

17
TOPIC: BIRTH

A+
Investigator: Litiana Kikau

INTERVIEWED: Ro Asela Meru..... 61 yrs. Burebasaga

SUBJECT: THINGS DONE RESPECTIVELY TO A LADY JUST GIVEN BIRTH

- When a chief's wife is nearing her due date, young man will be told to go out to the bush and cut fire wood ready for the cooking etc. that will be done when the chief's wife gives birth. So now the lady will come to when she gives birth to her child.
- How does a woman in the olden days count her months of pregnancy?

The lady will start counting from the very first day her monthly period doesn't come. Ten months from this very day is her due date. On this date when she is in pain she'll inform her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law will know straight away that the young girl is in labour. The mother-in-law will send someone to get the VUKU. During the young girl's pregnancy the VUKU will come every now and then to examine her. When she is sent for she will bring with her a VAU string and a sea shell that will be used when the cord is snipped off. The Vau string is beaten until it is very fine like cotton thread this will be used to tie the cord.

- A branch of VAU is cut and is kept in the water for sometimes when the fibre of the VAU is soft than it is peeled off and is dried in the sun. When the Vau is nicely dried than it will be beaten and screwed between the palms to be very fine and is kept especially for the purpose of tying the amblical cord. When the VUKU arrives she'll firstly smoothen her palms on the lady's stomach to know the baby's position in the woman's womb and also when the baby is due. The baby in the mothers womb will be very heavy this is the sign that the baby will be due soon.

So the vuku will ask the pregnant mother to hang on to the RUBE. The Rube is the piece of timber that runs across beneath the thatched roof of Fijian Bures. When the carrying mother hangs on to the Rube and pushes the water bag bursts and out comes the fluid. When the carrying mother hangs or swings on the RUBE her feet is not to touch the floor. When the water bursts out the VUKU knows that the baby is on its way; so the VUKU will tell the woman to lie and push.

- Who does she lies?

The woman will lie facing the ceiling, now hanging from one of the Rube-ni-Vale, that is the timber that runs up the roof, is a rope. The woman will be told to hold on tightly on the rope and when she is told to push she is to also hold on fast on the rope. When she pushes this way she'll have more power to push the child out. When the child comes

out the VUKU will wait until the breath of life is properly given to the child from the mother through the amblical cord. When this is done the VUKU will measure a span from the baby's side of the amblical cord tie the Vau string and cut the cord with the QANI-KAI that is the sea shell. At this time the TOKATOKA is still in the woman.

- What does the delivering woman lies on during her giving birth? ROKOCEBA is prepared by the chief's side where his wife will and the baby will lie. There will also be a white masi, the SEAVU, with the ROKOCEBA. When the chiefly baby is born and when the baby is cleaned, the baby will be placed on the prepared ROKOCEBA. When the baby is born the news will be taken quickly to the child's grandparents. At that time the WAQA-Turaga, Con-shell, will be blown to announce that the new visitor has arrived and is a baby boy. When the baby is cleaned one of his father's sister will carry the baby from the VUKU and place her on the ROKOCEBA and wraps her with this. The girl's family will be informed of the good news and ten ladies from the girl's side and ten ladies from the boy's side will be asked to come and carry the baby between until the tenth night.

The baby will be carried amongst this old ladies day and night. This ladies will be in their mid fifties. When the baby wants milk her mother will not carry the baby one of the oldies will be carrying the baby as the mother feeds him.

No young girls are allowed to do this only oldies because it is thought that the youngs might be pregnant and this will affect the baby. This is our belief then.

- Could you talk more on when the baby is cleaned?

There will be a basin, we call it Darivesi half filled with water, when the baby's umbilical cord is tied and cut the VUKU will deep her hand in the Darivesi and sprinkle some cold water on the baby's chest to make the baby cry. When the baby cries than the VUKU will bath him. When she's finished bathing the baby she will shake the baby softly four times before she places the baby on the ROKOCEBA and wraps him. The baby will be wrapped on this and is carried between the ladies until the tenth night.

- Who comes to name the baby?

The baby's grandfather will present a tabua as he names the child; then five girls from each side of the couple will be chosen to help in cooking the new mother's meal. The young girls will be cooking BA this is the dalo stem is boiled and the skin is peeled off. The new mother will have this for her menu everyday until the tenth night. This BA is not salted when it is cooked.

- Why is that?

This is to keep the child healthy and is a prevention from MACAKE and kind of sickness that is the results of eating sweet things. The new mother will only eat that and boiled vegetable without salt. Now the left of dalo stems not used,

the peelings and the left over food is to be kept until the tenth night.

The new mother will not touch her food. Her meals will be served in with a fork. She will not touch either her food or the baby. She'll use the fork to scop her food and the baby is hold by an oldie when she breast feed the baby.

A kind of ginger we call it Caga is used on the baby. The baby will be oiled with this to prevent her from getting sores.

- When the Vuku has tied the amblical cord and had cut it she'll turn to the woman to try and get the TOKATOKA out.
- Who is this done?

The VUKU will press the womans chest massaging down her stomach this will enable the TOKATOKA to fall out. But if this can not get the TOKATOKA out a branch of Siti is cut and brought home, the VUKU will scrape the skin of this Siti, makes it very fine and places it in a dari that is a TANOA. This medicine is thick and smooth. This will be given to the woman to drink. This drink will soften where the TOKATOKA is and the TOKATOKA will falls out easily. The woman's husband is responsible for burying the TOKATOKA just near the house.

- Who cleans the woman after birth?

The VUKU is responsible for cleaning that is bathing the child and the mother. There will be a Dari that is a basin like tub where the VUKU will bath both the child and the mother

until the tenth night. Sometimes the bleeding after birth doesn't come out freely, may be blocked so the VUKU will give the lady a medicine to enable the blood to flow out freely this is known as the BILO-CU.

- What causes this?

This is because she doesn't let the blood flows out freely by keeping her legs together. When she lies she's got to relax and let the bleeding flows out freely. All her stained clothes will be kept in the young girls BURE. There will be a Bure for the young girls and one for the young males. The girls will cook and the young men will be roasting in the outside oven for ladies who are carrying the baby in the house. On the tenth night ladies will carry dalo stem. After this the boys side will exchange gift between themselves. Forty mats from the boy's side exchange with forty mats from the girl's side. An exchange of Kumi, Masi and Mats takes place.

- Could you talk more on the kind of that the new mother eats?

The new mother will have boiled dalo stem without salt until the tenth night. On the tenth night her mother-in-law will cook for her. The couples relatives will also cook and they will all bring it to where the new mother is, this is where they will all feast. Also on the tenth night the girls will wake up very early get the left over dalo stem, skin and dalo rubbish and they will take this rubbish that is kept

from the first day to the tenth night and when the boys are still asleep the girls will creep in softly and unload the sack and baskets of rubbish on the sleeping boys. There will be an old man who will be sleeping with the boys. When this old man wakes up he'll see the dalo stem rubbish so he's got to wake the boys to see what the girls had done. After the boy's have had their breakfast they will take a VIA stem each to whip the girls with. So the boys will go to the girls bure and will whip them with Via stems, after the girls have been whipped the boys will go and make QALU for the girls.

- What is meant by the rubbish thrown into the boy's bure? That is just a way of celebrating the tenth night. On the tenth night the old ladies from both sides will spread a dabedabe this mats spread on where the new mother will seat during the feasting on tenth night. The mats will be spread where the new mother will enter the feasting place. The new mother will be dressed in Kumi and Salusalu she will be oiled in Yasi and REREGA; Beautifully dressed. Now she will carry her baby. The girl's relatives will lift the Masi curtain for the mother and the child to come out. At that time people in the house will welcome them saying, "SA QAI SIKA AUE," HERE THEY COME. This because now is the first time the new mother comes out with her baby. After the new mother has eaten than she is now allowed to

breast feed the baby, hold the baby herself and milking her breast.

- Why do carrying mothers have to VAKASILIMI?

This is the practice of the VUKU pushing her finger up the lady's organ this is what we call the SILLI, during the woman's pregnancy?

When a young girl looks weak and unhealthy she'll be taken to a VUKU who will do this to her. If she is carrying the VUKU will know and will tell her that she is carrying and she is not to do heavy house work.

- Is there any other kind of food that is tabu for carrying mothers to eat?

Carrying mothers are not to eat coconuts, that is food with coconut milk. Because when she gives birth it is believed that a plant called the NIU SE will also comes out with the child.

- Could you talk on the amblical cord?

When the amblical cord, dries up and fall it is wrapped in a small piece of white masi named SEAVU than the father is responsible of burying the amblical cord. The father will look for a nice healthy coconut shoot which he will plant on top of the amblical cord as he buries the cord.

- I sometimes hear that some people say that if the amblical cord is not buried properly the child will be a active one.

Yes, thats if the amblical cord is not properly buried.

The burying of the amblical cord is called the BUTONI-GONE.

- What happens when the amblical cord falls on one of the ladies while she is carrying the baby?

If the cord dries and falls on one of the ladies from one of the couples side that side is responsible to make a magiti and Yau(goods) for the child. It is a challenge where the child's cord will fall whether on the mother's side or the father's side. **

- What about the masi and mats that the new mother lies on? These mats are prepared by the girl's mother also the boy's mother. This mats etc. is for the new mother. This is different from the Yau brought in by ladies from both sides for the new baby and the mother. That Yau brought in will be shared amongat the ladies there. The ladies will be given shares and also the young girls doing the cooking. There'll be given mats, masi etc. As a thank-you from the couples families, these mats, masi, oil etc. are the KANI ROQOROQO.
- Is there anything done to the girls hair when she is carrying? When the young girl is known to be carrying, that is when she is still one month, two or three she'll be told not to comb her hair until she is five or six months, this is when the child in her is strong. When her stomach is strong than the boys side will prepare a magiti for her hair cut, before the young girl's hair is cut her family will be informed first. On the day of the hair cut the boys side will present a magiti known as the SAVASAVA to the girls family. SAVASAVA means to clean, because now the girl's hair is cut and she is also able to comb her hair. The girl's family will also present OCAOCANI to the boy's side. The young girl's mother-in-law will cut her daughter-in-laws her because the girl is now theirs.

- Is there a reason why the carrying mother is not to comb her hair?

The main reason is that it is thought that if the girl combs her hair there is a possibility that she can miscarry. The main reason why they don't comb is that, to keep the child forming inside. Carrying mothers are not given heavy inside or outside cores. They don't even go out to sun themselves because the child forming inside might over work before it is completely formed and she might lose the baby. When the baby's hair is cut for the first time his fathers side will prepare the magiti and the baby's mother side will cut the baby's hair.

- Is there any other thing that you would like to say?
I think that is all.

FINISH.