

APAU TRADITIONS

A painting depicting a traditional Apau sailing boat with two large, brown, triangular sails on a tropical beach. The boat is on the water, with several figures on board. On the beach, several figures are standing, some with their arms raised in a gesture of welcome or celebration. A thatched-roof hut is visible on the left, and a palm tree with green coconuts hangs down from the top left corner. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds against a deep blue background. The overall style is that of a traditional painting, possibly a reproduction of a historical work.

**The Legends Of An
Ancient Seafaring Tribe**

OUR CONTRIBUTORS



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We thank each and everyone of these men for their contribution through art, research and history to preserving the Apau culture.



Being female and the first in line of my ten siblings of six males behind me, I had the opportunity to grow up inside a huge combined family under my own parents and grandparents with lots of love and caring. They impressed upon us what "TARAHU" meant in their clan traditions.

It meant that you must accept any strangers with open arms and welcome them into your homes and share with those in need.

The time came in October 1958 when I was traded off with my third brother for the price of blood exchange between my father's cousin brother who had sadly lost his own young son during the 2nd World War.

As a little girl of only 8 at the time, I wondered why this exchange was necessary. Questions began raging in my little brain. Why were our parents giving us away to a place far from the safety of our loving home and familiar environment at such an early age?

We had no choice in the matter of course. According to the Apau traditions, my poor father also had little choice I suppose.

This compels me to iterate how powerful the Apau Motu Traditions were in those days. Almost every decision was influenced by them. From Pre-marriage, Marriage, Birth, Death, Marine and Land and Navigation ritual and rites -traditions that must be executed accordingly.

As I grew older I began to get more serious and do my own further research and collect information. In 1975 I was able to get more depth into the Apau Traditions.

In 2006 I launched the APAU OF ANCIENT BOERA HERITAGE to coincide with the 30th anniversary of PNG Independence. Sadly, invited dignitaries failed to attend but this did not dampen my spirit. Instead it encouraged me to persevere my passion to this day.

In October 2012 I also staged a big exhibition hosted by my cousin historian DARO AVEI when His Royal Highness Prince Charles visited Boera village. Prince Charles spent more time on that exhibition.

In this special APEC publication I have attempted my best to present to our readers to inspire you on some of the APAU TRADITIONS - including *matagara* - marine fishing for dugongs and turtles, pottery and the *lagatoi-hiri* traditions.

In doing so I hope other similar tribes may be inspired to follow likewise to treasure and preserve their traditional legacies.

I also would like to thank other authorities, namely NCDC, and now the APEC PNG 2018 for highlighting our Apau Motu-Koita traditions, of the *HIRI LAGATOI* insignia/trademark. This means a lot to the original inhabitants of the Port Moresby region.

My wish is that this information will in future become useful to educational curriculum materials and merchandise opportunities. I have many other options on mind. Most of all I hope that I have in some way contributed to your understanding of the Apau-Motu-Koita traditions for your consumption and other inspirational opportunities.

"My wish is that this information will in future become useful to educational curriculum materials and merchandise opportunities. In doing so I hope other similar tribes may be inspired to follow likewise to treasure and preserve their traditional legacies."

This is just the beginning - or should I say - this is the end to the beginning, as we look forward to embark on the journey of educating the region (and hopefully rest of the world) about our wonderful traditions. We hope you can share in this with us.

Thank you.

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The Apau People & The Hiri Trade



Who were the Apau?

Apau people are the descendants of the Marehau/Motu tribe. They were the sea-faring ancestors of the people of the Central Province of Papua New Guinea.

These pioneering tradesmen voyaged across the seas along the southern coastlines of Papua New Guinea, perhaps 4-500 years ago, participating in what was known as the *hiri* trade.

For at least the past 500 years, and possibly for as long as 2,900 years, the coastal Motu tribesmen (from where is presently the Port Moresby district of PNG) have set out on dangerous ocean voyages from the sandy shorelines of their home towns up to the Gulf of Papua rainforests about 400km away.

Setting up and sustaining these age-old partnerships for the exchange of food and building materials, the Motu pushed geographical boundaries and the limits of nautical know-how to investigate new opportunities along remote shorelines. They traded aptitudes, language, thoughts and culture en route. These excursions of social and material trade were known as the *hiri*.

Hiri – signifying ‘tie’ or ‘attach together’ – alludes to the joined structures of sailing vessels or *lagatoi*, the sailing ships that the Motu created.

Their unmistakable crab-claw formed sails carried the boats over the seas full of exchange merchandise and individuals, across tremendous distances.

In spite of the fact that the hiri voyages finished in the 1950s, it appears to be fitting that still today, hiri symbolizes 'association' not simply of the structures but rather of entire groups of individuals themselves, staying famous in contemporary PNG.

Originally from the village Davage - now known as Boera - the Apau people spread out through the lands of the Central Province of Papua New Guinea.



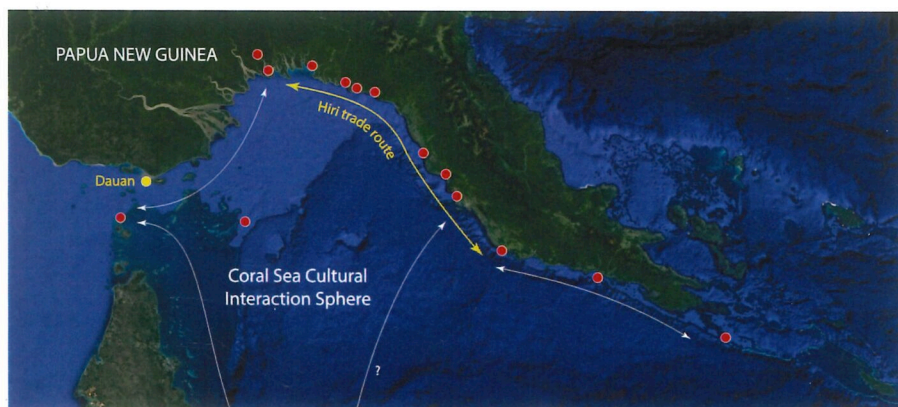
These days Motu-Koita villages are interwoven with intermarriages and are now speaking motu fluently. A substantial number of these two tribes can almost claim the Apau traditions through the intermarriages and other mixed and shared living experiences through the years.

There are 13 Motu speaking villages
(From the west to the east):

- Manumanu
- Rearea
- Boera
- Porebada
- Tatana
- Elevala
- Hanuabada
- Vabukori
- Pari
- Barakau
- Tubusereia
- Gaire
- Gabagaba

There are 9 Koita speaking villages
(from the west to the east)

- Gorohu
- Kido
- Papa
- Reholasi (Kouderika)
- Roku
- Baruni
- Kuriu
- Kirakira
- Korobosea





What were they known for?

In Apau villages, ladies were exceedingly gifted potters with rich assets of clay, sourced from nearby inland deposits. Some also made ornaments and jewellery made from sea shells, an esteemed currency that, when worn, marked cultural affiliation, social status and the capacity to rally support and to pay for grievances.

Apau men were accomplished navigators of the sea and vessel builders, however they were confronted with a problem.

Apau villagers had a poor local supply of appropriate ship-building timber, for their trees were too little for the vast frames required to build the lagatoi's hulls. Their trading partners in the Gulf of Papua, on the other hand, were blessed with plentiful timber and sago palms. The trunks of the sago palms could be processed to create tremendous amounts of starch, a favourite and treasured nourishment all over PNG.

How could the Apau villagers exchange their great pottery and

valuable shells for sago flour without the raw materials to build their boats? How might they sail the large distances to their trading partners, returning home securely with enough timber to rebuild for next year's excursion?

Their answer was exquisite.

As they touched base in the Gulf of Papua, they dismantled the their ships, often in large fleets, and afterward sailed back with the remade ships and loads of sago flour. New logs were cut from the rainforest and made into multi-layered pontoons whereupon the upper parts of the boats were built.

The Apau had a clear vision of maintaining long-term, even cross-generational relations with people in far off lands.

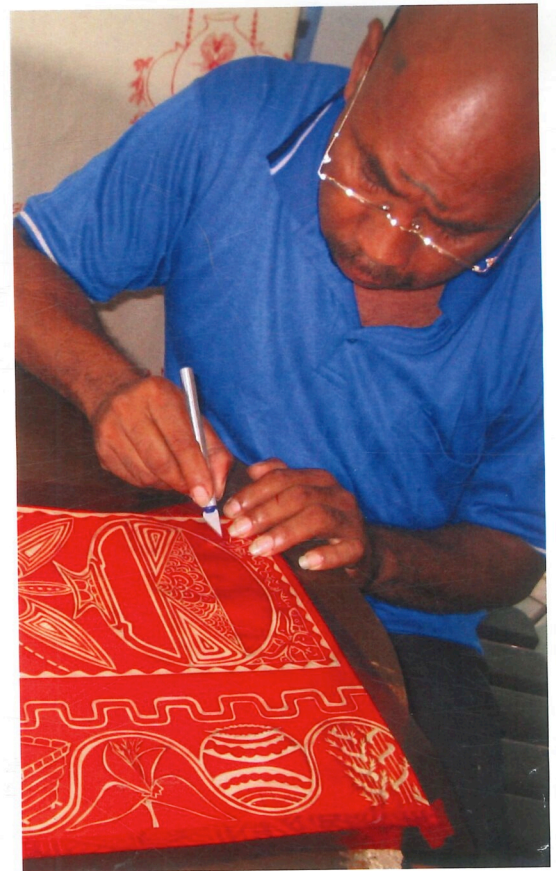
How was this massive amount of research gathered?

Audio and video recordings (Interviews, cultural dances, re-enactments), paintings, written contributions, designs for clothing, linen, china, pottery and of course history, history and more history!

What do we plan to do with all of it?

At Apau Traditions we aim to educate the world about the wonderful stories of the Apau people. There are many types of products that we aim to create to help us fulfil this goal. A few that we already have in the works:

- Books - physical and digital
- Cultural songs in CD format
- Traditional dances and games
- Documentaries
- Eco-Tourism (Village Tours)
- History Museum showcasing pottery and paintings
- Arts and Crafts
- Textiles
- not to mention translations into other languages and dialects!



Why is this important?

- The history of the Apau was one passed down primarily through oral histories.
- These stories were not properly catalogued in history except for research and efforts by outsiders.
- The founders of Apau Traditions have decades worth of written stories, recordings, paintings and more on our ancestors, the Apau.
- The people of the Southern Region of Papua New Guinea need to know their history before it fades from existence.



The Lagatoi Origin Story

The iconic image of the Motu people, the Lagatoi canoe is a proud symbol of the seafaring traditions that helped sustain and grow their ancestral tribes. The story behind the inception of the Lagatoi, as well as the treacherous journey it sailed across the sea with its crew of brave men, is one that we hold close to our hearts. This story has been passed down every generation and has been illustrated by descendant artists of the Apau people.

Every good legend starts with a hero. According to legend, the Hiri trade of the Apau people came from one such man, known as Edai Siabo.

Edai Siabo was a third generation descendant of the original ancestors of Davage, the first ancient village settlement of the Apau people who were referred as the Motu-Marehau tribe.

The meaning of "APAU" is to jump off into the sea or body of water to dive! It was believed that Edai's ancestors reached Davage looking for a suitable place to settle. Especially in search of water, arable land and safety reasons. These ancestors lived here under one original clan namely GUBAREI which was established by VAGI and BONI KAIRA.

Before any contact with foreigners in 1800, it was believed that the Apau MOTU tribe were the only occupants to possess the coastlines as far southeast to Taurama and Lakwaharu (now known as Tubusereia) and Delena in the Kairuku District to the west.

Edai's ancestors were great fishermen who braved challenging weathers and rough seas.

They were highly skilled in catching dugongs and turtles. This special fishing expertise was known as "MATAGARA" - meaning "eye sting" or "teary eyes." This was experienced by the men who dove into the sea without any protective gear for their eyes, causing their eyes to sting due to the saltiness of the deep sea waters.



It was during a particular matagara fishing trip when the famous Apau ancestor Edai Siabo was inspired in his dream at Hidiha Island. After a hard day's fishing, everyone involved became so tired and went to sleep. In the early hours of the morning Edai was given a vision in his dream.

He was taken under the sea into a small rock cave for several days (as told by oral tradition – he was always at the same place where he was finally spotted by his own son Vagi jr).

It was during these missing days when Edai was initiated with all the rituals and rites of the Apau traditions that birthed the HIRI-LAGATOI. He was anointed and

blessed with everything about this special trade voyage, from the skills needed to the rules and regulations - why, what, where, when, who and how to execute the special knowledge for this expedition. Soon the son was awoken and began to look for his father who was now missing from among the group of fishermen. Vagi alerted all and began searching.

Every accessible area on land, beach, over and under the sea water were thoroughly searched without any success. Until finally in the third day according to the oral sharing from generation to generation, he feet were spotted under the cave sticking out by his own son. Men jumped into the water and pulled Edai out of the cave. He was pronounced dead!

Edai was taken under the sea into a small rock cave for several days. Here he was initiated with all the rituals and rites of the Apau traditions that birthed the HIRI LAGATOI.



His son, Vagi jr and the fishing men were all sad and weeping. Quickly they sailed home wondering what ever had happened. How were they going to break the news of a dead being suddenly brought home from a Matagara fishing trip!

Edai's body was carried upstairs to his house still showing no sign of living. His wife was wailing with the rest of the community perplexed. Finally Edai was able to slowly began to breathe and gasped for air! Everyone started to fret and gripped with fear and all ran away. Except for his wife.

She braved to listen to what he tried to explain about his ordeal. It was not easy but she coped helplessly. Immediately Edai was at work to put into action what was given and taught to him by the sea spirits. Every day he executed the instructions as to how to and what to use in building the appropriate vessel for the Lagatoi ships to trade with - who and where and with what. He began to build toy canoes until he was confident and ready to put into practice all that he was required to know.

Even women folk especially his own wife started to make clay pots in preparation for the Hiri Trade. They were highly ridiculed and joked about by the villagers including own relatives. Edai did not care what they said. He just focused until he was finally ready to set sail for Gulf on his first

It was said that his first Hiri Trade Voyage was to Baimuru in 1750.

This was a success where Edai had reached his desired destination to execute his first business trade transaction in exchanging his earthen wares with sago and many other essentials with his new trading found partners!



Edai with his model Lagatoi

He began to trial out his toy lagatoi. People joked about him but Edai did not care nor listen.

He bided his time until he was able to convince his village people to help him build the lagatoi to start trading with the people of the west gulf of Papua. Women in the village made pottery wares, while men built bigger canoes to venture out further and trade with other villages for much needed goods.

BANEGE DOBI (HEHONA)

Banege Dobi
Hidiha dakwaia ba nege dobi
(Repeat x 2)

Nui sere Lohia sere
Bava dakwai netaru dobi (x2)
Hidiha dakwai banega dobi
Muao Hidiha

E-e-e Hidiha dakwai ba nege dobia
A'a Edai Siabo, Edai Siabo lalonai
Nahe gibarau - Edai Siabo
Edai Siabo Edai sumou e banega
dobi o!



Chopping wood for the Lagatoi hull

Apau men look for a tall, sturdy tree to cut down. This tree will become the hull of the first lagatoi. Once the tree has been felled, the men will get to work on the construction of the vessel.



Making clay pots for trade

Earthenware pots were made in preparation for the men to take on their journey. Various types including the *kibo*, *hodu*, *rigirigi*, *nau*, *uro* and *tohe* were made.

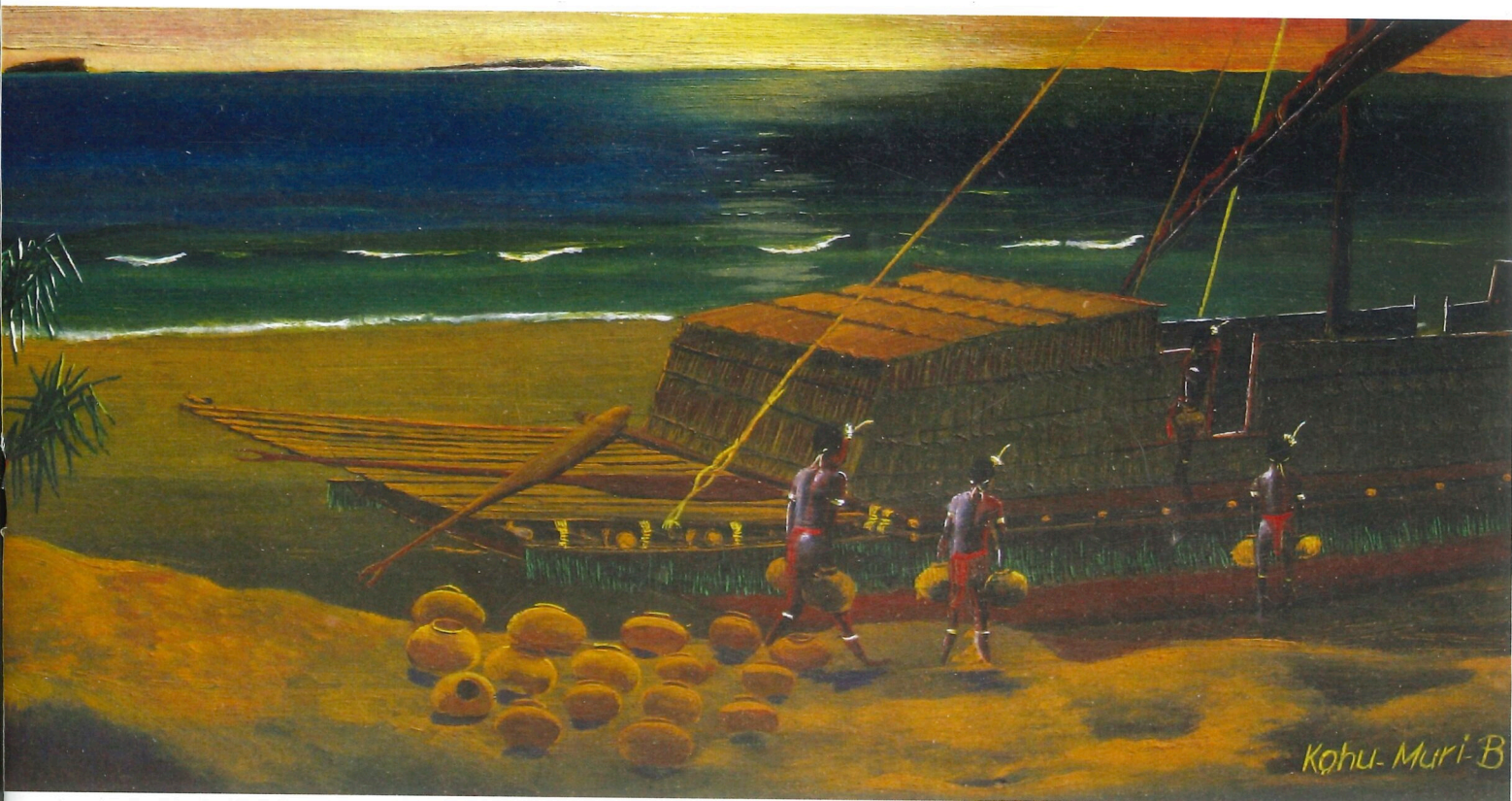
These clay pots were traded with the people of the Gulf of Papua for sago, building materials, mats, spears, arrows and more hulls for canoes for the next Hiri Lagatoi voyages.

Each woman was expected to make no less than 100 pots for her male relative to trade with!

Construction of the first Lagatoi

The first Lagatoi was named "BOGEBADA" or "BOGIBADA," after the type of timber/tree used at the first village, Davage. Men would carve the hull out of a large tree for while the females fetched water nearby for all needs.





Loading clay pots onto the Lagatoi

Once enough earthen ware was made and the hulls were ready for carrying the loads for the journey, the selected men embarking on the voyage must upload their cargo onto the vessel. Proper rites and rituals were followed with respect to avoid any accidents and dangers along the way. Those traveling were never allowed to mate or communicate with female partners before departure. To do so would be *taravatu* - taboo! *HELAGA BADA HEREA!*



Sailing out on the first voyage

Farewelling - *Hahemahuta*. Here The Traders may be singing the *hehona* "HARI BAITA HETONI."

HARI BAITA HETONI
TAIMAI OTAIMUA KURUMUI O'PIUMU A
AMUI RABIA IUDADIA ALAOMU E-E-E

ADO BAINÉ RAHI
TAIMAI O TAIMU KURMUI O'PIUMU
EMUI REKÉ ITOREDIA NONOHO

NUI SERE - LOHIA SERE E-E-E



Praying for blessings

Edai and his crew return to his place of initiation at Bava and Hidiha island. Here he asks the spirits that showed him the visions to get their blessings before departure.



Heading for the Gulf

During long hours aboard the Bogebada, the men begin to feel lonely and sad after leaving their wives and families behind, unsure of when they will return to them. During such long voyages, they sing and composed *hehona* songs taught by Edai.



Trading clay pots for sago

After many weeks making the treacherous voyage to the Gulf of Papua, the men have safely arrived. They cautiously approach and negotiate their presence, showing their wares for trade.

After some convincing, their new-found trading partners agree to trade sago for the clay pots brought by the Apau travellers.

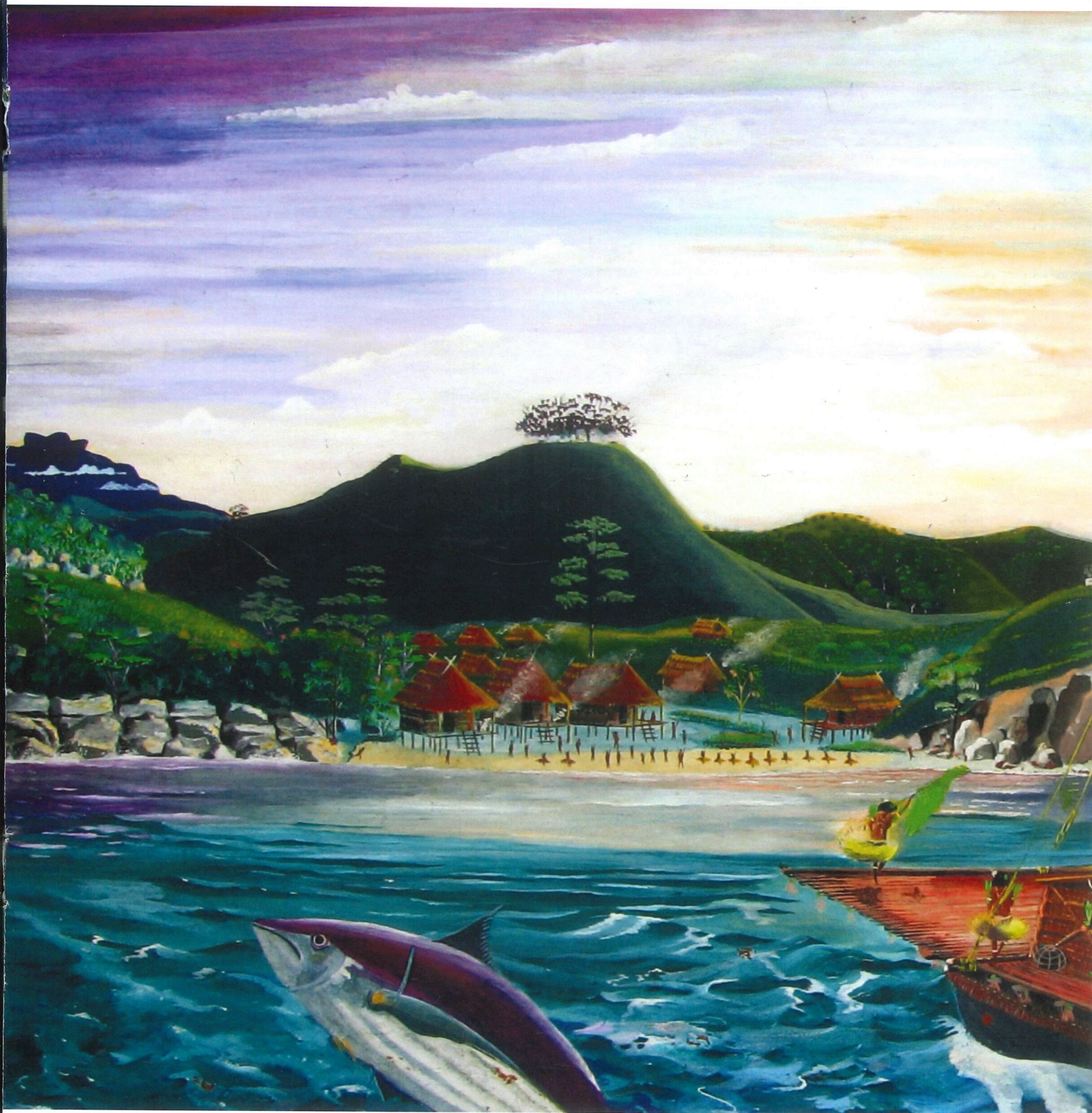
Departing the Gulf

Having cleared the rivers of the Gulf after a successful trade, the Apau seafarers make their way back into the open seas to fight their way home with their "*madinamo*" - the cargo and blessings with them to their families and loved ones back home!



Sailing home into Davage village

A joyous day dawns on the first Apau village Davage, when the lagatoi is sighted off the beach returning safely home!



*BUA E BUA RATA RATA OI NO SIMONO TANO SIMINO MAINI MAINI
NO TAREKO TAREKO BUE.*





Hudiha Hahinena preparing to welcome her husband

The *baditauna* (CAPTAIN/OWNER OF THE LAGATOI) Edai Siabo has returned! His wife Hudiha Hahinena is bathed and prepared in a very special manner as this is the very first time for her to come out of the darkness of her house and see the first light!

She is oiled up with coconut oil that really glistens on her skin. Her skin is so light and looks so different and beautiful.

With long black hair against her very light skin makes her so very beautiful and special. However, she and all other women

whose husbands are on board are still not permitted to physically meet them. Even more punishment endured until such time the rules are broken by some naughty men who cannot wait any longer. Soon the word is given by the captain to open up the Lagatoi and release the crew and unload.

Everyone is happy all around. Sago and other goods are appropriately shared and all is happy and blessed. People who have waited upon those who needed help with care and food even from villages a far, were all equally blessed.







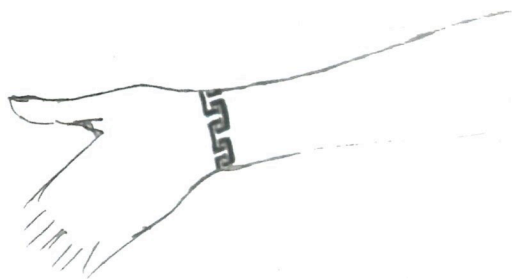
A New Journey Begins

And so the cycle continues. In the years to come, many more journeys to the Gulf are made by the seafaring Apau tribe.

This proud and courageous tradition was a vital part of Motu life. It brought much needed food and building supplies to the Apau villages. It was a right of passage for boys to become men. It was an entrepreneurial pursuit to broaden the world of the villagers that dared to seek beyond its boundaries.

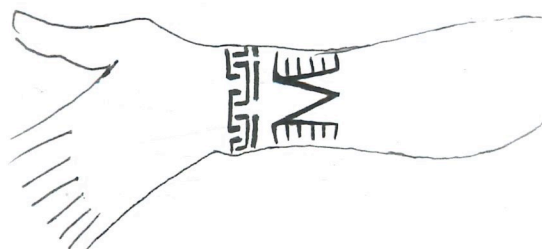
The Importance of Tattoos

Tattoos play an important role in signifying the growth of a Apau woman's stage in her life. Below is an example of the sequence of tattoos a female member of the Apau tribe would receive.



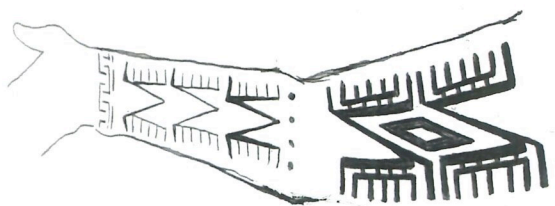
GAGIU
Girls aged 12-14

This tattoo is used on young girls aged between 12-14 years old. It is a bracelet on her wrapped around her wrist. In Motu this is where a girl reaches her mature marry-able age. This stage of a young womanhood is called *hane ulato*.



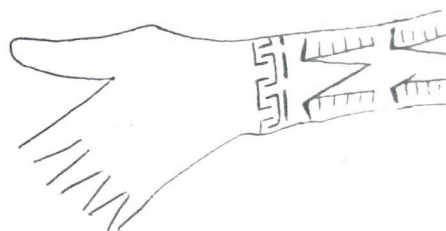
IGAU
Girls of a mature age

This tattoo confirms the real maturity of a young girl. We say this is the stage of real maturity, ready to be married and start a family of her own. This is called *hane ulato dagina korikori*.



KOROAHU
Fully matured women

The final addition of the *koroahu* tattoo once the woman has been married and given birth to children of her own.



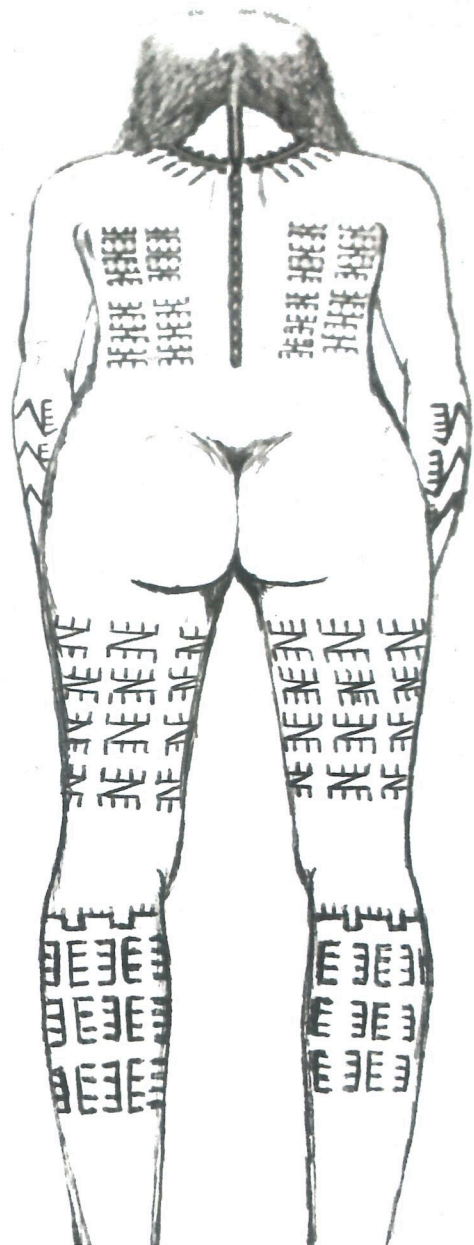
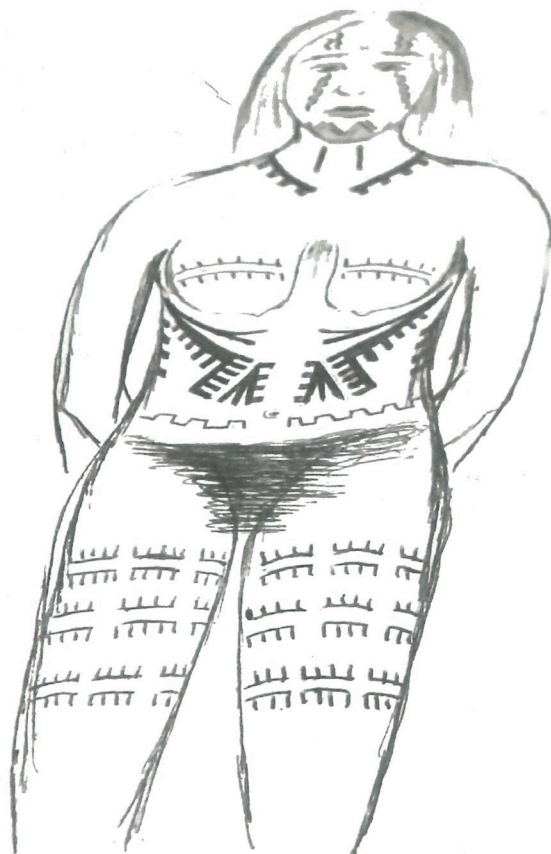
IGAU (repeated)
Engaged women

More *igau* tattoos shows the woman is unavailable, and very much engaged to another man. This stage of a woman is known as *mai mahohenina*.



The tattoo designer, designs from face to legs along down the thighs and stops below the knee caps (6"cm) nor further down towards the toes. These particular areas were cautioned, as this symbolized the women's husbands were involved in the great expeditions or involved in their young days on voyage. If the woman's husbands were not involved in the expedition, then the tattoo designer would stop designing around the thighs.

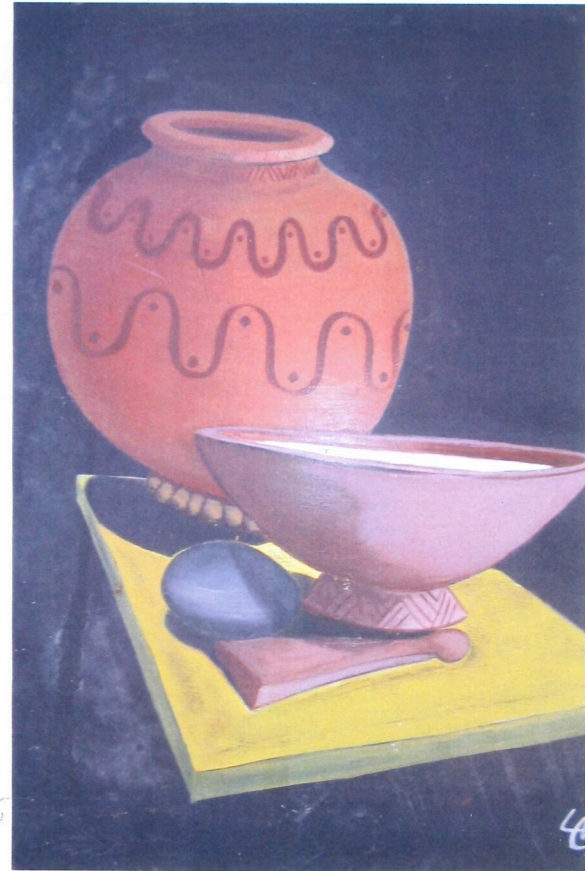
Tattoos around women and teenage girls wrists symbolized which clan they are from. Each tribe had their own symbols (the tattoo pattern) for identity.



Clay Pottery - A Valued Commodity

The clay pots made by the motu women were highly valued for the cooking and storage potential. Various sizes were made for trading with, among them *kibo*, *hodu*, *rigirigi*, *nau*, *uro* and *tohe*.

It has been said that the discovery of this type of pottery pre-dates that of Greek pottery, some of the oldest in recorded history.





Traditional Artisans

Using the abundant clay in the area that the Apau tribe settled in, the women became natural artisans at crafting the pots for the *hiri* trade.

To the left is a photo of one such potter, Boni Ario Daro - who made clay pots for the *hiri* trades in her youth.

IN PREPARATION FOR
THE HIRI TRADE, EACH
WOMAN WAS EXPECTED
TO MAKE NO LESS THAN
100 POTS FOR HER MALE
RELATIVE TO TAKE ON
THE EXPEDITION! IT
WAS NOT UNCOMMON
FOR A FLEET TO TAKE
UP TO 30,000 POTS IN
ONE VOYAGE.

