

TOPIC: BIRTH

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THE BIRHT OF A CHILD IN THE OLDEN DAYS

When a woman knows that she has got a child in her or that she is carrying a baby, she knows fully well what she ought to do and the other things which she must prepare. On her first month, it is known by her refusing to eat any food and she appears weak and dosent look well. Sometimes she refuses to go near other people because she cant stand other people's smell. This is the early signs of pregnancy. For othe women on their early stages of pregnancy, it is very hard for us to tell that they are pregnant. They eat as they like and we only can tell that they are preganat when the get really sick. On her second month she is not allowed to stay with her husband or to sleep with him. She is looked after well and taken care of. The food is prepared and then brought to where she is resting. When the baby is developing inside is no longer watery cells but a human and that is on her fourth month the woman is not allowed to do certain tasks because it is good that she rests because the baby needs a good position to be in before it develope gradually. The baby has acquired a certain position before it is fully developed. During her period of rest, all the things ~~what~~ that she usually is going to be left out at the moment. She will concentrate on how she is going to prepare the things for the unborn baby. The things that she is going to need during the delivery time and after the birth of the baby. The husband works very hard in the garden planting a lot of taro and

also he plants a lot of BELE. As for the food she eats everyday, mainly, it's green vegetables. This is to help her when she is going to give bith and also to help her in her blood supply. She is not allowed to dggg anything heavy or to carry heavy load because of the unborn child she is carrying. Also, she is not allowed to stetch her hand in order to reach out to get hold of something high up because our elders believe thqt when she gives birth, the child's feet will come out first instead of the head. She is not allowed to sit on the threshold of any house.

They believe thqtix if she allows herself to sit on the threshold, when she is going to give birth, the child's head won't come out. It willz only show it's face and goes b<sub>a</sub>ck inside. They are not allowed to eat anything with red texture since they say that if pregnant women eat these type of food, what's going to happen is that they may give birth children whose got spot all over their body. These spots may look like smallpox marks or measles' spot. This can also make the child suffer from pimples. The food and any drink given to the expectant mother is carefully chosen and prepared before it is given to them. They have to be chosy, prepared before it is given to them. They have to be choosy when it comes to food because of all the t<sub>a</sub>boo's mentioned and there effects if it is not followed or obeyed. The expectant mother stays at homebut she won't allow herself to spend most of the time sleeping. She should try to do some work or carry put the easy tasks around the house in order to move her body for the benefit of the baby which is inside. If she does not allow her body to move or exercise it, what might happen is that the baby

could die if it is not moved around. The months slowly pass until she reaches her eighth month but her on her seventh month, her overgrown hair is cut short because after she had given birth she is not allowed to cut her hair. On the seventh month, when they are going to cut her hair, they will prepare a MAGITI and other Fijian gifts for her. On the eighth month, she accompanies the ladies in the fishing trip, all her close relatives brings a TAKITAKI(food) each for her. They also sit down to eat with her. She begins her training at this stage. She trains her body by going out to get firewood, do some laundry work or help in the plantation. By doing these tasks, she is moving her body around and this also moves the baby which is inside her. She rests at her house but she should not sleep too much she should do these tasks in order to allow her for easy delivery. If she feels her back becoming sore or her big toe is becoming sore, these are the signs of the child ready to be born. These signs can tell the mother that she is a day away from delivery moment. Next day she is possible to give birth to her baby. Before she gives birth and she knows that her date is near, she is given a Fijian medicine that helps her to make easy delivery. These medicines which is used by mothers in the olden days to make easy delivery are red VASILI plants, she is going to chew the leaves and then take in the juice which she gets from the plant. Another one, the lady who is doing the delivery might mix her a medicine and this medicine is prepared from the BELE plant, they just get the leaves and they squeeze it to get the juice out of it. The slipperiness of this liquid which they get will help in the coming out

of the baby. When this lady who comes to help the lady in delivering her baby, when she comes, she is going to bring a KAI shell or bivalve shell. If not the others can prepare it for her. When she arrives to the place where the lady who is going to give birth is and then she checks the lady before she tells the rest of the people of what to prepare that she is going to use on this lady. After they have prepared everything then the mid-wife is going to hold on to the lady who is going to give birth and she tells her to push all her might. When she does this, she can burst the sac inside causing all the water inside to come out. When this happens, it shows that the baby is on it's way out and they have to be ready to get hold of it. When the mid-wife see this thing happen she goes near to the lady and then she keeps an eye on her so that she does not miss out when the baby comes out. When the baby comes out she is going to be the person who is going to hold it. They do not want the baby to drop onto the ground or on the place where the lady is resting or the child will get drowned again on the pool of blood which the mother discharged. As soon as the baby comes out, the mid-wife acts and she get hold of the baby and then she quickly suck out the blood which is on the baby's face and mouth and on it's nose. When she has completed this thing, then she will measure out as to how long she is going to cut the umbilical cord, she gets her mark, and the length from the stomach to the baby's navel it is the length of your longer finger. Then she is going to wait for the moment when the mother is going to try and give some air to the baby so that it can breath by itself. When the mid-wife notice that the umbilical sort of loses it's colour and

turns white, that is the moment when she is going to cut it. She uses the bamboo stick which is specially made for this to cut the umbilical cord. The bamboo stick is not very thick but it is sharp enough to cut anything. After this, then she gently slap the child so that it can cry. After the baby is able to cry, then they begin with the task of cleaning the mother. When the baby comes out, together with it is the placenta or the sac which stored the baby while it was inside the mother's womb. As soon as the placenta falls out of the mother they begin with the task of cleaning her up and this is not a very easy job. It has to be done soon and not later. All the useless blood which was stored up inside her during her pregnancy period, it all come out now and they just flow out. If she gives birth with no problem at all, then it is going to be alright to her too, but some cases they find problem. They removed the placenta and it is taken away to be buried. This thing the placenta is taken to be buried to the place where it cannot be seen or taken out from. They do this thing in the belief that when they bury it far from the place where the two people are, that is the mother and her child, nothing bad is going to happen to them and that is they are going to grow up well and healthy together, but if they bury it near them, there is bound to be some sort of bad luck that befalls them every now and again. A MASI cloth is placed under the lady's body when she is ready to give birth and when the placenta falls off, it lands on this MASI which is underneath, together with this MASI they bury it someplace where it is known to the mother and the child. They clean the mother up and then they gently place her on to the bed which they have prepared for

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her to lie on. At this place, they prepared all these good things for them to lie on, large mats are placed underneath to make it soft, followed by the GATU, MASI and they have the KUMI and the GATU hung up to keep them privacy. This is used for there mosquito net also. The mother and the baby is placed behind this curatâin of Fijian mats, since it is the first born for this lady, the baby is not going to be placed on the bed until the four nights are over. And during this ceremony of carrying the baby after it's birth, they always keep an eye as to which side of the family, would the umbilical cord drop on to, whether it is going to be a person from the father's side or from the mother's sdie. This thing the umbilical cord is something which is kept so that it is not lost. As for the people who are going to sit there and carry the baby for four nights, there are going to be four people from themother's side and four people from the father's side. And during their stay together, they are going to crack jokes and they sing p~~h~~alms to themselves to cheer them up during their stay. The birth of a child to a new family shows that God has given them another child who is going to be added to the number of the MATA-QALI who are already there but this is ~~and extra~~ extra one which might help them in the future. So, when a person is born in this family, ~~a~~ people rejoice in it and they do all sorts of things to make it a memorable thing. The mother and her baby are going to be near each other all the time and there are two people who are chosen to come and cook the meal for the mother every time the people are there since she is still weak and can't do much for own self. These two people are going to be responsible for everything she is going to eat. The food she is going to eat during

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those four days is just plain dalo and the dalo stem or the BABA. She is not allowed to eat any salty food until the tenth night is over. Let's go vack to the ladies who are carrying the baby for four nights or so, if it happens that the umbilical cord falls on to one of the ladies from the mother's side, then they go out to their place and they are going to prepare a MAGITI and some other gifts which they are going to present to the others. After they've done their part, then they are going to look for a coconut tree which bears orange coconuts and they are going to bury the umbilical cord but on the spot ~~where~~ they buried it, they are going to plant the coconut there. They believe that when they bury the umbilical cord and they plant something on it, the child will grow up healthy and strong and then when he is big, he is not going to be a very mishevious person but a quiet one. As for this thing for you decide whther it is a very good person or not, you will notice that the tree grows up tall and strong and there is nothing there to try and prevent it's rapid growth. This also show that this person or this c ild will be something compared to that tree, strong healthy and a very nice person. If you do not plant something on to the umbilical cord and you do not bury it somewhere like what I've just explained, when the child grows up, he is going to be a peñson who is fond of handling things and he can just go around taking other peaple's things, they say that she is still looking for his umbilical cord.

On the fourth day, they do this thing for them, that is they make the BURUA(food made at the birth of a child) because the two have both survived. They call this MAGITI in some other places as the TUNUDRA(a MAGITI made after a woman's confinement, on the day a

child is born, for the mid-wives). For this MAGITI, they are going to get a cow or pigs which they kill and they do not cook this food, it is placed there in front of all the people who are going to get a share out of this. Then they get the taro to go with it and then it is shared out among all the people who are there. The mid-wife gets the most share of this MAGITIZ. From the day the mother gave birth to her baby, many people who are closely related to her and the father of the child comes to their house to visit the child the mother and they bring things with them when they come and this is called the ROQOROQO (a ceremonial gift to a newborn child). When they come to visit the two people they bring small mats for the baby, oil for the baby, MASI, GATU, TABUA, and also they bring some food, but if they bring food they have to bring it raw. The name of all these things which they bring is known as the things for the ROQOROQO or KEVEKEVE. As for all the people who came to the ROQOROQO, when the ~~last~~<sup>fourth</sup> night comes, the father of this child, he is going to prepare a large MAGITI which is raw and then it is shared out among all the people who came to see the mother and the baby. This is known as the BURUA prepared by the mother and the father of the newborn child. And also as a way of showing their appreciation for their coming and their consideration to see the baby and the mother since they are both weak.

After they have had the VAKABOGI VA (fourth night) then for those people who want to return to their own homes, they are free to go. When all the people are gone, the rest of the people who are now staying there with the mother and the child is some of their very close relatives and the reason behind their stay is

that they would like to do something for the tenth night or for the VAKABOGI TINI. On the tenth day, the mother is then allowed to eat any seafoods or anything where salt is added to. During these days, the father is forbidden to go and have a look at the two people, at his wife or at the child. When they know that now is the time for the father to come and have a look at the child and the mother, then they will approach him and tell him to come now. After they have done all these things, they will all return to their own homes, and the mother, the father and their child remain at their own home. As for the mother she is not allowed to do any heavy job or left to do a lot of work, she is kept very quiet so that she does not get more sick or become really worse than the condition she is in at the moment of her delivery. If a mother gets sick or TADOKA (relapse into a sickness) it is very hard to try and find a medicine for it. For this thing to happen, it is all caused by the cold getting into her and it makes it worse for her organs and other parts of the body to function. It can kill the mother if she is not careful with her health. She is not allowed to comb her hair. They say if she is going to do all these strenuous tasks she can make herself sick and also the baby which is under her care now. As for her hair, she lets it grow and she does not comb it until the moment when she feels that she is strong enough to do it all herself. When the child reached the age of one month, then the parents had to consider the things which they will need for the christening of their baby. When the day for the christening comes, they will all go to the church where it is going to be held and the parents will both appear in Fijian costumes, everything they wear is that of our traditional dress.

Inside the church along the aisle the mats are laid there for them to step on, on their way to the altar. And at the altar they have some mats placed there too for them to step on during the christening of their baby. After they've had all these things then all the mats which they used for this christening, it is all given to the priest or the minister who conducted the service. As for the child who is growing up, the hair is not cut until he reaches the age of one year. At the age of one year then they decide on a date when they are going to cut the child's hair, because they believe by cutting the hair, they will remove any impurities which might be clinging onto him which is from the mother during the time when she gave birth to him or her. They cut the child's hair to let it grow this time with nothing which they believe that might endanger his life, so they cut the hair and then let it grow until the time they decide to cut it again. At the time they cut his hair, they will prepare a MAGITI which is called the MAGITI NI KOTI (food for the cutting of the hair) and also some gifts for the baby. As for the mother, when she is eight months now after she gave birth, now, she is allowed to cut her hair anytime she wants it.

- I would like to ask you a question, what can you say about the way they name a baby who is a first born in a family, how do they pick a name for him.
- When a first born is given to a new family, it is the father's duty and privilege to think and choose a name for his child. But for many case, the child's grandfather often names the child. If the grandfather of the child wish to name the baby, when he is going to go to their house to tell them of a name whom he thinks

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would be a suitable name for his grandchild, he is going to take a TABUA with him and he is going to present this TABUA to the child's father and then he is going to tell them the name who he thinks best. He just can't walk in like that and tell them that he just decided to call that baby so-and-so. The right way when someone wants to name a child, they have to bring a TABUA with them when they go to that house to tell the child's father.

What are all the things or equipment which the mid-wife uses when it is time for her to deliver the child?

When all mid-wives during those days goes out to do their duty by helping deliver a baby, they take with them their things which they are going to need for the delivering of the baby. These are things like the bamboo sticks and some bivalve shells or QANIKAI. This is the type of bamboo stick which they use to circumcise young boys. For all mid-wives it is like their talent for them to do such things and they know all the things which they are to do and what not to do, if they follow everything which they know is the right thing without all these things, then they have no problem whatsoever with their work, all they have to do is be faithful to what they are doing. The knowledge of what new mothers' are expected to find during their moment of delivering the baby is there with them and they know of the hard time that these ladies go through. And during this time of her work and doing all these things of being a mid-wife, she learns of many things that has not happened in any of her case before. When it is going to happen in the future she knows what she is going to do now, since it has happened before.

How do the mid-wives know of such things about delivering babies?

In the olden days, our ancestors were really close in union with our VU(originators). So when the people wants something they just approach the BETE(priest) and they tell him of what is in their midd. They want anything they just take it up to their BETE and it is the duty of the BETE to communicate with the VU and tell him of what the people wants. As for some other people all they have to do is to remain at home and then one day, someone arrives at the doorstep and they give them this MANA(supernatural power) to do all this extra-ordinary things for themselves to help others in it and also to help themselves and the rest of the people in the MATAQALI. That is their way of living in the olden days, life is full of surprises. I could say for all those people who do this sort of thing, for all native physicians, and allthose who practise witchcraft and the mid-wives, this isx something which was given to them via their BETE or by someone who happened to drop at their hoem unexpectedly and they are giventhe power and the strenght to do all these things. This could be du3 to a VU or originator who is buried there at there place or somewhere near. So from those people who had been doing all these things for most of the days of their lives, they pass it down to other of their descendants directly from the next person whom was given of this power. And it just carry on to the next generations and then on to the next until it reaches some of us today who although they do not attend shhool, they know of all other things, which other people like them do not know of. If they are faithful towat they are doing, they are bound to get really up to the top with what they are doing and beat all those people whow went to school to learn of all these ~~h~~ things.

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Could you name some of the medicines which is given to the ladies who are pregnant and they are nearing their time for delivery?

If a pregnant woman feels that she is not well and needs to take something to make her feel better, she will visit the mid-wife and then tell her of her problem or from what she is suffering from, then the mid-wife will tell her what medicine, native medicine, to take which is going to make her feel much better. All she has to do is to tell the mid-wife of what is the trouble with her and the mid-wife will do the rest for her. In some cases, the mid-wife will just tell you to go and get some VASLLI leaves and chew it then you take in the juice which you get from the leaves which you chewed. After you chew this then you eat your food. Do this every-time before a meal and then note the changes you experience. If not you get the BELE leaves and then you make a medicine out of it that to make a liquid then you take that and you drink it. For the mid-wives also they can do this thing of "VEIVAKASILIMI (bathing a lady to tell whether she is really pregnant or not or to see how the child is getting on inside the mother's stomach and all that. They can do all these things and it is nothing hard for them all you have to do is to go to their house and ask them if they could help you with the problem you've got and they will help you. It happens that most of the ladies whom I try to deliver their babies I find it hard to do it, so "I just give them this medicine not long I find that the baby is on its way out, so I just make sure that everything that I am going to make now depends on how I handle it and the life of the child and the mother now depends on me. But most of the medicine which I give out to them for them to take it is really useful and the medicine which I give out to help them to give birth much more easily and quickly too.

Do you know anything about pregnant women who abort their children and all that.

- I don't really know anything about this thing but I've heard that a lot of people do this silly thing of killing their own children but they do not realise the danger of doing this thing, they just think of doing this sort of things and they do not give anything whatsoever of what might happen in the future. They just think of themselves and they do not think of the part of their blood and body which they are trying to get rid. Some of these ladies they go to the lady or people who know of the medicine for this sort of thing, and that is the medicine for abortion. As for people who take this medicine for abortion, it is going to be a really long wait for them before they can get pregnant again. There is also medicine which you take that can prevent you from getting pregnant until the time you decide to have a baby then. All these things, all the ladies who know about native medicines they can help you with it. I don't even know it myself.

- Why do they have to go and bury the placenta?

- The reason why they bury the placenta so that no bad luck befalls on the two people, the mother and the child, they have to take it and bury it somewhere far from the place where the two people are staying. They should not be told of this too. It is all to be a secret as to the place where they are going to bury it. For this thing, as soon as the child comes out of the mother's womb it is followed by this thing the placenta or the ~~ix~~ I TOKATOKA. If it is hard for them to get rid of the placenta from the mother's womb, or that the placenta did not come out as soon as the baby come out, then it shows that something is wrong..

When something goes wrong in this case the placenta did not come out after the baby had been delivered, this is called the KUBE (the cleavings, fragments of placenta remaining in the uterus or vagina). The mid-wife will try all her best to remove it from the mother's body. She massages the mother's back and she moves her stomach around in a wave-like motion. Not long, then the whole of the placenta that is still inside falls out and then it is taken away to be buried.

- What happens if they are not able to deliver the baby, what are they going to do, is there anything which they have to do when such thing happen.
- When this sort of thing happens the mid-wives know that these lady did not follow all the taboo which she was told not to do. If not there could be some thing wrong somewhere, the husband must have done something wrong and the punishment is placed of the wife who is not able to give birth. So, if the husband did something which is not accepted in society, then he has to go and ask for atonement and all that. If not, the sister-inlaw approaches the mid-wife and ask for pardoning for the wrong done, whether it is done by the brother or by the brother's wife. After they have done all these things, when the midwife slipd her hand in this time, she notice that the child is beginnign to come out nw. In some case, when this sort of thing happens, that is a lady is not able to deliver her child, it could be the husbands' fault. Maybe the time the wife was pregnant, he was having another affair with another lady, so the thing is really affecting the two people now, and that is the baby and the mother. So, he is called to

the place where the wife is and he is asked all these things, if he is having another affair with another woman, then when he blurts out the truth, after that everything is going to be fine with the mother and the child, all that was needed for the husband to tell the truth, if he hides the truth then he is just killing the baby and the mother, they could end up dead if the father of the child does not tell the truth.

- Is there anything else you would like to say about this topic we are discussing today.
- I think that is all that I can share with you today and just one other thing, that for people who are doing this sort of thing they should try to do it honestly and without any tricks or bad grudges for anyone. It is the life of two people that is on her both hands so she is going to live with it if the thing she is doing kills one of them. Thank you.

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