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TANI Funeral dirges

These are funeral dirges that were composed in traditional Sikaiana life. When a person died there was a period of mourning, *ppali*. A song was composed to commemorate the deceased. Often the song referred to personal aspects of that person's life, a favorite activity or attribute. I can only find one recording of a *tani*, the *tani a Kahana*, Kahana's funeral song. This recording is included in a separate heading in this collection. In this I have collected three other dirges, which I hope will provide some insight into traditional Sikaiana life.

Tani i Sioe

The notes for this song are from February 1, 1981, which is before I had much facility in the language, so I must have taken the transcription and translation from someone else, most likely Reuben Tenai, John Kilatu or Ralph Evesi. From the view of 2021, the translation is very good. The dirge is a very sad one and poignant one. A daughter has died and the parent mourns that she has died before him. The parent wants to think that when people came to the house it is for something good but instead it was to carry her body away to her funeral. He thinks about all her actions that he will miss. I was told that this was composed by a father, although it seems to me it could be a mother as well.

Taku tama ni uhu imua manau ki taua nei ka mea pehea I toku noho ia soko nau e

E Lahia ni uhu sala imua moku kalemata nei ki taua nei ku laka pehea i taku noho koe ka sasau e

E ka sasasulu e hai nau ko to ola nei kato mate ia nei

E ka sasasula e hai nau ko to laoi ka to male ia nei e

Toku tama ni hakalele manava (ki taua nei mea pehea i toku noho ia soko nau e

E Lahia ni haka oho mouli ki taua nei mea pehea i toku noho ia soko nau e

Taku tama kuoti to saele mai nei ki taua nei mea pehea i toku noho ia soko nau e

Lahia ku oti to tapa mai nei ki taua nei mea pehea i toku noho ia soko nau e

Taku tama ku oti to ulu mai nei ki taua nei mea pehea i toku noho ia soko nau e

Taku tama ku oti to noho mai nei ki taua nei mea pehea i toku noho ia soko nau e

My child has departed instead of me; what are we two to do in my home all alone

Lahia has departed instead of me from my view; we should trade places in my house as you are being carried away

When they come to carry you away, I think it is for you alive but it is for your death

When they come to carry you away, I think it is for your good, but it is for your death

I love my child dearly what are we to do; what can we do, I am living alone

Lahia makes me tremble (with grief); what can we do, I am living alone

My child has finished calling here; what can we do, I am living alone

My child has finished entering the house; what can we do, I am living alone

My child has finished dwelling here; what can we do, I am living alone

Tani i Kavaia

I was told that this is a “bonito” song. The tani is composed for a brother who died and loved to fish for bonito. I was told families went together to fish for bonito and now when family members look in their canoe, the brother is no longer there. This is a short version. I was told there are many more verses that include all the things that the person liked to do. I don't know who gave me this song and my translation is rough and done in 2021.

Talatala ki te kau vaka aku tama e tuutuu tatani i te laua taina ku mate
Tell all the canoes/people to be ready, my people are crying for the dead brother

Talatala ki ni hakasoasoaku e tuutuu tataani I te laua taina ku mate
Tell all the friends that we are crying for their dead brother

E aleha ei i te henua aku tama e tuutuu tatani i te laua tama ku mate
Our people circle the island, are crying for their(2) dead brother

Ni olo ku liliho i te ohana, aku tama e tuutuu tatani i te laua tama ku mate
They go hidden by the passage, our people are crying for their dead brother

Ni olo ku nimo mate inaho aku tama e tuutuu tatani i te laua tama ku mate
They go delayed at the flock of fish, our people are crying for their dead brother

Tell everyone to be ready, my people are crying for their dead brother
Tell all the friends that we are crying for our dead brother
All around the land people are crying for their brother
They are hidden at the passage, our people are crying for their dead brother
They are stopping by a flock of fish, our people are crying for their dead brother

Tani a Tepeau

This funeral dirge tells a story that I heard throughout my stays on Sikaiana. A woman, Peia, was driven crazy by the spirit of a dead person (*aitu mate*) who was angry at her husband. In pre-Christian belief, Sikaiana believed that some dead people became powerful spirits after their death. They could harm the families of the people who were their enemies while they were alive. In 1980, Peia was known to some of the oldest living Sikaiana people from their childhood. Fane Telena told me that she knew Peia. Peia left her husband and took on many different lovers. She could be mean, one time she used a coconut palm to burn a blind woman. Eventually a Sikaiana man married her against the advice of his relatives. One evening, Fane told me that she and her family were sitting nearby and saw there was a commotion outside her house. Her foster father, with whom she was living, went to see what was happening. Peia had cut up her husband and was cooking him. Peia's brother, Tepeau, decided that she had to be put to death. The relatives of her deceased husband said that wasn't necessary, but Tepeau felt that things were getting out of hand. Brothers are in a very important relationship with their sisters and he was very sorry for his decision. Fane told me that he tried to drown himself with Peia when she was put out to sea but others stopped him. This is a *tani* that Tepeau wrote in his regret for deciding to put his sister to death. He asks why no one came forth to try to stop him. He calls out to a cousin, Takalo, who did not try to stop putting Peia to death.

My notes indicate that this *tani* was collected early in my stay, although I learned the context over the next 2 years. The translation was provided by Ralph Evesi.

Vaea te maua haikave i anau ni talatala koe ki mate
Ku mahana te maua haikave i anau ki talatala koe ki mate
Ka manatu muli toku manava i anau ni talatala koe ki mate
He kite nau a kit aua ki sulamai ma taua he tanata koe ku mate
Pehea he taina to ouia ki noho mai maki huhuti i to mate
Ko manatu muli toku manava i akoe ku mate
He kite nau ki a Takalo ki sulamai ma ki huhuti to mate

We are divided from our brother-sisterhood because I said you must die
I am split away from my sister because I said you must die
I think back in my heart, that I said you must die
I did not see anyone come forth to stop me that you must die
There wasn't any brother of mine who came to stop me from your death
My heart thinks back to you who has died
I did not see Takalo (a brother) come forth to stop your death.