	0.82	0.02	1.95	1.20	0.06
Sea Urchins	0.39	0.16		0.56			0.03	0.01	0.06			0.06
Holothurians												
Loliloli	0.06	0.07										
Dairo	0.20	0.43		0.56				0.56	0.07		1.15	3.08
Sucuvalu							1.09	0.87	0.71	2.87		0.80
Algae												0.09
Mana	0.49	0.12		0.28								
Lumi	0.19	0.15		0.28			1.65	2.99	1.08	0.74	0.17	0.77
Turtles	1.28	0.68		0.28			0.01	0.01				0.26
TOTAL	4.51	0.95				3.48	1.44	0.24				4.07
						6.12	1.24	0.19				1.89 = 10

### Fish prices

The mean price of fish sold in Fiji's municipal markets in 1979 was \$1.49/Kg, a 4.9% increase over last years mean of \$1.42/Kg. The average price in Central Division was \$1.63/Kg (\$1.49 in 1978), in Western Division \$1.48/kg (\$1.40 in 1978) and in Northern Division \$1.34 (\$1.00 in 1978). Table 34 below shows the mean municipal market fish prices in the

1.13%



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE  
AND FISHERIES

PO Box 358, Suva, Fiji

TEL NO

361122

REF. NO. 34/4/7

DATE:

17th July 1980

Dr George Balaz  
Turtle Biologist  
University of Hawaii at Manoa  
Honolulu  
Hawaii  
U S A

Dear George,

Many thanks for your letter of 17 March  
I am now writing up the results of my studies on beche-de-mer  
which will be published as a technical paper by the  
South Pacific Commission.

Am enclosing a copy of a "turtle data sheet" which I have  
designed for use by Fisheries Division market research  
teams in Fiji. As a result of the SPC Turtle Workshop, I  
was left with the strong impression that there is a need for  
basic catch statistics for the turtle fishery in the  
Pacific Islands. The problem in most of the islands is that  
turtles are caught at the subsistence level and it is  
impossible to gather any such data. As a result, there is much  
speculation about "overfishing" but little or no data on  
which to base management measures.

In Fiji, however, there is a unique opportunity to gather catch - statistics because:-

- (i) many (probably most) of the turtles caught are sold in the markets in the towns
- (ii) the Fisheries Division maintains a trained market research team which randomly samples fish catches on all six market days per week in all main centres.

The total catch of turtles (all species) sold in the markets of the 5 main centres over the last 3 years was:

1977	:	18.15 tonnes
1978	:	16.04 tonnes
1979	:	10.02 tonnes

This catch consists of greens, hawksbills and a few logger-heads (all are eaten). At present, the turtles are not measured or identified as to species.

I have designed the data sheet so that the turtles can be identified from the head alone if necessary (shells are often sold separately from the meat.). The idea is to measure shell length where possible, but otherwise to measure head-length or right front flipper length and to estimate weight by regression.

..2//

10,



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Address —

MR. ASAELI BACE  
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ONO-I-LAVI  
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