

TOPIC: BIRTH

Investigator: Torika Ovoi

INTERVIEWED: Siteri Nasumusumu..... Naibitu, Tokatoka, Tailevu

SUBJECT: THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

- When a young girl is wedded she will stay with her husband in their own house. After a few months her monthly period stops and she'll know that she is carrying. The young girl will tell her husband of the good news and her husband will inform his mother. So the boys family now knows that their in-law is carrying. The boys parents will get a Tabua and inform the girls parents, presenting the tabua to them of the good news. The boys parents will return to their home and after a month, the girls mother will come and ask her son-in-law if she could take her daughter to her home. The main reason girls are taken down to their parents home is that it is thought that the girl might miscarriage if she agains have sex with her husband, that is why the girls mother comes and ask her son-in-law if her daughter could go down for a visit to her home for sometimes. This is all because of the young girl not to have miscarriage. The girl will stay at her parents place until she is eight

months than her husband's family will come to take her back. At this time the young girl returns her mother-in-law will prepare everything for her daughter-in-law's birth.

On the ninth month, when the young girl is counting her days for delivery, one of these days she'll get labour pains. When her back and her stomach pains, aches the young girl will inform her mother-in-law. The old woman will straight away know that her daughter-in-law is having labour pain so she will send for the Vuku (wise woman). At this time the young girl's husband will be alert to know what is happening.

- Who is this wise woman?

The Vuku is the wise woman who will help the woman give birth. She will attend to the woman giving birth. This lady is good in this particular field. It is her talent to attend to ladies giving birth, that is why she is called wise woman because she very well knows what is to be given and done to the baby and the mother during after pregnancy. When the VUKU comes she'll bring with her the equipments she'll need. A kind of sea shell is used to cut the umbilical cord, and she will also bring with her VAU string to tie the cord before snipping it off. The VUKU arrives and she'll examine the lady. By touching and feeling the young girl's stomach she very well will know when the child will be born and the baby's position in the mother's womb. When the VUKU knows that the baby is due. She'll ask the young girl to hang on the

timber above her head and to push. When this is done the fluid sack will burst. So the Vuku will lie the pregnant mother again to wait for the delivery. The pregnant ladies legs will be placed apart to make way for the baby and the Vuku. When the Vuku sees that the baby's head is seen coming out she'll ask the pregnant mother to give another push that will allow the child to come out safely. Big solid pieces and also liquid blood flows out after the baby, but before this the VUKU quickly carries the baby and place him on a safe place so that he is not drown by that flood of blood. The VUKU places the child a side and waits for the amblical cord to fall out; now the VUKU will watch the amblical cord to turn white, this is when the mother has given her child the breath of life. When the amblical cord is white the VUKU will measure a span from the baby's side of the cord, tie a string around the cord and snips the cord with the sea shell which she brought with her. When the cord is cut the VUKU will take the child, softy slaps the baby's back and when she hears the baby's cry, she'll wrap the baby with a towel and place the child aside. Now she'll attend to the child's mother. The VUKU will massage the lady's stomach. From between the chest, she'll massage, pressing deep down so that the TOKATCKA would fall out. When the TOKATCKA falls out the VUKU cleans the woman and place her child next to her on the prepared beddings. The TOKATCKA is wrapped and taken to be buried. If the baby is a first born.

Straight after the baby is cleaned, people in the house will start carrying him until the tenth night.

- How does the pregnant mother know that she is giving birth soon?

The pregnant mother's back and stomach will be very painful and the pain will come after another. Not long the fluid sack bursts and this shows that the baby is on the way.

- What happens if the baby wouldn't come out?

If the baby can not come out this is a sign that the woman should own up. This shows that she must have been having intercourse with her husband during pregnancy. This is a tabu. When a lady is pregnant she's not to have sex with her husband because this will stop the baby from coming out. Unless the woman owns up she will not be able to give birth to the child.

- How will the VUKU know that she has been sleeping with the husband during her pregnancy?

If the pregnant mother denies that she's been having sex with her husband, the VUKU will bring her husband's underpants and dip it in a bowl. If the water in the bowl turns yellow this shows that the woman had been sleeping with her husband. So the VUKU will come again and tell the pregnant mother of the result, then the lady owns up, at that very time she also gives birth to her child.

Pregnant mother should not also eat Red foods, like crabs,

prawns etc. this is a tabu because if they do the child will get sores on her head.

- What does the pregnant woman lie on during delivery?

A mat is spread and a piece of masi on top of the mat. This masi is used in wrapping up the Tokatoka-ni-gone before it is buried.

- What happens next after the child is born?

When the child is born the baby will be carried from one lady to another. These ladies will do the BIKABIKA that is they are to stay in the house and the only thing they are required to do is to carry the child between them from the child's birthday to the tenth night. On the fourth night a feast is prepared by the boy's side. This feast is called the BURUA it is a feast to celebrate that the mother and child had come home safely from the valleys of death.

- Is there someone chosen to cook for the new mother?

Yes, there is someone chosen to cook for the new mother, but usually the new mother only eats boiled, dalo stem, without salt and also green vegetables boiled without salt. This is to give the mother's milk more vitamins.

- Is there any other thing that you would like to say?

On the tenth night another magiti is prepared by the boy's side and is present to the girl's family. Now everyone will feast together and also on the tenth night the new mother

Cont'd Page 6

can sprinkle salt on her food and may eat fish. The beddings where the new mother and her child lies is prepared by her mother-in-law and her mother. There will twenty mats and a piece of masi on top and masi curtain.

This is where the new mother and her child lies until the tenth night.

That is all.

VINAKA.