

Culture and traditions in my country fiji

Countries



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Myfamilyis originally from Fiji which is comprised of 333 islands. Fiji became a British colony in 1874, and was granted its independence in 1970. For the most part during those 96 years, the British confined Fijians to their villages using a head tax - some say it was to preserve traditional power and social structures but at least one or two people argue it was payback for all the English heads that went missing during the days of rampant cannibalism.

The British chose instead to use indentured labourers from its Indian colony to develop major sugar plantations in Fiji. When the British shipped out at Independence in 1970, they left behind roughly an equal number of Fijian and Indian citizens. These figures have since changed in favor of Fijians with post-coup migration.

Fiji embodies everything the romance of the South Seas is supposed to - with laidback maritime charm, a warm, tropical climate, friendly people, exotic fruit and vegetables, and strange yet harmless creatures. Yet it also holds its own South Seas mysteries and can be a bit of a puzzle sometimes.

Fiji sunset - Three Loose Coconuts

Here you will find people who have helped propel Fiji tourism to international fame as the friendliest destination in the world. Yet, 37 years since Independence, Fiji also has under its belt four armed takeovers of Government and three Constitutions - promulgated in 1970, 1990 and 1997.

Today Fiji is a multi-cultural country with its citizens including Fijians and people of Indian, Chinese, Pacific Islander and European ethnicity. This has

helped Fiji become a cultural melting pot of sorts in the South Pacific (and allows for a nice smorgasbord at parties!).

Colonial legacies continue though... English is still the official language. People drive their vehicles on the left-hand side of the road. The currency is the Fiji Dollar. And sugar continues to be a mainstay of the economy - surpassed only by tourism these days.

But I show you the geographical location of Fiji so that you would have a fair idea where this country is. It is located on the 180 degrees Meridian Line, where the new day begins. People will stand on an island in Fiji known as Taveuni and a straight line is drawn and where you can stand on one side of it and say, that you are in the present or future i. e. either today or tomorrow and yesterday and today.

But let me show you exactly where my village is located on the small island known as Nairai in the Lomaiviti Province. The longer name for my island is known as Nairairainimarama or in English the island of beautiful women. Lomaiviti Province means the Central Province or Centre of Fiji.

Fiji is a multiracial country rich with cultures and traditions and the indigenous people are Fijians who comprise of about 60% of the population and Indians with 40% whilst other minorities include Chinese and other Asians, Europeans, Americans, Australians and many others.

Fijians like may other ethnic groups have their own cultures and traditions with which they are identified as a group of people. Our traditional system is such that is similar to the people of Israel as we have Chiefs or Leaders or

Kings, then 2 sets of warriors, those who stand guard outside any Kings residence and another group of warriors which is only allowed to interact with the chief and allowed in the house. Then we have the Priests or Bete who offer advices and representatives who interact with others on behalf of the Chiefs/Kings and they send out messages of any meetings or events to other villages. Also there are those people who are known as commoners who perform other tasks like farming and fishermen known as Gonedau who go out fishing for the Chiefs and his family. But the Chiefs and his family do not eat the same food as his warriors or bati. So when a Fijian is born he or she is born with his roles and responsibilities and that cannot be changed unlike other systems in the world.

My Family

My family originally hails from one of the chiefly islands in Fiji where many great chiefs and leaders come from. The name of the island is Bau. My ancestors were one of the few chiefs that left Bau Island for Nairai Island in the Lomaiviti Province in the 16th century. So our family members as from a chiefly background are leaders or chiefs having huge responsibilities to lead the people and serve them well. But to become a good leader one has to accept to learn and be educated because leadership is something that has characteristics or skills that must be learned and practiced. One must be seen as a dictator but have qualities to listen, control, speak and command the respect of his people.

Our Fijian culture could be seen by some to be very complex because of the traditional values and beliefs it is attached with. To illustrate from the day a

child is born, and within a chiefly system, the child will not be laid on bed for four days and four nights. The mother will be kept with the child under the supervision of old women in the village and will not be allowed to work as food will be gathered by others. A feast will later follow where relatives will gather to celebrate the birth of the child. At an early age, a boy will be circumcised and a feast will again be organized on the fourth night and even when he first goes out to the sea, the family will prepare mats and other things for him when he returns from fishing in the sea. For a girl or a boy engaged in a traditional dance for the first time he or she would be presented with gifts. Even when someone in the family travels abroad he or she will be hosted to a feast by relatives.

There are things that we use for almost all traditional occasions or events or customs. These are whales tooth or known as tabua in Fijian and kava which is a derived from a kind of plant. The whales tooth has been a medium of exchange in the past until today and it is used for consultations and many other things including seeking support or reconciliation for a fight that had occurred. Also it is used by families to seek the approval of another family or families for a young woman to marry a young man. Usually, a total of not less than 10 whales tooth should be presented by the young man's family or relatives to the young woman's family or relatives. There a number of processes and many activities that must be performed traditionally to complete the establishment of a new family.

However, people in the village as having different responsibilities and duties are expected to perform their own during the whole process. Even the passing of a chief or anyone requires the presentation of tabua and kava.

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Kava is used for discussions or meetings as well as a means of seeking approval for one or a group to entry into another village or family home. It is a sign of respect and acknowledgement. However, kava has been used in developed countries to produce depression tablets and other products that enhance performance too. Fiji has been exporting kava to Europe in the past and USA and other countries in the world. In Fiji and other Pacific Islands kava is common and used but has been abused for over consumption and takes away the real purpose for kava use.

A child born in a chiefly village will be taught to do all the traditional presentations during all traditional ceremonies and know his role. For this reason, I will have to learn from my father and relatives of all the roles that I am obliged to perform whenever needed.

I have shown below my family tree to help you gain some information on my family background.