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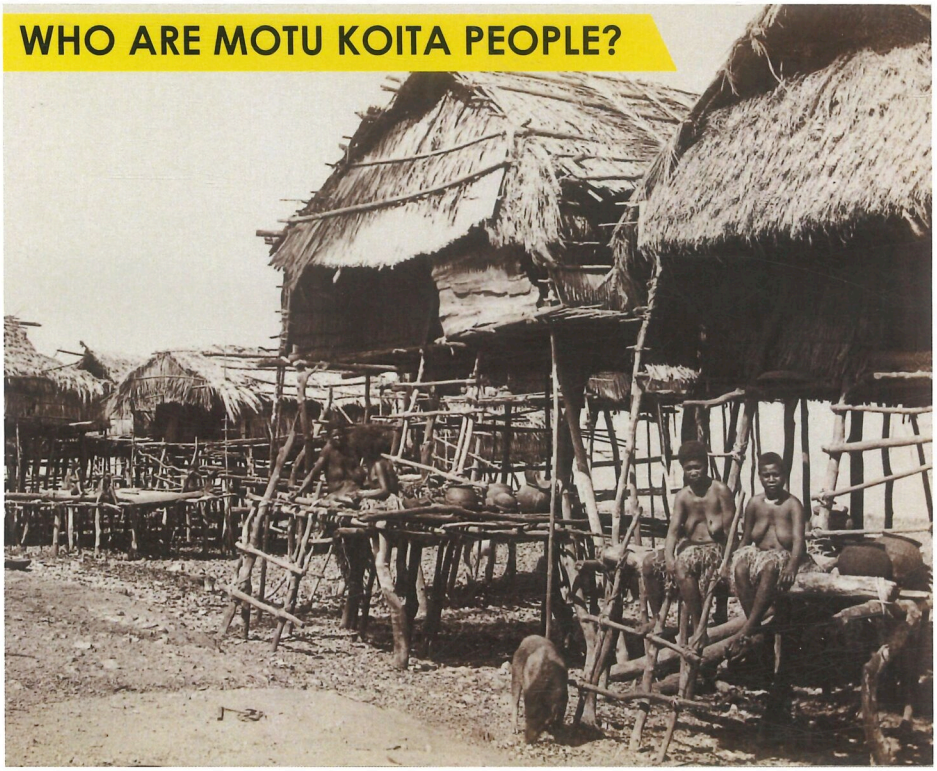
WHO ARE MOTU KOITA PEOPLE?



The Motu-Koita people are the traditional owners of the land on which Port Moresby, the National Capital of Papua New Guinea, now stands. Originally they were two Distinct tribes with the 'MOTU' speaking AUSTRONESIAN language with similarities to language spoken throughout the Pacific, while the 'KOITA' people spoke a lan guage similar to that spoken by the people in the Owen Stanley Ranges.

Whether the MOTU or the KOITA people were the first to settle in the Port Moresby area, is a hotly debated point but in 1873 when the first white explorer arrived, there were MOTU speakers living in villages of MANU MANU, LEA LEA, BOERA, POREBADA, TATANA, HANUABADA, (ELEVALA, POREPORENA, TANOBADA), VABUKORI, PARI, TUBUSEREIA, BARAKAU, GAIRE, AND KAPA KAPA.

The KOITA people lived at GOROHU, KIDO, PAPA, KOUDERIKA, HOHODAE, GURIU (the last two part of Hanuabada) as well as inland BARUNI, KILA KILA, KOURABADA (3 Mile Hill) and AKOROGA (KAUGERE).

Traditionally the MOTU were seafaring people with their traditional wealth coming from shing and trading the clay pots made by their women.

By constrast, the KOITA were great hunters and agriculturalists so the MOTU and the KOITA CO-EXISTED by trading with each other for everything that was needed.

Over the years since the coming of the white man, the customs and cultures of the MOTU and KOITA people have merged so as to be indistinguishable from one another and all are usually reered to as simply "MOTU KOITA" people.

THE MOTU KOITA VILLAGES

MOTU people living to the west of Port Moresby have always built their homes in sheltered bays in lines extending out over the sea.

Each line of houses belong to a family group who can trace their ancestry back to a single ma. Sometimes there are two or three lines of houses belonging to the same group known as "IDUHU" who share the same clan insignia and leader of each IDUHU lives in the house nearest to the shore.

In MOTU villages to the east of Port Moresby, the houses face the open sea so they are built above high water mark. However, all Motuan village houses were built of bush timbers and either kunai grass or nipa palm that constructed on long timber piles.

Each typical Motuan house has a single room and a verandah in front where minor ceremonies can be performed. Outside the home of the IDUHU leader however was the special platform where village elders could sit and chew betelnut and where all major ceremonies were conducted.

The KOITA by contrast generally built their thatched homes on the tops or saddles of hills overlooking the sea while the KOIARI people who lived even further inland, built their homes in the tops of trees to be less vulnerable from attack by enemies.

Leadership of an IDUHU passed from father to son but the aairs of the clan were presided over by a group of elders who held secret powers of their ancestors and knew the ancient customs.

HOW MOTU KOITA LAND BECAME PNG'S CAPITAL

In 1872, the "London Missionary Society" established a United Church mission manned by several Samoan pastors and their families at "Manu Manu" village on Redscar Bay west of Port Moresby.

Unfortunately these missionaries had few provisions and had become very ill before Captain John Moresby, on British naval vessel H.M.S "BASILISK", heard of their plight awhile with a group surveying the Torres Strait Islands.

Captain Moresby went to Manu Manu to give the missionaries provisions but while there, he and his Navigating Lieutenant, Mourilyan, went o in the ship's boats to explore the area. During the following weeks, he and his men found a large deep water harbor that he named Moresby Harbour while naming the gap in the reef across the harbor entrance, "Basilisk Passage". Captain Moresby was so impressed with the country he saw and the friendly people he met, his report persuaded London Missionary Society to relocate their mission on the hills above the villages we now call Hanuabada (Big Village) on the shores of Moresby Harbour.

Several years later in 1884, the British Crown agreed to annex the southern eastern section of the great island of Papua New Guinea and chose Moresby as its administrative centre.

After World War II when the Australian Government, who had been given the job of looking after the Paupan Colony in 1906 and had also been administering the former German Colony of New Guinea since 1919, decided to administer both colonies together. In doing so, they choose Port Moresby as the new Headquarters. Since Independence day on September 16, 1975 Port Moresby has been the National Capital of Papua New Guinea.

THE SEAFARING MOTUANS

The Motuans have always been great seafaring people with abundant sea life providing bulk of their food as well as means of trading shell and sh, for meat and vegetables from their land based neighbours, the "Koita".

In addition, the sea has spawned a fabulous tradition for the Motuans, namely their annual ocean going trading expeditions westward to the Gulf of Papua New Guinea where they could trade clay pots made by Motuan women for sago grown in the Gulf.

Although this annual collection of sago was necessary because Motuan and Koitabu villagers were very short of food during January and February while waiting for new gardens to grow during the north-west monsoons, the voyage was also part of an even greater exchange of ceremonial wealth that stretched from the Milne Bay in the east to Daru in the west end and beyond.

Central to this ceremonial exchange was MAILU ISLAND to the east of Port Moresby where people made decorated arm-shells called "TOEA" after which our modern PNG currency is named. These "toea" were traded east through the islands of Milne Bay in what is known as the "KULA RING" but they were also traded by the "Hula" people who lived a 100 kilometers east of Port Moresby.

This "Hula" expedition was called "Vili" and the "vili" bought the Mailu armshells to the Motuans.

In turn, the Motuans took the armshells to the Gulf of Papua on what is known as the "Hiri Expeditions".

There were two diferent sorts of Hiri voyages, the first one was the "HIRI LOU" or "HIRI KWADOGI" which was only a short voyage to the DAIVA (Mekeo) or KONE KONE (near Toaripi) for 2 to 3 weeks. These short voyages were made on vessels constructed over two canoe hulls, and called "HAKONA". However, the second type of HIRI expedition was the "HIRI LATA" made on the great "LAGATOI" vessels that were up to 20 metres long and four canoe hulls under them.

These Lagatois sailed even further west to the MEREA (around Vailala) and the NAMAU (Baimuru) areas and took at least seven weeks to complete.

To the captain or "Baditauna" of a "Lagatoi" on HIRI LATA, was the ambition of ever Motuan male, for such a voyage not only brought great wealth to any man game enough to make the voyage, but it also brought great prestige to his whole family.

WHY MOTUANS HAVE NO SAGO

According to the Motuan traditions, sago once grew in Port Moresby but it all belonged to two hills called TAURAMA and KIAURU. Unfortunately these two hills had an argument after TAURAMA accused KIAURU of making his well dirty.

During the battle that followed, KIAURU smashed all TAURAMA's sago palms leaving great holes all over TAURAMA's hill but eventually TAURAMA was triumphant and he chased KIAURU away.

KIAURU took off flying westward, but the soil was so heavy, he kept dropping it in the sea forming islands we now know as Manubada, Daugo, Bava, Idihi, Lagava, Varivari and Yule. KIAURU was too frightened to stay on Yule, so he continued westward until he got to the Gulf of Papua where he has lived ever since. All he had left however were the sago palms and these he planted along the coast where they have nourished ever since.

Meanwhile, TAURAMA was not very happy because all his sago palms had been destroyed and he knew his family would be hungry during the months of Biria Biria (January) and Guiraurua (February) where there was nothing in the gardens to eat except the roots of the banana palms and the fruits of mangroves.

Today you can go to Taurama Beach and see the hole in the ground where KIAURU once lived and marvel at the club marks he made on Taurama's Hill and they now call Pyramid Point.

SAGO MAKING

Sago is made from the palm that nourishes in the low marshy conditions along the Gulf of Papua. When the palm is 15 years old, and has reached a height of some ten metres, the trunck becomes engorged with starch and a ower spike forms above its crown, as soon as the spike appears, the palm is cut down and the trunk cut into two (2) metre lengths. The bark is than striped from the length and an edge used to pulverized the starchy pith inside.

This pitch is than placed in a slopping trough made from the sheath of a sago leaf that a sieve of coconut fibre at one end. Water is than mixed with the pitch so that the sago starch washes through the sieve and into collection bowls. The woody fibre is caught in the sieve.

The starch settles at the bottom of the bowl but needs to be washed several times before being allowed to drain and dry.

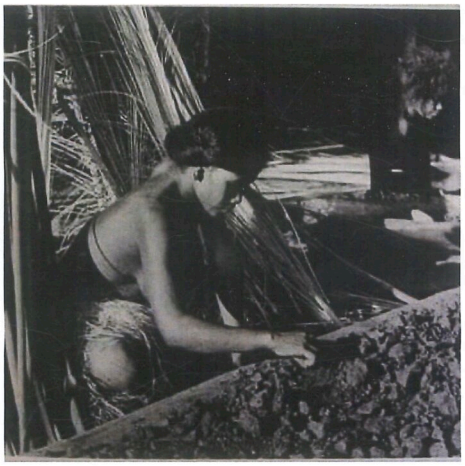
Sometimes the sago starch was roasted inside a bamboo stick and 10 of this sticks called "DIKEA" were also worth 1 pot.

Sago was packed in 20 kilograms bundles wrapped in sago leaves and called "VAI" by Delta people and "KOKIHARA" by the Keremas. Each bundle took a husband and wife team one day to make and could be traded for one Motu Cooking Pot.

To trade for an TOEA armshell, the Gulf people would have to make 6 and 14 sago bundles and these were tied together in a conical pyramid called a "GORUGORU".

CLAY POT MAKING

Traditionally all Motuan village people except those from Tatana and Vabukori, made clay pots.



First the women would dig their clay from the pits behind the beaches then carry it to the village in string bags. The clay is then cleaned of any large impurities and broken into small pieces then left to dry on a plank from an old canoe. The dirty clay is then placed on a bed of beach sand and sprinkled with sea water. The potter then kneeds the clay and sand together removing any grit and combining the two until she feels "it is good". She then pats the clay into a rough sphere and puts in the base of a broken pot. The she pushes a hole into the soft clay mix and uses her nger to drag out of the middle and build up the walls of her new pot. When the pot is roughly the right shape, she smooths the outside of the pot with her hands and forms the rims by running a wet hands around the top edge keeping the thumb inside the pot. While all of this is going on, the old pot is acting as a turntable.

The pot is then briefly beaten and put in the sun to dry. When it is reasonably firm, the potter holds the pot on her lap and places a round stone on the inside and hits the outside with a wooden beater. Round and round the pot goes until the walls are thin and perfectly synetrical. Several different types of beaters are used before the potter is satised with her work.

The pot is again placed in the sun to dry then decorated with a geometric pattern similar to the tatoo on the woman's arm. To "re" the pots, the potter preheats them in a re of dry coconut fronds. She then places them in a large re stoked with stems and fronds of many coconut leaves. Once red, the pots are splashed with water that has had mangrove bark soaking it in to give the pot a purple brown colour.

Many, many dierent shape pots were made in olden times but the most famous are the "URO" - the ordinary cooking pot that was in great demand on HIRI Expeditions. HIRI HANENAMO.

Images of Common Household Motuan Claypots

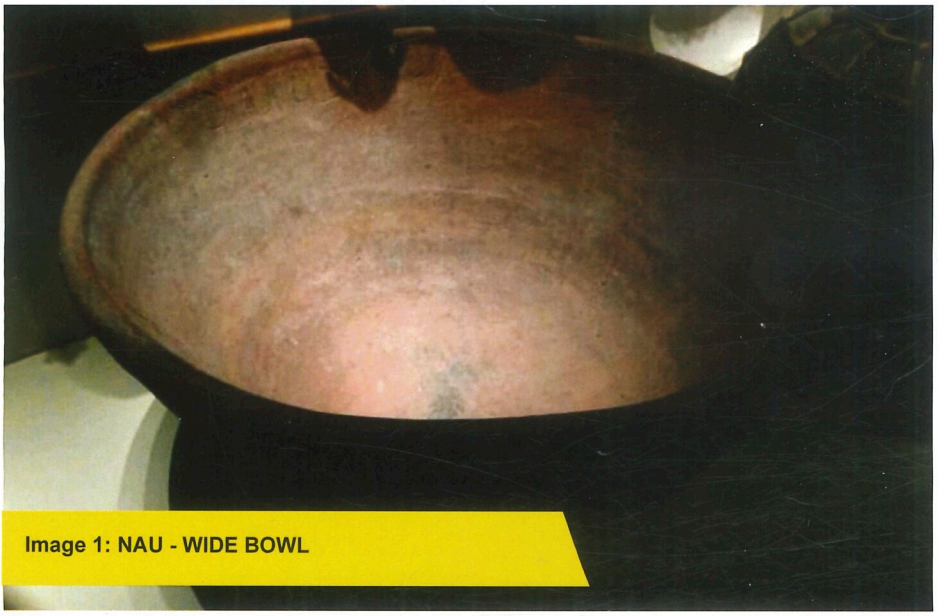


Image 1: NAU - WIDE BOWL

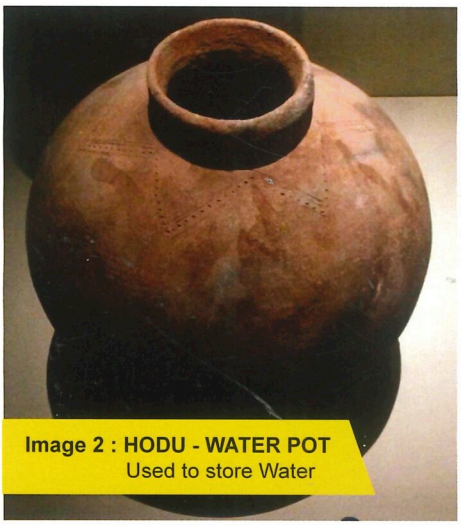


Image 2 : HODU - WATER POT
Used to store Water

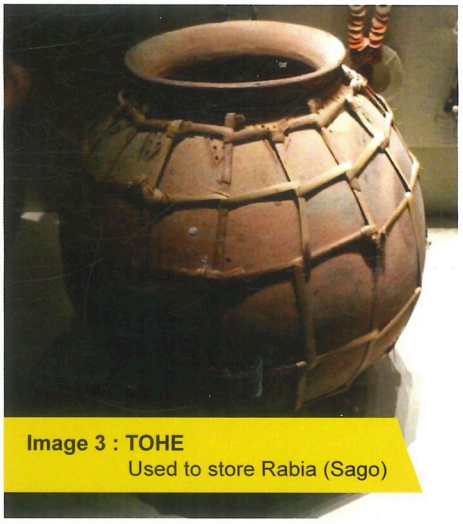
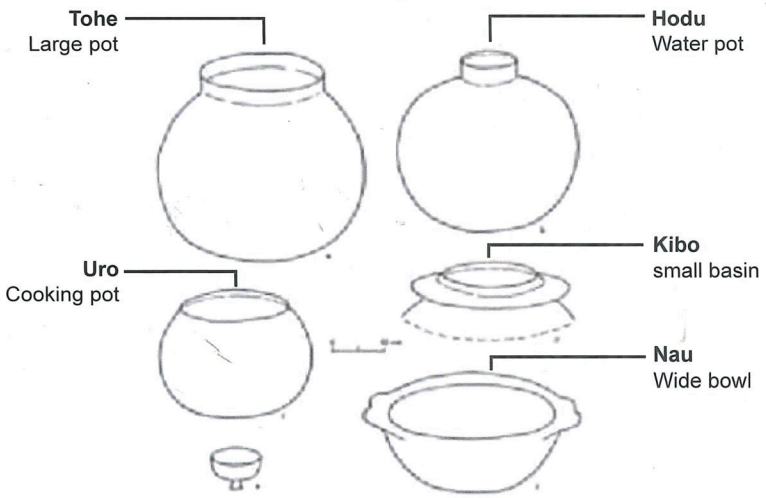


Image 3 : TOHE
Used to store Rabia (Sago)

Types of Motuan Claypots

Image 4 : A motuan family with their collection of Claypots

Illustration 1: Illustration of the different Moutuan claypot ware



MOTU KOITA CALENDER

The MOTU KOITA year consisted of thirteen months that would be identied by the weather and therefor directed the activities of the village. The "Western" name for this "months" is therefore only an approximation.

1. VEADI _ JUNE.

Men secretly began making big shing nets called MATAGARA meshes 20-30cm in diameter. People began to clear land for new gardens.

2. VEADI HARO _ JULY

Special ceremonies held before the nets were taken to the canoe. Good shing weather. planting of new crops begins.

3. VEHADI HIRI HIRI _ AUGUST

4. URIA _ SEPTEMBER

"Hiri lata" expeditions set sail for the Gulf of Papua. Women tending the gardens.Young girls been tattooed.

5. LAGA _OCTOBER

The hunting month when wallabies caught in nets laid across the land after res and beaters stirred them from their slumbers.

Days very hot and flies and ants everywhere. Yams planted. Tattooing continue. "VILI" traders arrived from HULA.

6. MANUMAURA _ NOVEMBER

First rains of the LAHARA (Wet season). Last of the small lagatois leave for Mekeo area.

7. BIRIAKEI_DECEMBER

8. BIRIABADA _ JANUARY

Hot winds constantly changing direction from the land (MIRIGINI) to the sea (ATUDIHO). Fastest Lagatois return from the HIRI. Many wrecked by the treacherous ATUDIHO. Hula people sail home.

9. GAIRAURA _ FEBRUARY

Month of the big storms that blew down trees and houses. More lagatois returned.

10. GOHA _ MARCH

Time when darkness "passed away" and 'LAHARA" (NORTH WEST) winds finished. Time of the moons.

11. LAILAI _ APRIL

Laurabada winds from the south east start to blow. First laurabada bring BONA DIKA (bad smell). Gardens look as though they will die. Second laurabada brings BONA NAMO (good smell) makes plants start to grow again.

Men who plan to hold a feast or go on a "Hiri", look at their gardens and decide if there will be enough food to support the rituals. Rehearsal for dancing begin.

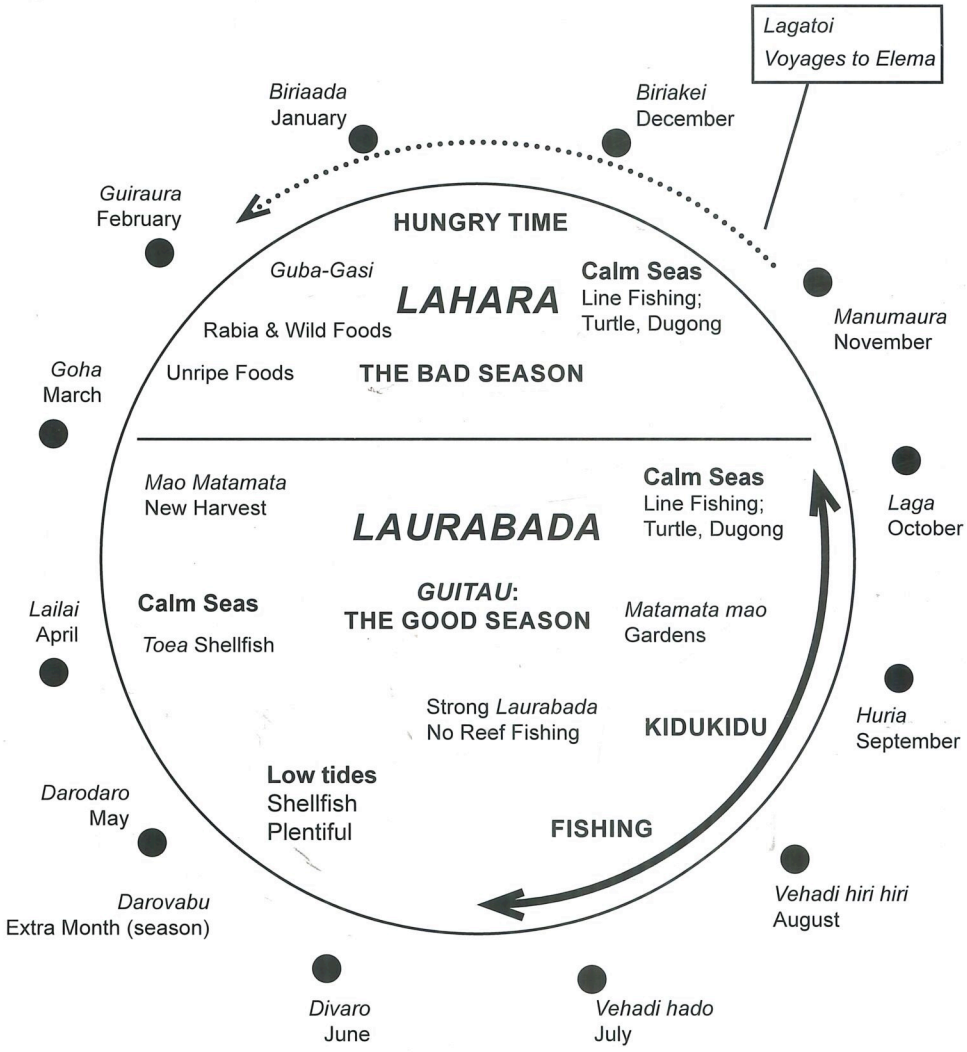
12. DARODARO _ MAY

Strong winds blow dead leaves from the gardens so that the harvesting of hams can be begin. The dancing season starts.

13. DIVARO _ JUNE

Harvesting of Yams continues. Dancing seasons continues.

Figure 1. The Motu Calender with 13 Lunar Months



MOTU KOITA DANCING AND FEASTING

Dancing and Feasting was a major part of the Motu Koita way of life, as the songs were regarded as psalms to their ancestors from whom they received strength for gardening, trading, hunting, shing and fighting.

Any man who wanted to gain favour with those spirits would have to sponsor a dance.

As with all things in the village calender, the Motu Koita people had a Dance Season that began in Daro Daro (April) when the yam harvest began and ended in DIVARO (May) when the harvest was over. Planning for the dance however began in March (LAILAI) when the dance sponsor would place a ower in his hair to declare his intentions to the village. Villagers would then begin to rehearse for the dance.

Early missionaries objected strongly to these formal dances that went on every night or two months. Dr Lawes describe them as carnival of "LECENTIOUSNESS and SENSUALITY" and suspended any Motuans from his Church who took part. Fortunately the Government Administrator MR BARTON recognized the need to preserve Motuan dancing traditions and asked dance groups to perform at Government House and gradually Church was coersed into changing its stance.

Basically there were three different reasons for holding a dance. The first was the "Gaba" or "Hekarai" to honour a person who had died and the second was the "Turia" to settle a person quarrel by forcing the other person into bankruptcy. The third was originally a "Koita" custom called a "Tabu" and this type of dance was meant to bring joy to the people while bringing prestige to the IDUHU leader himself.

The TABU Dances is the tradition that is being revived especially for the "1989 Hiri Moale Festival" by the TUBUSEREIA people.

TABU

The TABU was a festival of dancing and singing and a time when many traditional games were played. Usually it was the leader of the IDUHU that suggested his clansmen held a TABU and henceforth he was called the "TABU BIAGU" or "Master of the Tabu". If the TABU BIAGU was sure his garden enough food, he would build a dancing platform known as DUBU, in front of his home consisted of a rectangular platform supported by horizontals which pass through opposite pairs of carved wooden uprights. When the platform was secure, palisades of sugar cane were built around tree trunks and lled with yams and decorated with bananas, yams and betlenut.

Sugarcane was stacked everywhere under the DUBU were shing nets lled with yams and coconuts.

On the morning of TABU Feast, the fattened pigs were killed and the meat place on the DUBU by the TABU BIAGU. The men than wash themselves in the sea before painting and adorning themselves.

The neighbours would then arrive and hide in the bush waiting for the counch shell to blow. They would than enter, brandishing spears and clubs or beating their drums.

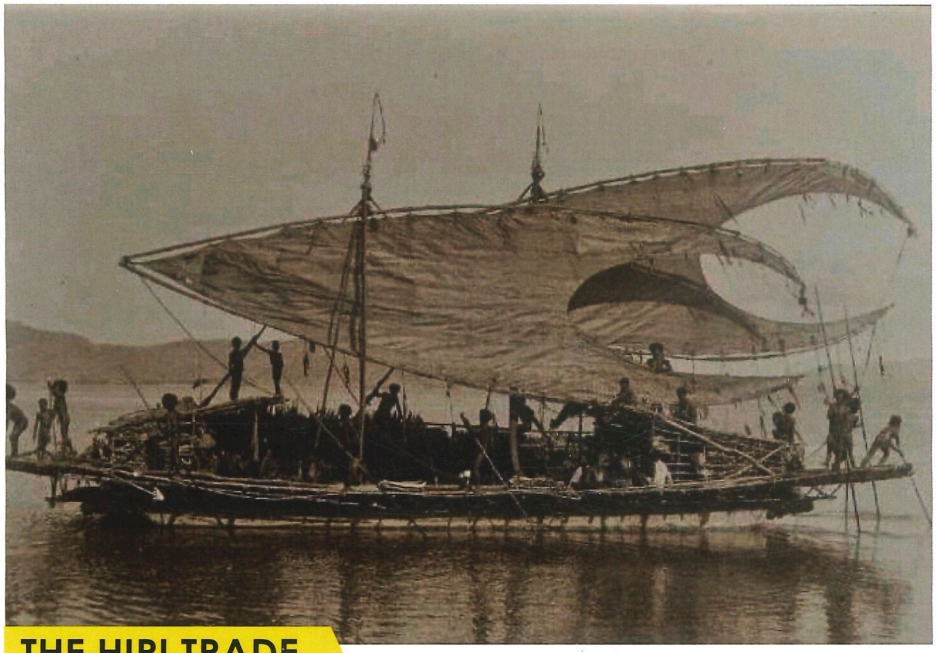
Suddenly PAIRS of men of appointed by the TABU BIAGU would move around their guest holding bundles of sugar cane and knocking the spears out of everyone's hands.

Meanwhile women entered the arena swinging their petticoats and holding a yam in each hand which they gave to their visitors.

Young girls would then climb the DUBU posts dancing and singing while the major sponsors of the TABU sat on the platform watching.

Eventually everyone quitens down and the TABU BIAGU called the visitors to the DUBU so that his men could distribute the food.

When the TABU is finally over, the TABU BIAGU and his friends hold a small feast and eat the meat from the lower jaws of the pigs that have been killed. The bones are then hung on the DUBU posts to remind everyone of what a wonderful party they have made.



THE HIRI TRADE

HIRI is the name given to the trading expeditions undertaken by *Motu* - speaking people in what is now Port Moresby region

There were two different sorts of *Hiri* Voyages, the first was the (*HIRI KWADOGI*) which was only a short voyage to the *DAIVA (MEKEO*) or "*KONE KONE*" (near *TOARIPI*) 2 or 3 weeks. These short voyages were made on vessels constructed over two canoe hulls, and called " *HAKONA*".

However, the second type of HIRI expedition was the "HIRI LATA" made on the great Lagatoi vessels that were up to 20 meters long and four canoe hulls under them.

These Lagatois sailed even further to the west to the MAREA (around Vailala) and the NAMAU (Baimuru) areas and took at least seven weeks to complete.

To be the captain or BADITAUNA of a Lagatoi on a Hiri Lata, was the ambition of every Motuan male, for such a voyage not only brought him great wealth to any man game enough to make the voyage, but it also brought great prestige to his whole family.

Leaving their villages between September and the end of the year, Motu trading canoes, called LAGATOI, were carried by the Southeast trade winds to villages bordering on the Gulf of Papua. There, they exchanged pots and arm shells for sago, and also obtained additional canoe hulls at their more distant destinations.

They returned home between the beginning of the year and March or even later, when the Northwest Monsoon was blowing.

The people of the Motu villages agree that the HIRI expeditions were begun by a man name Edai Siabo,of Boera village. Some traditions say that the earliest expeditions were undertaken to the Purari Delta.

Food shortages in those days was prevalent in the Western Motu area and extended all along the coast,including inland areas. Warfare was endemic throughout the area also.

A number of factors demonstrate the economic importance of the hiri. Above all, there was the need for sago on which their lives depended. As according to Author Groves, "without it they could not have subsisted".

ORGANISING THE EXPEDITION

So the expeditions were organised. There were usually two leaders of the expedition - BADITAUNA and the DORITAUNA, and each had a mast man and a sail man. The greatest prestige was accorded to the two former.

There were not always two leaders. If a man had sufficient resources to organise an expedition by himself, he was called HIRIDUBU. The baditauna was the organiser or (Sponsor) of the expedition and the leader in exchanges in Gulf villages, but he did not navigate the vessel and stayed ritually on his mat during the voyage.

Toward the end of the year before an expedition,a man who had at least one arm shell (toea) and other valuables in his box and a canoe hull,set about making large gardens so that he could provide the feasts required during the making of the trading canoe.

In April or May, the man would examine the state of his gardens. If he would stay apart from his wife and practice other abstentions to put himself in a state of (ritual potency). He would then summon his close relatives to a small feast called LAILASI, in which he would announce his intention and enlist their support. They would provide the additional hulls, making up three, four or five needed to make a trading canoe and also arm shells and other valuables.

About June he would signify his intention to the public by coming down from his house with a fire and sitting in the street in the early morning. He would do this untill he was joined by a Doritauna who would also practice ritual abstentions. Each leader would then be joined by his mast man and sail man and by crewman. According to another researcher Barton, the average number of crew was 29 and ranged between twenty and forty.

The making of the canoe involved collecting vines and cane, assembling and binding the hulls, and stepping the masts, which were handed down from father to son. This operation was accompanied by supplies of food from the large gardens which had been prepared. These were being cooked by the wives of the leaders.

The women of the village set about making pots in preparation. Women undertook the heavy work of digging the clay. The kinds of pots principally cooking pots but also water pots, dishes and smaller pots have been described in oral accounts and literary sources.

Women owned the pots. It has been described how crew members were obliged to take with them the pots belonging to their wives, their mothers if they were unmarried, their sisters and the women to whom they were betrothed. They took the pots belonging to other kinswomen to whom they were indebted, according to their sense of social responsibility and interest in maintaining relationships. Arm shells (toea) and other valuables were obtained from limited local manufacture, especially Boera and from the Hood Bay area.

THE VOYAGE

The lagatoi's design was also to cater for the work of the captain (Baditauna) and his (Doritauna) and the general crew.

One part of the Lagatoi that needs stressing is the IRUTAHUNA. The Irutahuna on the Lagatoi was the central part between the two masts. The Irutahuna on the Lagatoi was the area in which the two holy men and the two holy boys resided and were conned on the voyages. These four people were the UDIA (the people of the mat) those in a state of high ritual potency. The baditauna and the doritauna were the spiritual leaders on the voyage. The mast and the sail captains attended to the physical running of the vessel. The two sons around the age of the puberty and the sons or nephews of the two holy men had the main task, it appears, to assisting in, maintaining the continuity of contact at the Irutauna on the Lagatoi between the physical and spiritual worlds. For instance, when the two captains would leave their mats, their places would immediately be taken up by their boys.

For the time at sea, these four people were obliged to obey a strict set of rules covering all aspects of their daily routine. They were all attempting to attain and maintain the very highest level of spiritual consciousness for they, and the crown believed the success of the whole expedition depended upon how well these four individuals performed their roles.

THE EXCHANGE

When a lagatoi arrived in the river of Gulf village, the Baditauna was greeted amidst rejoicing by his trading partner. The two expedition leaders exchanged arm shells for the pigs or dogs of the trading partners.

Pots were then unloaded and the two tallies, called KAHI, were made, one was taken by each partner to mark the number of sago and logs. After exchange of pots for tallies had been made, the Gulf villagers went to prepare sago and to cut logs which the Motu then fashioned into canoe hulls. The logs were given mainly to the six principal men, the doritauna, baditauna and their respective mast and the sail men.

While they were preparing their canoes and were waiting for sago, they lived in huts, which they built on the shore and were fed by the host villagers.

While the Motu say that the relationship between their trading partners, was one of HETURA, which can be translated to as FRIENDSHIP. They often refer to their partners as VARAVARA, which is a general term for relatives. They stress the strength of the ties which could extend over several generations.

THE RETURN

When the canoes returned to their villages, there was great rejoicing. Those who have returned then paid their several large stones encased in a network of heavy cane lashings. It is attached to the doritauna's end of the lagatoi with lengths of rattan called VAKADA knotted together. The knots are called PERI. Very strong spells were cast over the traditional anchor and cable to hold the lagatoi in its place.

The Baditauna's wife who had been living like a widow while her husband was away, never talking to anyone except the Doritauna's wife, never washing or combing her hair, observing food tabus, keeping watch over the fire and tying knots in a cord hanging from the house rafter to mark the normal 50 days of the hiri, would run from her house when she heard the news and hit the veranda post with a stick shouting " HE-DIOTO O-O-O. HEDIHOROA..... the lagatoi's back". This triggered of a whirl of excitement in the village. Other women would come running and dragging the wives of the two captains to the sea, pushing their heads under water as they danced and shouted. Coconut oil was then rubbed into their skins, their hair was cut before they were dressed in new grass skirts and were adorned with (TOEA) and perfumed leaves. Meanwhile others prepared a feast for the returning of the lagatoi.

THE LAGATOI

HOW THE MOTUANS LEARNED TO MAKE LAGATOI

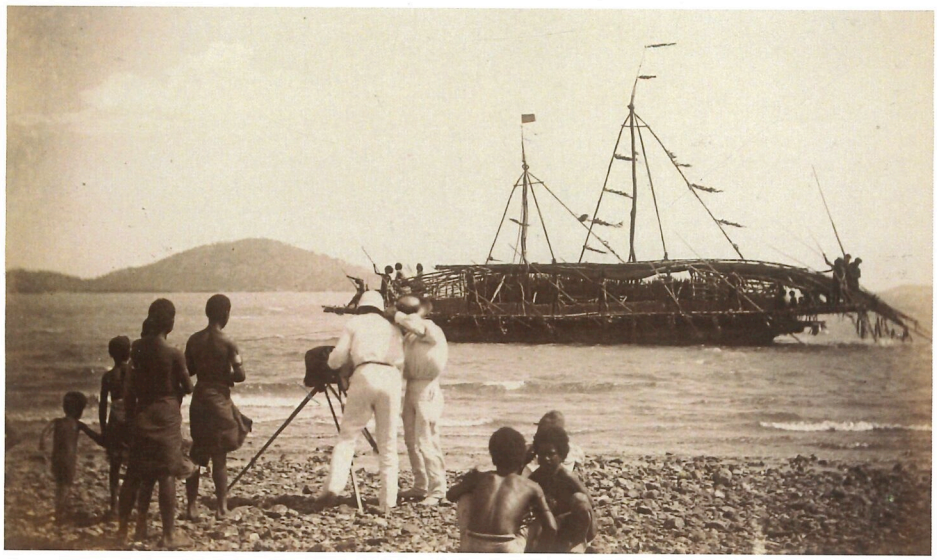
There was once a Motuan man called EDAI SIAPO form BOERA village who went on a shipping expedition to IDIHA Island where an eel spirit, called "DIRAVA" pulled him into the water and took him down into a rock cavern. When EDAI's friends realized what had happened, they dived down into the water to try to recover his body. One of the men saw Edai's feet poking out from a cave but when they tried to pull him out, they couldn't.

Some time later, Edai came out of the water and told his friends that the spirit kept him in the ocean while it taught him how to build an ocean canoe called a "Lagatoi" that would take him to Gulf of Papua where he could trade for sago. Edai also told them of the many songs and rituals that would have to be carried out if the voyage was to be successful.

Edai then went back to the village and built a toy lagatoi according to instructions he had been given. Once he learned how it should be done, he asked his friends to help him build a full scale ship. Eventually they set sail with their cargo of clay pots and ornaments as well as food supplied by his sister "BOIO" who had married a Koita man called BOKINA.

Edai and his crew were away for so long that many of the wives thought their men had died and remarried again. Edai's wife did not worry. She did all the things her husband had told her to do and eventually the lagatoi did come back. When the Motuans saw how much sago and betelnut and how many new canoe logs Edai had, they all wanted to know the secrets of building and sailing lagatoi.

During the "Hiri Moale Festival", a lagatoi is built by a Motuan village on four logs owned by the "National Capital District Interim Commission". In 1987, Elevala people had the honour of building the Lagatoi. In 1988 it was Rea Rea's turn but in 1989, Gaire village will have the honour.



LAGATOI TRADITIONS

In the month of "Lai Lai" (April), any Motuan man could make the decision to build a lagatoi providing that he at least had one hull (Asi) and at least one arm-shell (TOEA) as well as a big enough garden to feed his crew while they were building and sailing the Lagatoi.

Once a man had made his decision, he would ask his wife for approval and if she agreed, this man, who could than called himself the "Badi Tauna" (man who originates), would ask a friend to be his "Dori Tauna" or Top Man. From than on both men would cease to cohabit with their wives and strive to acquire ritual potency.

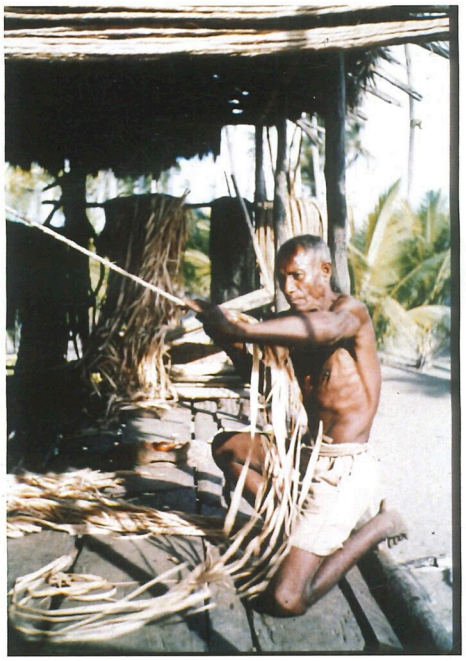
In the month of August the captains would choose their crew of up to 30 people and ask them to overhaul and call the four canoe dugouts to be used to the lagatoi.

Neither captain would take part in this work but would sit on their mats contemplating the voyage and forging a spiritual bond with their craft. During this time, they drank no water, only coconut milk and the soup from the cooking pots and they did not wash their skins nor comb their hair.

By the month URIA (September), the lagatois would be ready for trial sailling and the youths of the village would board the vessel dressed in their nest clothing with young girls dancing energically on the bow and the men beating bamboo drums called SEDE (no wooden drums were allowed on the lagatois). The Badi Tauna and

Dori Tauna would maintain their places on their mats in the IRUTAHUNA (Holy Place) at either end of the lagatoi and leave the running of the vessel to the crew.

When everyone was satised than the lagatoi was sailing well, it was taken back to the mooring and the captains and their UDIHA were carried ashore so that the clay pots could be loaded.



On a given day usually between mid September and early November, the Lagatois were polled out to deep water with the BADI TAUNA's end of lagatoi leading the way.

When the south easterly winds called "LAURA-BA- DA" hit the sails they were on their way for an adventure of a lifetime.

On a "HIRI KWADOGI" (short Hiri) the destination could be reached 2 to 3 days, but on a "HIRI LATA" to the north west corner of the Gulf where the best sago grew and trading partners were said to be more generous, the voyage could last a week depending on the strength of the "Laurabada" winds.

If all went well, the lagatois would arrive in the intended village and be greeted by canoes of friendly people. The lagatois would drop anchor in a sheltered bay and the Badi Tauna and Dori Tauna would jump into the sea to wash themselves then cut their hair and dress in new clothing.

The senior trading partner would then come out to the lagatoi and after much embracing, he would be asked "Do you have pigs? If you have pigs, you can have my lakatoi". If he said yes, he would then receive the ceremonial TOEA armshells, push them underwater and make them hang onto the paddles shouting, "Now it is time for you to do some work".

They were then taken back on board and given sago to eat while they dropped anchor and allowed everyone to dress in their nest clothes ready for the homecoming.

It was a time of joy and sadness for the Badi Tauna as he told his lagatoi that they were nearly home and he called on the home spirits to accept them back.

Next day the lagatoi was surrounded by a otilla of canoes as it neared the village.

Among them were the captains wives who were thrown a bundle of sago that they immediately took home to cook.

When the lagatoi finally reached the village, there were great feasting and dancing and many presentation of sago to the many people who had helped with the successful voyage.

Sago bundles had to be given to those who had made pots as well as the families who had looked after the women who were left behind. Much sago had to be given to the Koita people who had supplied food especially CYCAD FLOOR during the construction of the lakatoi as well as the west-ward voyage. Other sago bundles were given to the Hula people who had supplied the MAILU armshells. The Badi Tauna and the Dori Tauna kept little sago for themselves but relied on food from friends as well as the sago cargo that would be brought in by Gulf people on the last of the Lahara winds to keep them alive until their new yams were harvested in DARO DARO (May).

CARGO FOR THE LAGATOI STONE ADZES

Among the valuable trade item taken on the Hiri Lagatoi was the stone axes trade down to the MOTU from mountains behind Port Moresby.

Nobody knows were the adzes were made. The Koita got them from the Koiaris but the Koiaris said they got them from somewhere else.

According to the early missionary, Rev. W.G. Lawes, these "stone hatches" were "innitely better tools for making canoe than the introduced iron" variety. He also recounted a Motuan legend that said these adzes were once fish and that bushmen collected them by wading into streams to catch them in hand held nets. He said it was easy to spot an adze catcher because his legs were covered in scars made by the stone fish trying to evade the net . One stone adze had the same barter value as one large TOEA armshell and could "buy" up to 150 kilogram of sago.

BETEL NUT

The Betelnut was also an important Hiri Trade item because although the palm grew in the Moresby area, the palm grown in the Gulf Province produces nuts that are usually bigger and of better flavour.

For people who have been brought up in culture that does that not chew betelnut, the whole operation can look pretty disgusting as they watch a great red cud rolling about in the chewer's mouth before it is spet into a rubbish bin or onto the ground.

Fortunately that is only the one side of the story.

Traditionally the chewing of betelnut was a very genteel habit and under MOTU KOITA law, it was only indulged in by men who have proved their manhood and been on successful "Hiri" expedition. It was after their return that they could take their place on the IDUHU Leaders verandah or on the "DUBU" and chew the nut.

As in all cultures where betelnut is chewed, the Motu Koita people believe the betelnut has many mysterious powers. It is said to aid digestion and stimulate the brain and use to word off evil spirits in the same way as Westerners once used garlic.

The giving of betelnut to another person therefore regarded as a great honour and a sign of real friendship while to sit down with that person and chew the nut, is a spiritual experience. In many cases, the person who had planted the palm would be known to the chewers, so his memories would be praised. The more nuts that were chewed, the more spirit power the chewers acquired. It is a mild intoxicant but chewers claim it brings greater awareness of the surroundings rather that dulling the senses like alcohol. Great qualities of betelnut were brought back by "Hiri Laka" lagatois.

THE HIRI MOALE FESTIVAL

HIRI HANENAMO

A major event in every "HIRI MOALE FESTIVAL" is choosing of the "HIRI HANENAMO" from amongst the Motu Koita entrants.

It is not a beauty competition. The event is judge on ancient MOTU KOITA traditions that holds that a women is desireable because of her poise and deportment in the dance, as well as the tattoos, ornaments and traditional clothing that enhance her natural poise.

During this competition, the girls are asked to dance before the audience as well as to be interviewed by the judges where marks are given for knowledge and love of their ancient culture.

Judges first chooses a winner from every village represented in the competition. This girls are called "HIRI HANE-ULATO". The judges than choose one of this village winners to be "Hiri Hanenamo" and she is the girl who will represent the Motu Koita people both in Port Moresby and overseas during the forthcoming year.

MOTUAN TATTOOS (*REVAREVA*)

Another time consuming occupation for women was the making of tattoos on all female children. This tattoos were made not only to enhance the child's natural grace and beauty while proclaiming her tribal identity but also, so that the girl could become a walking picture book proclaiming the lineage and bravery of her father.

This very painful process began when the little girls were about 5 or 6 years of age when tattoos were made on the arms from the hands to the elbows. The designs varied so that an observer could easily identify the child. Usually the mother made the tattoos but sometimes an aunt or grandmother with exceptional artistic talent would be asked to do the work.

Tattoos were always made during the months when men were away on the Hiri Expeditions- September to January. Each year when the men were away, new tattoos would be added and old ones would be redone to make them darker. When each was finished, a special feast was held at which TOEA arm shells were presented. By the time the child had seen her seventh (Hiri) return, her cheeks, chin, nose and lower arms would have been tattooed and she would have endured the dreadful pain of tattoos across her stomach and thighs. These would allow her to join the Dance sequences.

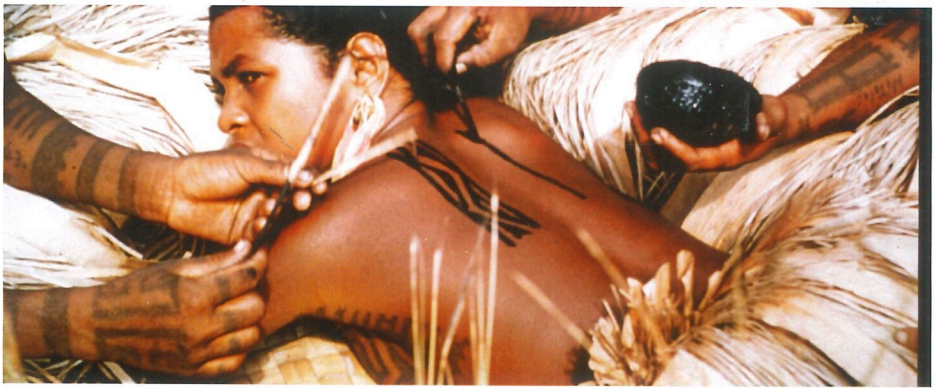
When she was ten, the (KADIDIHA) tattoos from under the arm pits to the nipples would have been made. Later, to show that she had reached puberty, she would be tattooed down her back starting at the shoulders and going over the buttocks to the knees.

Each year when the Lagatoi appeared on the horizon, the girls with their new tattoos would be taken out onto the sunlight for the first time in many weeks and allowed to bathe and cut their hair. After so-long indoors, the girl's skin would be very pale and therefore show of the tattoos to advantage.

The final tattoo for every Motuan child were tattoos across the girl's midriff which were made when she took her place among adults.

In addition, to this "ordinary" tattoos however there were many tattoos that could only be made to commemorate special circumstances. The first born daughter of a Lagatoi Captain for instance could wear a " Tear drop" tattoo below each eye and over the cheek. All the daughters of men who had actually been on a successful expedition were allowed to have tattoos on the lower part of their legs. There were other tattoos for the daughters of brave warriors, shermen or hunters and those who had sponsored a dance series. What pride fathers must have had in their daughters dance to reveal these special tattoos. Eventually the girls would be of marriage age and after a boy's family had approached the girl's family with a proposal and a "bride price" had being negotiated, a "V" shaped tattoo from between the breast to shoulders would be started. This tattoo and a tattoo on the woman's throat and the private parts would be eventually be finished when the couple were actually married.

Today, very few Motu Koita girls elect to have more than a token tattoo on their bodies. However, the tradition continues on formal occasions such as during the HIRI MOALE FESTIVAL when tattoos are drawn on their bodies with felt tipped pens.



MOTUAN GRASS SKIRT

"IMUDI" is the traditional plain grass skirt worn every day in the Motu culture. Not anymore though; the practice of wearing grass skirts as everyday wear has died out.

IMUDI or the plain grass skirt is originally from Karama (a leaf ber from the nipa or mangrove palm).

We have only two types of rami

1. Plain white imudi (Native Motuan) made from Karama ber
2. Kurikuri ((ramikaka from Kerema people made from sago)

There are two ways to weave the Motu rami (grass skirt):

1. EHATUAMU- Is the threaded between two lengths of string
2. The other method is actually knotted, called 'EAUAMU'

Both methods are as good as each other, chosen according to what the weaver likes. Motu rami are never longer than calf length. The skirt is correctly tied on the RIGHT hip, with an intentional small gap where the two ends meet, called the 'SEREMAKA'.

VANAGI & ASI ASI RACES

Another important event of the HIRI MOALE festival is the outrigger races known as "VANAGI".

The Vanagi is traditionally a shing canoe with a square sail on a single mask. The hallowed out canoe can be of varrying lengths and the outrigger is a small log acting as ballast.

Today the racing of these craft has become a specialized art with dierent classes for the vanagi depending on the length of the canoe, Many vanagi are sponsored byncompanies in Port Moresby and races are held most weekends for big prize money and even bigger wagers .

"Asi" is the Motuan word for dug-out canoe but the "AsiAsi" has come to mean a model canoe of up to one-and-a-half metres in lengths that is raced up and down the beaches near the beaches near Motuan villages. The vessels are similar in design to the shing boats the 'vanagi' and the 'trick' is to set the sail and rudders so that the "Asi Asi" will sail unattended along the beach while its proud owner runs along the shore ready to drive into the water if its capsizes or looks likes heading out to the sea.

"Asi Asi" races are held most weekends especially on Taurama Beach.