

TOPIC:      BIRTH

Investigator:    Seninili Fikau

INTERVIEWED:    Ro Asela.....Burebasaga, Rewa

SUBJECT:      BIRTH OF A CHIEFLY BABY

- My grandmother Ro Aliti looked after me when I was small and she told me the story on what is done when a chiefly visitor is about to be born. When the lady is pregnant all the men in the village will be bring fire wood and keeping it ready in the pregnant ladies kitchen. When the lady starts to have pangs of pains she'll inform her fathers sister that is her aunty and her aunty would go and get a Vuku who is specialise on this particular thing. When the Vuku arrives she'll mix four Gasau leaves and four Bula leaves with water and she'll give this to the pregnant mother. After the lady has drank this she'll be told to stand up and hold on the kuba ni vale this is the timber that goes across the top of the house the lady would hold on this and would push. When she pushes fluid would gush out than she'll be told to lie down again. When the lady lies down the baby will come out. The Vuku will wait to see that the breath of the mother is given

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to the baby before she measures a pace long amblical cord from the kids stomach, tie a string there and cut the cord with a piece of bamboo or Qani Kai(shell). The Vuku will than take the child, wrap her and place her on a Ceba this is a small mat made for the child. The child will be wrapped in white masi. When the kid had been wrapped the Vuku will attend to the mother to get the Tokatoka-ni-gone out. She'll push her thumb and finger up to the virgina to try and get the Tokatoka out if it still don't come she'll strain the skin of Siti, water it and give it to the lady to drink. When the lady drink this the Tokatoka immediately comes. The Vuku will clean the child's mother and she'll be laid on the davodavo her mother in law had prepared. Her mother will also come to the house to spread her daughters davodavo (gifts of mats, beddings). Ten men and ten ladies will be asked to come and stay in this house. They will be carrying the child until the amblical cord falls. Ten young girls from the new mother's side will come to cook Ba (dalo stem) for the new mother.

Only young girls are to cook for the new mother because it is thought that married ladies might be pregnant and they can cause sickness to the child and his mother. If the child is a boy lali will be beaten to inform the villagers that the 'chiefly visitor is a baby boy.

All this time after giving birth the new mother will be ointed with REREGA (a ginger like plant). On the tenth night ladies from the new mothers side will carry dalo stem

to the new mothers home. Both sides will cook and food will be brought to the new mothers home that is on the tenth night. The new mother will be dressed and oiled all over with this particular plant. The table cloth will be spread and the new mother and her child will be brought to where the meal is spread. As the women inside sees the lady and her child coming to the spread meal they shout, "SA BASIKE AUE...."

- The food that is cooked for this lady on the tenth night is boiled dalo stem and dalo, without salt. If she's given yams she's got to drink the yam juice too. All the food she eats are not to be salted.

- Who gives the baby's name?

When a chiefly baby is born his father's side will present a tabua and give the baby's name.

- What are young men responsible for on this occasion?

All along from the first day to the tenth night the ten girls who had been cooking will keep their dalo rubbish, safely hidden. While the girls cook the young men chops fire wood. On the tenth day the girls would wake up very early and would collect all their dalo rubbish, they'll make their way to where the young men are sleep and dump their rubbish on them and they'll go back. When the young man wakes up they'll see the rubbish and they'll know that the girls had been here. So they'll collect the dalo stems and will whip the girls with it before they go to prepare

QAIU(kind of dessert) for the girls.

- What happens when the Tokatoka falls?

When the tokatoka falls it will be wrapped in a masi and taken to be buried. When the amblical cord falls it will be kept safely.

- Is there a belief that goes with the tokatoka if it doesn't fall out easily? Any tabu?

This is because the new mother wasn't given the food she wants when she was pregnant. That is why the Tokatoka wouldn't fall out easily. Another reason is that she must have eaten bananas of Vudi(another kind of banana) whole. When a pregnant mother eats banana she's got to chop the banana first into pieces before eating it. If she doesn't the amblical cord will go around the baby's neck and can also choke the baby if the Vuku doesn't untie the amblical cord fast.

- You've been mentioning that the new mother eats dalo stem, why is this?

Dalo stem, boiled, gives good milk and it will also help the child growth.

- Why is not known that the girl is in labour. Why is it kept a secret?

This is kept a secret when the girl is in pain. Because if it is known one of those who doesn't like the girl will

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whisper to herself that she doesn't like the girl and because of this it will be very hard for the pregnant mother to give birth. So a yagona is to be presented again to this person before the baby can be born. Sometimes it is late and the baby can kill his mother in the womb. That is why labour pain is kept a secret in the house. I think that is all.

FINISH.