

CHAPTER 5

STICK GAMES

Stick games are usually called in Maori 'Ti Rakau' or known by the name of the specific game, however there is argument as to the ancient terminology of such games. 'Ti' was the name of a tree which according to mythology changed its position by magic. If one of these trees was encountered it was said to be an evil omen. Thus the word 'ti', for a tree which changed position, came to be applied to games which involved the throwing of sticks. Another term sometimes used is 'titi torea' which is a corruption of 'titi to ure'—a vulgarism which is best left untranslated!

The version seen nowadays is purely a musical game which delights audiences at concerts with its rhythm and the dexterity of the players but in ancient times it was a serious war game where the prime purpose was to practise the hand and eye of the players. Old versions of the game used long sticks or actual spears. One game consisted of the players, always men, standing facing one another in two lines. One spear only was thrown backwards and forwards and anyone who failed to catch it was out. Finally only one person remained. (A similar game is played today by New Zealanders of all races—only a rugby ball is substituted for a spear!)

Nowadays long sticks are seldom used and a short stick some 400mm (16 inches) to 500mm (20 inches) with a diameter of 20mm to 30mm (1 to 1¼ inches) are the norm. Sticks shorter or thicker than this are difficult to catch, particularly for the novice. Cut up broomsticks of a suitable diameter make good sticks. Brightly painted sticks are easier to see, especially in artificial light, and make for much more pleasing public performances.

Learning the Game

Stick games require plenty of application and practice. When learning the game, rolled up newspapers of the correct length, soundly

taped into a cylinder, are very handy substitutes for sticks and make much less impact if one fails to catch the 'stick'. The secret is to concentrate on the stick or sticks which are thrown to you rather than, as many novices do, watching the sticks which you have just thrown. Thus skilled players always look down at their own hands and not of those of their partner.

The sticks must not be grasped in the fist but rather held lightly between the thumb and the tips of the fingers. They should be thrown with a slight lobbing motion which makes them easier to catch and offsets the tendency for them to drop towards the floor. Players must wait for the sticks thrown to them to arrive, rather than reaching out and grabbing for the incoming sticks, or the result will be hands colliding with sticks. To avoid mid-air collisions, partners should agree beforehand so that for the throwing movements, one throws more to the left and the other more to the right.

A MODERN STICK GAME—TITI TOREA

"Titi Torea", sometimes known by the first line of the tune which accompanies it, as "E Papa Waiari", is one of the most commonly played modern stick games. Although it is simple to play, it demands a great deal of skill and practice. Here are the words and music which most usually accompany it. (Music is on page 26.)

E Papa Waiari
E papa waiari
Taku nei mahi (twice)
He tuku roimata
E Aue!—(Chorus)
E aue! Ka mate au!
E hine! Hoki iho ra.
Maku e
Maku e kaute o hikoitanga
Maku e kaute o hikoitanga
HuriHui
Hurihuri, hurihuri o mahara e
Ki te tau, ki te tau, ki te tau e.
Kore rawa, kore rawa o mahara e
Ki a koe ra, e hine!



Translation

Sighing and grieving
 Is what I've been doing (twice)
 Here are my tears of woe
 Alas! The pain will kill me
 Oh maiden, return to me
 I will count your footsteps
 Yes, count your footsteps
 My thoughts are ever turning
 Towards you, my love
 Yet not a thought is spared
 For me, my beloved!

How to Play

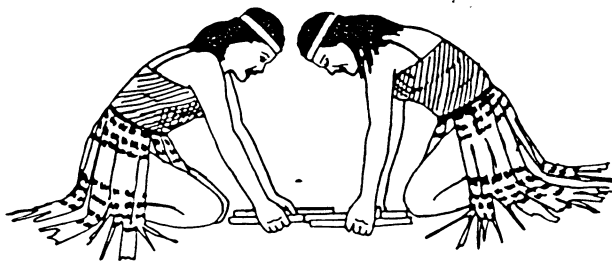
This version of Titi Toreā comprises a number of sets done either to the tune 'E Papa Waiari' or to the tune 'Maku e'. Each set is interspersed with the chorus 'E Aue'. This chorus is accompanied by a kind of marking time action and it allows performers to pick up dropped sticks and to think about the set which they are to perform next.

The game finishes with a very rapid series of movements done to the tune 'Hurihuri', followed by a tumultuous crash as the performers down their sticks to the position shown below.

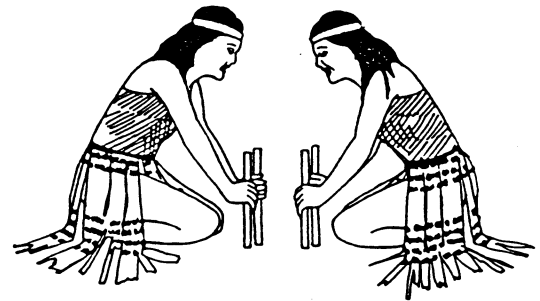
The game may be played by any number of performers kneeling in pairs with the back straight and the buttocks rested on the heels. An alternative position is to sit cross legged, but catching and throwing the sticks are rather more tricky from this latter position.

Starting and Finishing Positions

Before the game begins, the sticks are laid on the ground in front of each performer as shown below.



Someone acting as leader gives the command 'kia rite' (be ready) and the sticks are brought up to Position 1 (below) and rapped sharply on the floor. The leader then sings the first two bars of the chorus 'E Aue', to give the note and the tempo, calls 'toru, wha' (three, four) and the chorus begins with the appropriate actions, shown below.



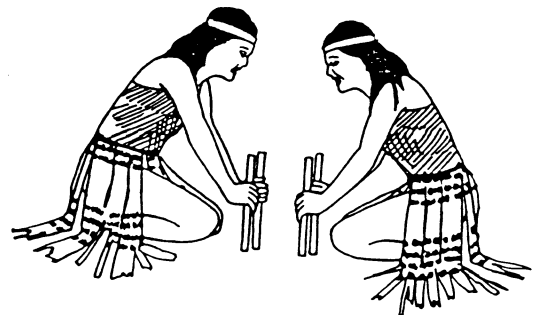
Each chorus is followed by a set of movements, the movements progressing from the simple to the more complex. Each of the movements or positions occupies one beat of the music except where sticks are flipped or tapped together twice. In this case, each flip or tap takes a single beat.

CHORUS

(Tune: 'E Aue')

There are three movements in the chorus, each one carried out on the first, second and third beats of each bar.

POSITION 1



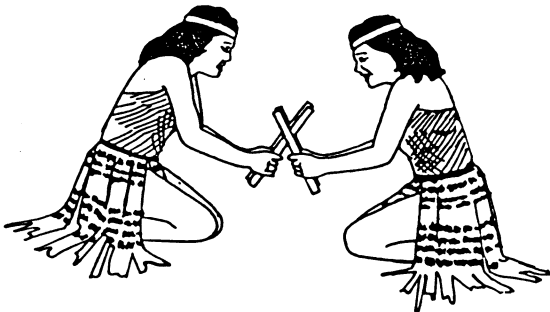
Sticks are tapped on the ground from the vertical position.

POSITION 2



The players tap their sticks together.

POSITION 3



Each player knocks sticks against those of partner.

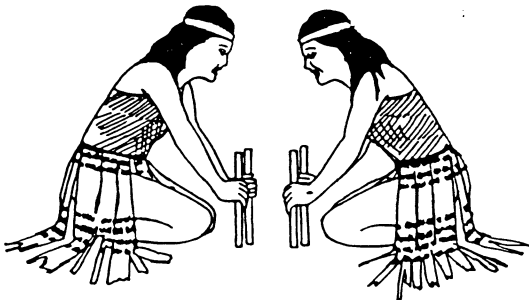
SET No 1—THE SINGLE THROW

(Tune: 'E Papa Waiari')

There are three movements in this set, each movement occupying one beat of each bar. As this tune has sixteen bars, the set is performed sixteen times (eight times throwing the right stick on the third movement, and eight times throwing the left stick), before returning again to the chorus.

POSITION 1

Sticks are tapped on the ground.



POSITION 2



Each player knocks sticks together.

POSITION 4



Each player throws RIGHT stick to partner, catches partner's stick with RIGHT hand.

Positions 1 and 2 are then repeated but this time for position 3, it is the LEFT stick which is thrown and caught in the LEFT hand.

SET No. 2—THE DOUBLE THROW

(Tune: 'E Papa Waiari')

Set No 2 is an extension of the first set. There are four movements, each done to one beat of music. The set is thus repeated twelve times before returning to the chorus 'E Aue'.

Movement 1: Sticks tapped on ground (Position 1)

Movement 2: Sticks tapped together (Position 2)

Movement 3: Player throws RIGHT stick to partner and catches partner's RIGHT STICK (Position 4)

Movement 4: Player throws LEFT stick to partner and at same time catches partner's LEFT stick.

SET No 3—DOUBLE DOUBLE THROW

(Tune: 'E Papa Waiari')

There are six movements to this set, each movement taking a single beat. Thus the set is performed eight times before returning to the chorus 'E Aue'.

Movements 1 to 4: As for Set No. 2.

Movements 5 & 6: Movements 3 and 4 of Set 2 repeated.

SET No 4—IN AND OUT

(Tune: 'Maku e')

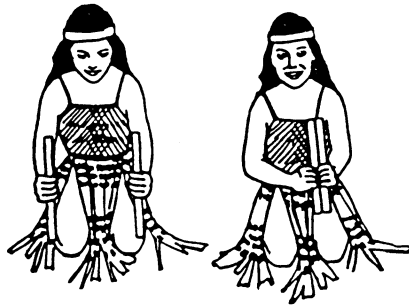
This set has three movements, each to a single beat. Thus the set is performed sixteen times before returning to the chorus 'E Aue'.

Movement 1: Sticks tapped on floor (Position 1)

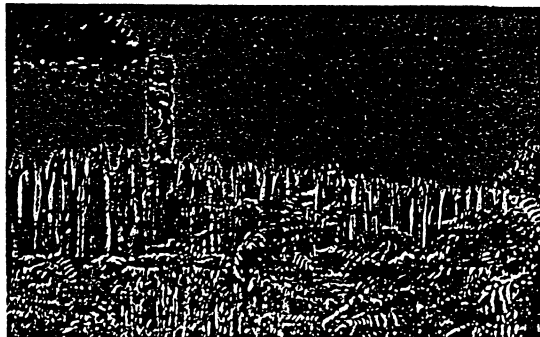
Movement 2: Sticks tapped together (Position 2)

Movement 3: Each player throws both sticks TOGETHER and almost simultaneously catches those of partner. (See Position 5 below.) When they throw, one set of sticks passes between the other set (it must be arranged beforehand who throws sticks outwards and who throws inwards.)

POSITION 5



One player holds sticks apart; one player holds sticks together.



SET No 5—THE FLIP

(Tune: 'E Papa Waiari')

Movement 1: Sticks tapped on the ground on the player's right side (Position 6 below).

Movement 2: Sticks flipped in mid air (Position 7 below).

Movement 3: Sticks tapped on ground (Position 1).

Movement 4: Sticks tapped together (Position 2).

Movement 5 & 6: As for movements 3 and 4 of Set No 2.

POSITION 6



Sticks tapped on ground on player's right.

POSITION 7



Sticks are flipped over and each player catches the opposite end of own sticks.



CLOSING SET

(Tune: "Hurihuri")

Hurihuri finishes the game after the final chorus. It is taken at a very much faster pace than the other sets and, performed well, makes a spectacular finish.

Movement 1: (one bar) Sticks tapped on each player's right side (Position 6).

Movement 2: (one bar) Both sticks flipped TWICE (Position 7).

Movement 3: (one beat) Sticks tapped on ground (Position 1).

Movement 4: (one beat) Sticks tapped together (Position 2).

Movement 5: Each player taps RIGHT stick TWICE against partner's RIGHT stick.

Movements 1 to 5 are repeated again twice. The only difference is that for the first repeat the sticks are tapped on the players' LEFT sides for Movement 1 and it is the LEFT sticks which are tapped together in Movement 5. For the second repeat, the sticks are again tapped on the right side for Movement 1 and the right sticks are tapped for Movement 5.

Following the two repeats the set continues as follows:

Movement 6: (two bars) sticks flipped twice as for Movement 2.

Movement 7: (1 beat) sticks tapped on ground (position 1).

Movement 8: (1 beat) sticks tapped together (position 2).

Movement 9: (1 beat) sticks placed together on ground with a bang.

PLAYERS IN GROUPS OF FOUR

A more complex version of "Titi Torea" is played by groups of four. The players actually work as two pairs but one pair inserts extra beats into the opening movement of each set to ensure that when they throw, their sticks do not collide with the sticks of the other pair. It is good fun and looks very spectacular when performed on stage.

The Chorus—Working in Fours

The chorus movement to the tune "E Aue" is performed in the same way as described previously except that for the THIRD position, the players, instead of tapping their sticks together, tap their left stick against their neighbour's right stick, and their right stick against their other neighbour's left stick.

The Single Throw

The single throw in fours to the tune "E Papa Waiari" is done in the same way as for Set No 1 of the pairs. However, to avoid mid-air collisions of sticks, one pair, for the very first position only, gives their sticks TWO taps on the ground, instead of one. The other pair continues as normal.

The effect is best illustrated by the table below:

First Pair

Tap sticks ONCE on ground (pos. 1)
Tap sticks AGAIN on ground (pos. 1)
Tap sticks together (pos. 2)
Throw RIGHT stick (pos.4)
Tap sticks on ground (pos. 1)

Tap sticks together (pos. 2)
Throw LEFT stick to partner (pos. 4)
Tap sticks on ground (pos. 1)
Tap sticks together and so on

Second Pair

Tap sticks ONCE on ground
Tap sticks together (pos. 2)
Throw RIGHT stick (pos. 4)
Tap sticks on ground (pos. 1)
Tap sticks together (pos. 2)
Throw LEFT stick (pos. 4)
Tap sticks on ground (pos. 1)
Tap sticks together (pos. 2)
Throw RIGHT stick to partner

It will be seen that the initial double tap on the ground by the sticks of one pair, enables the four to synchronise their movements to avoid the sticks colliding when they are thrown. The same principle applies for the other sets, as shown below.

The Double Throw

The double throw in fours to the tune "E Papa Waiari" is the same as the double throw in pairs (Set No 2 above) except for the insertion of two extra beats initially by one pair to avoid the sticks of both pairs colliding. One pair, for the first time only, gives their sticks THREE taps on the ground as illustrated in the following table:

First Pair

Tap sticks on ground ONCE
Tap sticks on ground AGAIN
Tap sticks on ground AGAIN
Tap sticks TOGETHER
Throw RIGHT stick to partner
Throw LEFT stick
Tap sticks on ground
Tap sticks TOGETHER
Throw RIGHT stick
Throw LEFT stick
and so on...

Second Pair

Tap sticks on ground
Tap sticks TOGETHER
Throw RIGHT stick to partner
Throw LEFT stick
Tap sticks on ground

Tap sticks TOGETHER
Throw RIGHT stick
Throw LEFT stick
Tap sticks on ground
Tap sticks together
and so on...

In and Out Movement in Fours

This movement is done to the tune "Maku e". There is little difference from the same movement in pairs (see Set No 4) except that synchronisation between the pairs is achieved by one pair giving their sticks TWO taps on the floor INITIALLY, instead of ONE tap. The sequence is:

First Pair

Tap sticks ONCE on ground
Tap sticks AGAIN on ground
Tap sticks together
Throw sticks in/out

Second Pair

Tap sticks ONCE on ground
Tap sticks together
Throw sticks in/out
and so on...

