



2<sup>nd</sup> Century Terracotta relief of Scribonia Attice on her Birthing Stool

## Pregnancy and Childbirth

### Pregnancy

- The creation of children was of high importance.
- Augustus set a minimum marriage of age 12
- A young girl who had not had their menses yet could still get pregnant but only after an examination.
- If a girl was too young to carry either she would miscarry or the child would not develop right. This could do irreparable damage to the girl and child.

### Labor

- “Delivery can also be eased by drinking goose semen mixed with water or “the liquids that flow from a weasel's uterus through its genitals.”<sup>1</sup>
- ”According to Pliny, fumigations with the fat from hyaena loins produce immediate delivery for women in difficult labor; placing the right foot of a hyaena on the woman results in an easy delivery, but the left foot causes death.”<sup>2</sup>

### Child Birth

- Childbirth was a danger to both the mother and the child.
- Most children did not survive to adult hood.
- The birthing process was difficult and complicated for the mother.
- After the child was born the father had the choice to expose the child or to except the child.
- Girls were mainly exposed in the Roman Empire.
- Friends and Family members were allowed into the birthing room.
- The naming process was done days after birth.
- Mortality rate was high for both the women and infants during this time.

### Important Terms

- Placenta: An organ that forms inside the uterus and nourishes the unborn child in the womb.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.indiana.edu/~ancmed/midwife.HTM>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

- Uterus: The organ inside a woman in which a fetus develops.
- Midwife: A person, mainly a woman, who helps a woman give birth. Most commonly found in home birthing in modern day.
- Menses: The flow of blood that comes from a woman's body each month
- Miscarry: The early and unexpected end of a pregnancy.

## **Website**

<http://www.indiana.edu/~ancmed/midwife.HTM>

This website gave us information on the birthing process, and what the Romans would do while a woman was in labor. It was interesting to read about the different ways they thought would ease the pains of labor. It also talk about what would happen to the child after it was born.

## **Journal Article**

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c8d78b3e-e8ad-4cad-a3cb-f3a8677e9d34%40sessionmgr111&vid=3&hid=122>

This article from the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology talks about childbirth in the Roman Age. It explains how difficult the process was for the women of the time. Many women and newborns died during child birth

## **Questions**

How is childbirth and pregnancy different today compared to Ancient Roman times?

How are they the same?

What are some of the common procedures done today that would not have been done in Rome?

Do you think the practices in Ancient Rome were safe to perform?

## **Bibliography**

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