

***Hope* and Other Sacred Places in Kokorapa**



Headhunters and an *oru* in Munda taken by an early Methodist missionary, George Brown in the late 1800s. Courtesy of the Methodist Church Archives (Auckland).

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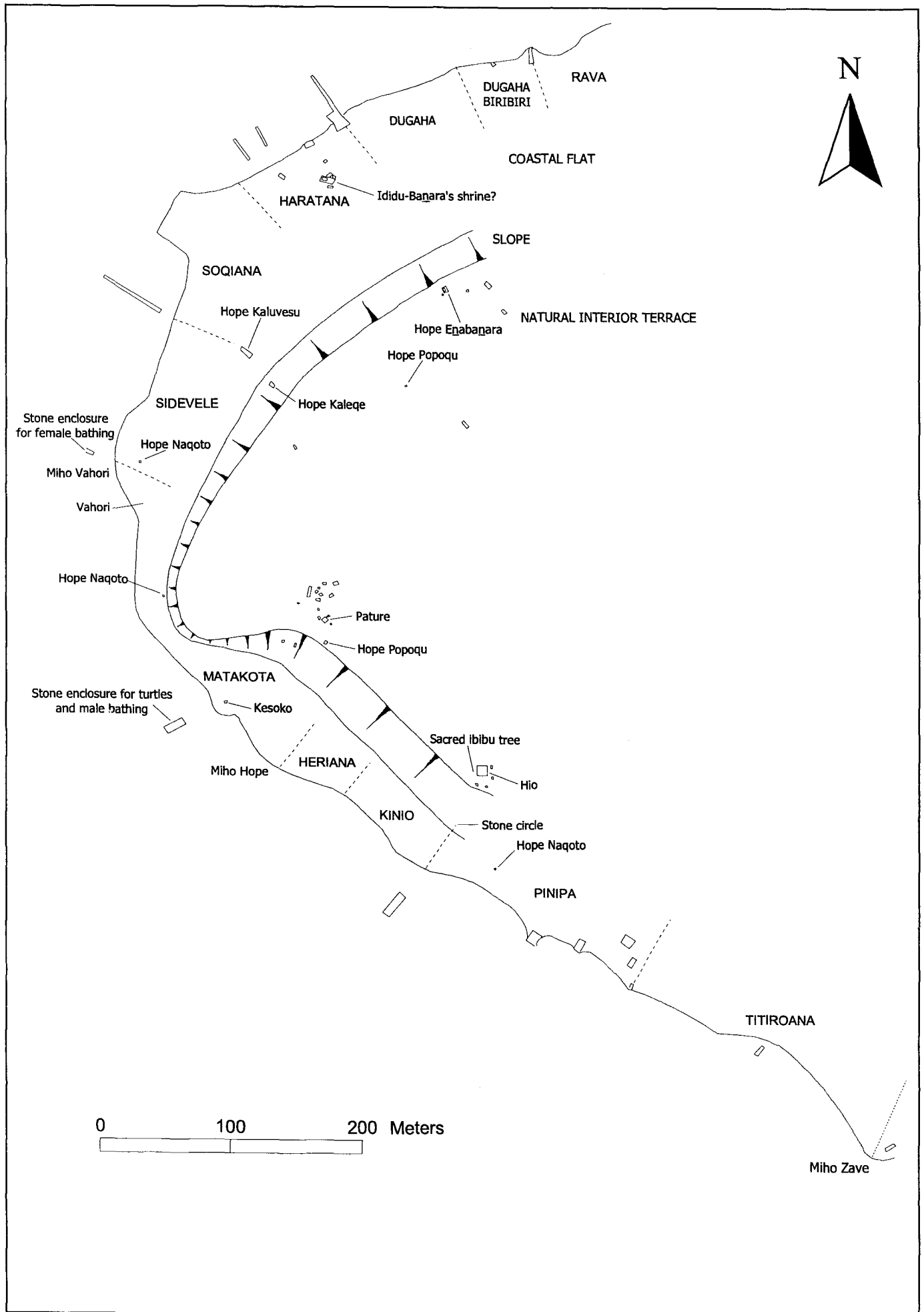


Figure 1. *Hope* and other sacred places in Kokorapa.

Piraka (chiefly ancestral shrine)

Ancestor worship held at ancestral shrines (*hope* [Figure 2]) was the most critical part of pre-Christian Roviana religion, and was especially associated with headhunting (Hocart 1931), burial procedure, and the harvest of ngali nut (*okete* [Hocart 1922]). It is through the ancestors' skulls kept at ancestral shrines that the priest (*hiama*¹) communicated with the god (*tamasa*) for supplication (Schneider 1997).

The chiefly ancestral shrine (*oru*) of Kokorapa is located on the northeast point of Piraka Island. This shrine is said to have three levels; the top layer for chiefs (*banara*), the middle layer for lesser chiefs and chiefly assistants (*buko*), and the bottom layer for elders (*palabatu*). It is said that the chiefs' skulls kept at Olobuki on the ridge (*toqere*) of Nusa Roviana were first transferred to near Hio at Kinio and then to this shrine during the time period between the establishment of the Methodist mission in Munda in 1902 and the late 1910s when the Christianity was accepted on Nusa Roviana.

The triangular-shaped wooden (cover photo and Figure 4) or gabled roof skull house (Figure 25) used for storing chiefs' skulls as well as the chiefly ancestral shrine itself is called *oru*. *Oru* represents the upper portion of the decorated facade of the ritual house (*zelepade* [Figure 17]), which also has the same name. The elaborate motif of the triangular wooden board (*leve* [Figure 3]) which closes the *oru* describes a chief holding a tomahawk (*karamaho*) and shield (*lave*) in his hands on a war-canoe (sometimes with two followers



Figure 2. Ancestral shrine in Munda in 1908. Courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library.

¹ Supporting the chief by meditating with the ancestors and the spiritual world on behalf of the *butubutu*, it was the *hiama*'s main duty to prepare a head taken from the dead for keeping at the ancestral shrine and to take care of tabu places, especially ancestral shrines and garden shrines (*hope manini*).

paddling). An early Methodist missionary, George Brown described the ritual held by the returning headhunting party at an ancestral shrine at Paramata, Munda in the late 1800s:

... as they [headhunters] reached the shore they marched in single file up to the grave of Mia's [Miabule] father, on which each man laid an offering. ... The offering consisted of a betel-nut, a leaf, or anything indeed which they had picked up from the canoes. ...[we] found simply a heap of stones with two small triangular boxes [*oru*], which evidently were put there to protect the skull of the chief when it was originally placed there, lots of skulls of turtles, some old rings, etc. In front there were the ashes of a fire on which they had cooked food for the spirit before starting on the expedition to ask for his protection (Brown 1910: 164).

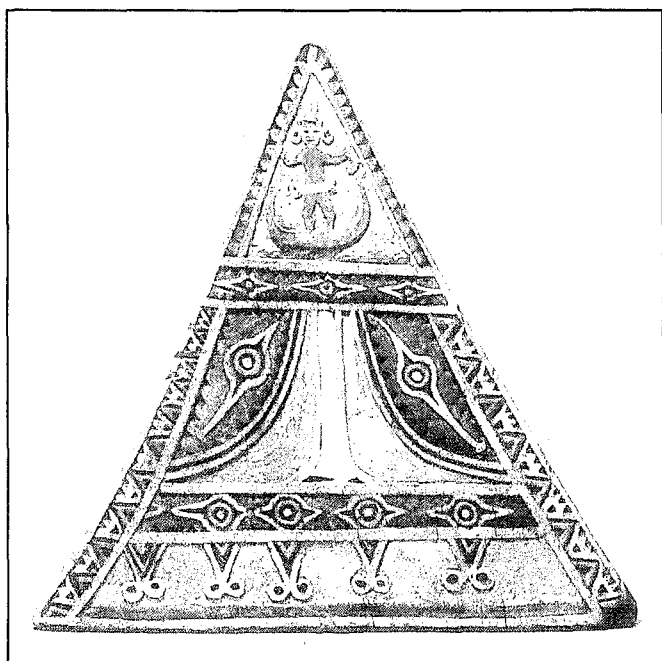


Figure 3. Wooden board (*leve*) for closing triangular skull house (after Stöhr 1972: 180, Abb. 427).



Figure 4. An *oru* on Kudu Island in Vonavona Lagoon taken probably in the 1930s. Courtesy of the Methodist Church Archives (Auckland).

Hope Maṇini² (garden shrine)

The garden shrine is located on the slope of the northernmost “hill (*botu*)” called Maṇi, looking down on the fertile flat land of Kokorapa. Garden shrines were one of the earliest and most fundamental shrines in addition to ancestral shrines (*hope*). The priest (*hiama*) prayed to *tamasa* for the fertility of garden plots *inuma* (Schneider 1997: 97-98). Offerings of shell valuables were put over a tree stump or root (*reqe*) at the shrine. The priest fell into a trance state (*sabusabukai*) which enabled him to chase harmful spirits away.

² Riko na maṇini is ‘the patron of agriculture’ (Waterhouse 1949: 149).

A ritual called *sosope la pa reqe* was conducted before cultivating virgin forest (*muqe* [1997: 107-108]). A person who wanted to develop a new piece of land handed over a *poata* to the priest. Offering a *poata* at the *reqe* of the shrine to *tamasa* ensured not only the fertility of new garden but also the transfer of the control over the land. Soil and ashes were ritually taken from the shrine to a proposed garden area. *Sabusabukai* was also performed at this occasion. People prayed for a good harvest before planting taro, *pana*, and yam, and an offering was made here after the harvest.

Kesoko (fishing shrine)

This fishing shrine is located on the point at Matakota. Kesoko is a male spirit who is coupled with a female spirit Bolana.³ Before a fishing expedition of *kuarao* (fish drive using vine and stone wall trap), *valusa* (bonito fishing), or *kura* (fishing for a large triggerfish



[*makoto*] with a basket trap), the shrine owner performed a divination (*sabusabukai*) at the shrine. He spoke to the spirit, saying “Oh! Kesoko of Matakota. We are going out fishing. Come and guide us to the things which we are aiming for.” He communicated with the spirit while bending down respectfully and swinging the sacred *zipolo habu* leaf to which the answer came back. The leaf was torn down in the middle and tied to his neck to carry to the expedition. Sometimes the cooked fish is offered at the shrine after fishing. A black wooden statue (*beku*) of Kesoko stood on this shrine facing the ocean until the statue was removed to the southern part of the island in the 1930s (Figure 5). A stone enclosure for keeping turtles, which was connected to another enclosure for male bathing (*bara huhuveana*), is located in the inter-tidal zone nearby.

Figure 5. Kesoko taken probably in the 1930s. Courtesy of the Methodist Church Archives (Auckland).

A ritual called *soboto* was held at fishing shrines before the feast to celebrate the return of a headhunting expedition (*qeto minato*), the inauguration (*vapeza*, literally ‘to make wet’) of a new war-canoe (*tomoko*), canoe house (*paele*) or sleeping house (*vetu putaputana*). On the first day, a bone of a deceased *banara*, pudding (*rahi*), and a *hinuili*

³ However, Hocart (1937: 35) states that “Mbolana [Bolana] is a spirit in the net...and is a name for Kesoko, the fishing god.” The war-canoe (*tomoko*) prow figurehead *nuzunuzu* (Figure 7) is also said to be “an image of Kesoko” (Beti 1977: 40). Kesoko bolana is referred to as ‘the patron of net fishing’ (Waterhouse 1949: 149).

were wrapped in a small basket and thrown to the reef to call fish. On the third day, during the sorcery called *betubetue*, Bolana came to shake the canoe. The man asked, “who are you?” “I am Bolana.” “Why do you shake the canoe?” “You take the turtle net (*morumoru*) and go fishing there.” Fishermen placed a new *morumoru* on the shrine to empower it before use, while used nets were left on the shrine.



Figure 6. Probably Kesoko in 1910. Courtesy of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Oru (bonito fishing shrine)

This bonito fishing shrine (*hope inaru*⁴) is located on the southeast point of Pukuni Island. Next to a headhunting raid, bonito fishing (*valusa*) was traditionally of marked significance to Roviana men (Waterhouse 1949: 134). Rituals were associated with “the preparations, the actual fishing, and the return and distribution of the spoils” (1949: 134). Fishing gear, such as bamboo rods (*sasaburu*), pearl shell lures (*gaili* [Figure 8]) and lines (*taili*) made of bark of *pusi* vine were left at the shrine. The shrine owner talked to the spirit at

⁴ Inaru raqoso is ‘the patron of bonito fishing’ (Waterhouse 1949: 149).



the shrine, "Let the bonito come out. We are going fishing." The items which men took fishing, for example, custom tobacco (*tabaika elelo*), a betel nut set, were offered at the shrine before the fishing expedition.

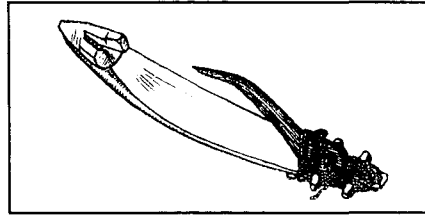


Figure 8. Pearl shell lure (*gaili* [after Koch 1971: 41, Abb. 29]).

Figure 7. War-canoe prow figurehead *nuzunuzu* (after Waite 1983: 37, Plate 6).

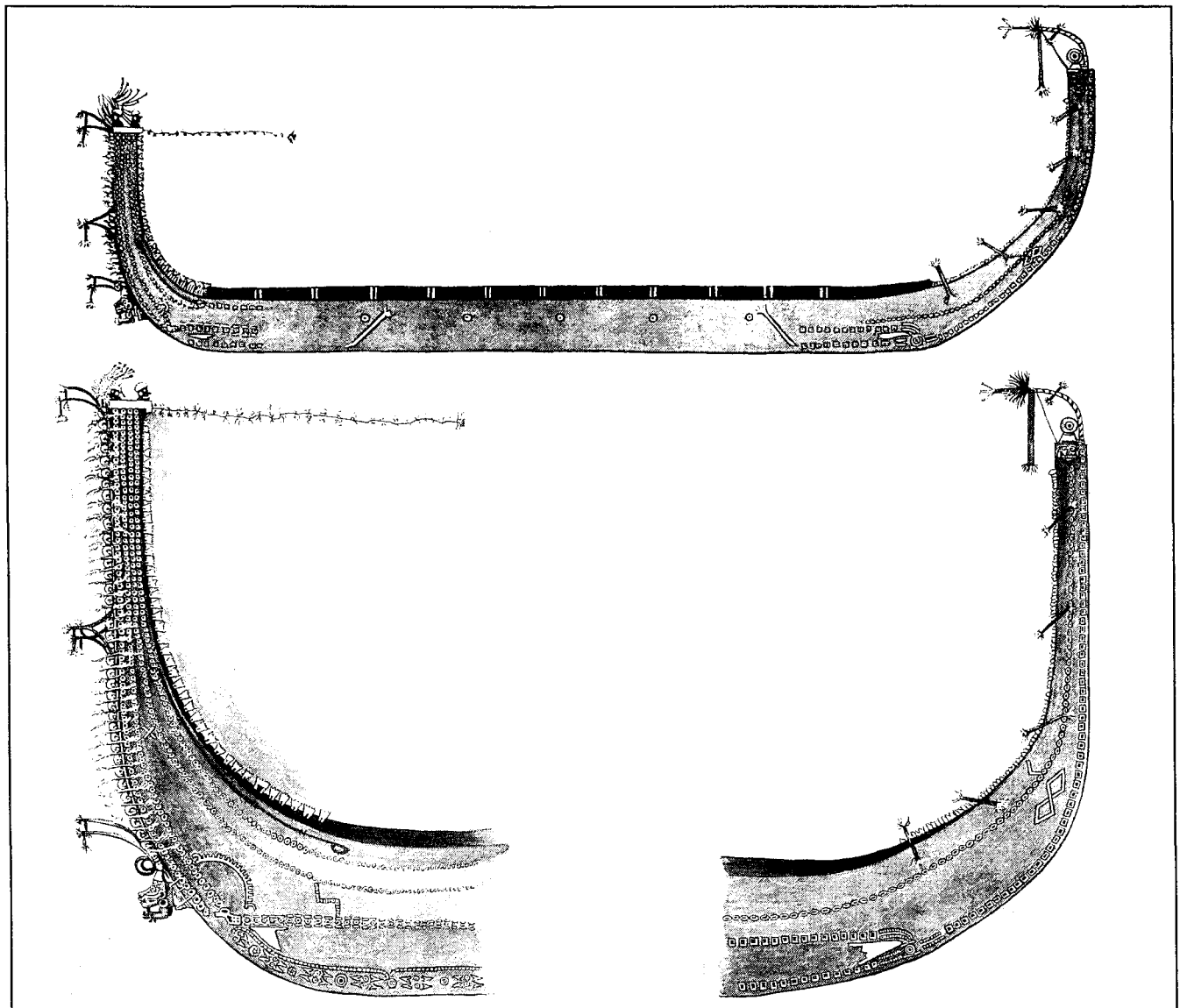


Figure 9. *Tomoko* war-canoe (based on Woodford 1909, Plate XLI, XLII, and XLIV).

Hope Enabanara and Hope Soqiana (*Mateana* shrine)

Mateana are the ancestral spirits who are represented by natural phenomenon such as meteors (also called *mateana*), shooting stars (*ilono*), rainbows (Hocart n.d.). In the fort (*toa*) on the ridge (*toqere*) of Nusa Roviana, for example, two shrines are associated with two *mateana* ancestors. Gorabele died and after three days he broke open his wrappings and flew up from Zare Ibibu where the feast for his memorial had taken place annually. In contrast, Taua (or Tagua) died and entered the ground at Zare after three days of mourning. There are two *mateana* haunting places or *mateana* shrines in Kokorapa. When a significant event such as the death of a chief was about to occur, *mateana* flew from a *mateana* shrine on the northernmost “hill (*botu*)” named Marini on the ridge to haunt the grove of Hope Enabanara (*ena* means ‘face up’), then a large *kalala* tree on Hope Soqiana which women were prohibited from accessing. In Vuragare, *mateana* flew from the ridge to haunt at a large *tanovo* tree at Suvuru.

Hope Kaluvesu (*Kaluvesu* shrine)

The Kaluvesu shrine is located at Sidevele. Kaluvesu is said to be a giant spirit with long hair who had a walking stick (*kolu*). The people of Nusa Roviana are said to have invited him from Simbo to secure the island and Sidevele, a chiefly hamlet of Kokorapa, especially along the coast from foreign enemies. If someone broke the tabu, he would go back to Simbo unless the person was purified. Kaluvesu is said to be in Simbo now. The wooden statue (*beku*) of another Simbo spirit, Sea, who protects Sidevele people from magic sent from outside, stood at the western side of the shrine until the World War II. Sea appears



and stays on a *dadao* tree on the shore, if a person of Sidevele gets sick. The area from Hope Kaluvesu and Hope Soqiana to the wharf (*hehipi*) on the shore is a tabu area where in-laws (*roroto*) were not allowed to approach.

In the early 20th century, Rev. John F. Goldie (Figure 10) came to Kokorapa to visit the places of traditional worship. When people showed Hope Kaluvesu saying that this spirit was very powerful, he held out his baby and said, “If you are really powerful spirit, try to take this child.” After they went back to Kokeqolo, the baby died.

Figure 10. Rev. Goldie and a statue (*beku*) called “Reresana” of a *hope* at “Andi” or “Ade” in 1932. Courtesy of the Methodist Church Archives (Auckland).

Hope Popoqu (*leprosy* shrine)

Leprous spirits as well as lepers and leprosy are called *popoqu*. Lepers were isolated from ordinary people and close relatives left food for them without coming into contact with them. In Kokorapa, there are two *hope popoqu* where the shrine owner supplicated the

spirits to cure leprosy and to protect one's possession by causing the thief to develop leprosy (property tabu [*tokoro*]). Approaching the shrine caused a person to develop leprosy.

Hope Naqoto (cleansing shrine)

There are three *hope naqoto* in Kokorapa, probably corresponding to major hamlets, Pinipa, Matakota and Sidevele. Virgin forest (*muqe*) is considered to be a place beyond human control, full of malicious spirits (*tomate*) such as *susu kure* (woman spirit who has only one breast), *matemakata* (the spirit of people who died by accident), *hiramate* (the spirit of women who died during delivery), *huqimate* (the spirit of a person who committed suicide) and *boso lau* (the spirit with no head). When people planned to settle such a place, the priest (*hiama*) would cleanse the land so that harmful spirits could not harm the people. The priest would chant magical spell to shut up the spirits in stone heap on which he was stepping.⁵ This stone heap became a shrine to protect and secure the people from harmful magic sent from enemies. Several behaviors are not allowed around the shrine such as making fire, defecating, uttering garbage, and approaching by females. The violation of this causes the resurrection of the confined spirits from the shrine. The spread of epidemic in Kokorapa in the 1960s was thought to be caused by violating the tabu and a hedge was planted around the shrines to prevent children from disturbing them afterward.

Hope Kaleqe and Ugugu (purification shrine)

A person who violated tabu through adultery (*barabarata*)⁶ or theft was considered "smelly (*fuma_{na}*)," as it was believed that evil spirits (*tomate*) would spoil the person. In Kokorapa, there are two purification shrines (*hope vinulasa*) for men and women separately.

The purification men's ritual took place at Ugugu on Pukuni Island until Christianization in the late 1910s.⁷ The chief and elders, except for the sinner, would participate in the ceremony. Pigs, bonito, puddings of taro and ngali nut (*okete*) which were cooked by the shrine owner were brought to the shrine. The priest prepared sweet yam (*pana*) cooked with coconut milk (*poholo*) for the ritual. A sprout of *zoni* tree is put into *poholo* and swung on the shrine.⁸ Then puddings crushed in a stone bowl (*lolu*) with a stick (*tutu*) were thrown to the shrine. "All the spirits, you have already been cleaned. I came here to offer you food. Eat it." The participants ate together afterward.

⁵ The meaning of *naqoto*, 'to put a weight on an article to prevent being disturbed or blown away' (Waterhouse 1949: 79) seems to be related to this ritual.

⁶ The purification ritual for adultery (*barabarata*) called *vulasa* was made to propitiate spirits (Waterhouse 1949: 142).

⁷ After his father Belakera's death, James Pitu (Figure 16) returned from the Methodist mission school at Kia to be the chief and to introduce Christianity to Kokorapa in 1914. However, in addition to other areas in Roviana (such as Dunde, Munda, and Vuragare), disputes between the Christians and heathen people arose on Nusa Roviana in 1917 when James Pitu's house was attacked with spears and bows and arrows (Pitu n.d.: 96-97). It was until in the late 1910s that the people of Kokorapa were fully christianized.

⁸ This ritual was held to purify a contaminated house or shoreline. Another informant describes the relatives of the sinner as being purified by sweeping the smoke of a sacrificed turtle toward themselves at a canoe house (*paele*). Later, the ashes of turtle were deposited at the shrine. Hocart (n.d.) also documented a similar purifying ceremony of adultery, using the smoke of sacrificial pig at the first day and *poholo* at the next day in Roviana.

The women's ceremony took place at Hope Kaleqe at Sidevele on the same day as the men's ceremony. The sinful women joined the ceremony, hiding their faces with traditional "umbrella" (*poro*) made of Pandanus (*poro*) leaf. Offerings, especially the first fruit of ngali nut (*okete*), were also given to the spirits at this shrine by women led by the male priest.

Hio

A shrine of the giant clam shell (*hio*) is located at Kinio. One side of *hio* came from Java on Vella Lavella where the other shell with the meat attached is said to be still in the sea there. If a person removes dirt from the shell, a large storm will come and last for several hours. When the enemy is accessing the island, the dirt is cleaned so that the storm would attack them. It is said that even if it rains, the shell does not collect water. No tree cutting is permitted in this grove.

Pature

If someone clears around Pature, there will be drought (*dada*). In the case of long rain, Pandanus trees (*dolo*) there will be cut to stop the rain. It is also said that those who cut trees develop a skin disease (*rumihi*) and their hands get spoiled (*geqi lima*).

Haratana

There is a shrine at Haratana related to Ididu-Banara (Figure 11). Thirteen to fifteen generations ago, the Kazukuru-Roviana people resided in the interior of Munda, such as Bao and Tirokiaba, and it was Ididu-Banara who initiated the migration to the coast.

Luturu-Banara made a feast to celebrate his son's upcoming installation as chief of Bao. Luturu-Banara was old and needed somebody to succeed him. He called his tribe (*butubutu*) and that of sister Sogaduri who were living at Hia Gore to come together to install Ididu-Banara. He called the Kazukuru people of Tirokiaba, Patu Kuti, Patu Kuna, and Zorutu [Kazukuru settlements]. Bao was a big settlement and there big feasts were celebrated. Before the feast, the chief told his people that when the Kazukuru dancers came nobody should laugh because their descent line [*tuti-na*] was one of leper [*tie popoqu*]. The Kazukuru came and danced, some had no hands, no eyes, and no ears. One woman from Maqala Qanaqana laughed, hihihhi! and zaaaa! The dancers sank into the earth and became stones, snakes, and other things. But some Kazukuru people remained and returned to their inland settlements. Therefore, Ididu-Banara became a chief and began his move to the coast (Aswani 2000: 46-47).

Ididu-Banara came down to the Bareke River and crossed to Nusa Roviana Island by a raft (*bana*). He arrived at Haratana and made a shrine to place eighty spirits for protection. There was a large *kalala* tree here where spirits stayed. Women are prohibited from accessing the shrine. Then, Ididu-Banara climbed the hill (*toqere*) and named the island after his grandmother, Roviana. There, he built a shrine "Hope Roviana" where he transferred the eighty spirits. At that time, the Koloï people resided on the barrier islands from the eastern part of Nusa Roviana to Reregana.

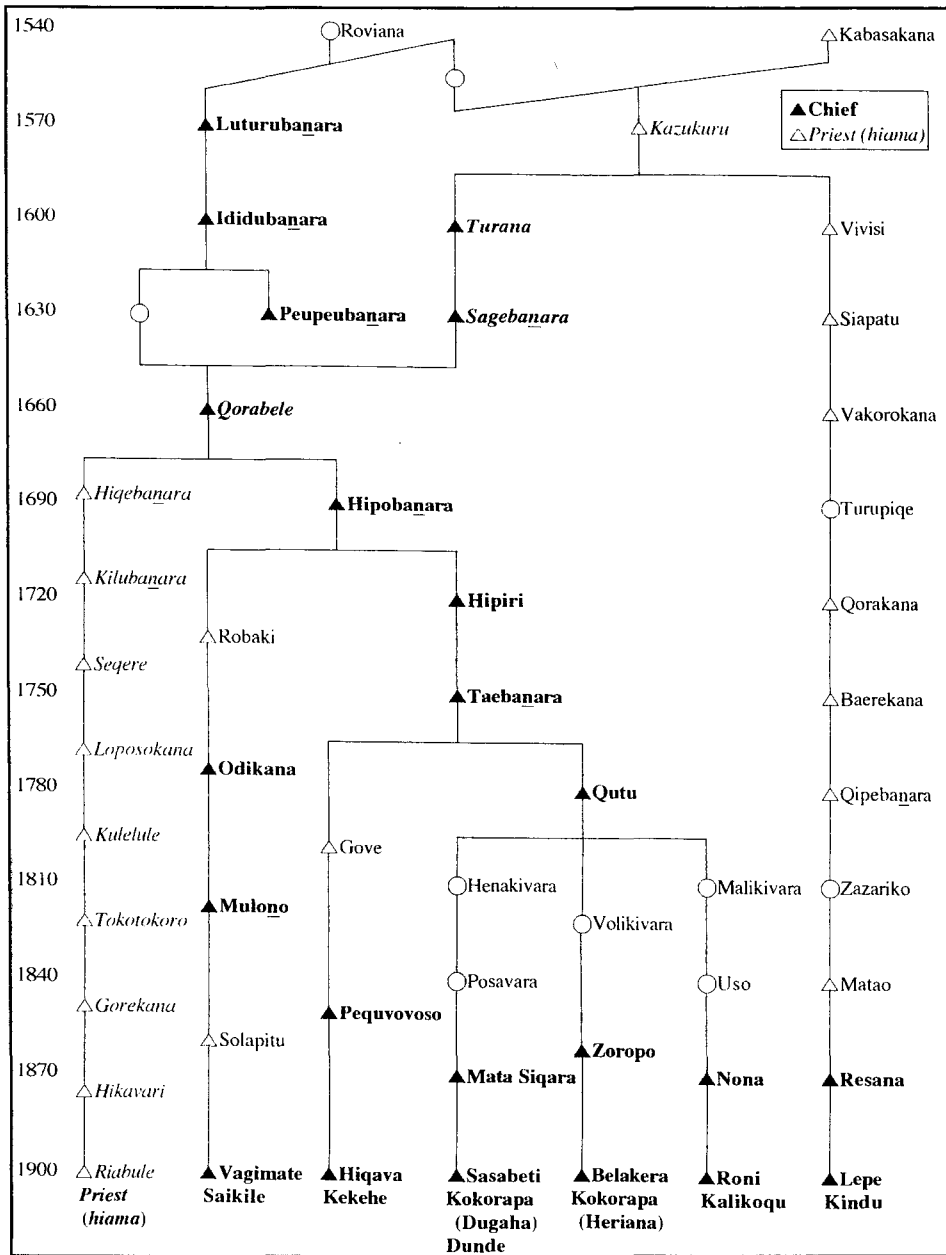


Figure 11. Genealogy of Kazukuru-Roviana chiefs (based on Schneider 1997, Figure 4).

After Idu-Banara settled Nusa Roviana Island, the Koloï people called his people to help caulk [*tita*] their *tomoko* war-canoes. His son Peupeu-Banara went to Koloï to help because they were relatives. Two Koloï boys followed the coast back to Peupeu's settlement and found old blind Idu-Banara near the shore grinding *bakiha*. They took a branch and tickled his face. Idu-Banara thought that flies were bothering him so he rubbed his face until it was covered with shell sawdust. During the evening, while people were still feasting at Kosianae, the boys returned and told of their prank. Peupeu-Banara heard of the story and told his old man. Idu-Banara was angry and told his son to bring his basket [*seki pagara*]. He told his son, "you will take this *bakiha* and go to Kazukuru." Peupeu-Banara went to the mainland and presented the *bakiha* to his close relatives who accepted the compensatory payment. The *qeto minate* [war party] of Kazukuru began killing the Koloï at Zare Ibibu in Nusa Roviana and continued throughout the barrier islands of the Roviana Lagoon. Then, they crossed into the mainland and continued killing until they reached the Biribiri River where they saw a standing axe [*туру karamaho*]. This was the location where Idu-Banara had said that the killing should stop. Some Koloï survived because they went to Vuragare and hid from the warriors (Aswani 2000: 48).

There are still statues of the two Koloï brothers who turned into stone at Kosianae because of Idu-Banara's magic.

Miho Hope

The ritual of feeding two sacred shark (*kiso*), Voseiviri and Titiu, which are the totem (*kokolo*) for the Kokorapa people, was held at Miho Hope. The two sharks were fed with first fruit of various crops and pigs.

Paele (canoe house)

Canoe houses (*paele*), where *tomoko* war-canoes were kept, were the center of religious and social activities such as assemblies and feasts. Prior to pacification, there were several *paele* in Kokorapa. They were owned by chiefs and predominant seniors (*palabatu*), for example, the *paele* of chiefs at Sidevele for the whole of Kokorapa, the one at Kinio belonged to Eazama, and at Soqiana to Gesoraqomo (Figure 16). In Simbo, men slept in canoe houses during a period of celibacy prior to headhunting and bonito fishing (Dureau 1994: 273), and were thus set apart from ordinary life (state of *hopena*), while women had limited access to these houses (Hocart n.d.). A smoked enemy's corpse called *virivirikana* was hung in front of *paele* where the supplication for the spirit⁹ to gain the power for fighting was held (Schneider 1997: 92-93). Skulls (*batu boso*) taken from headhunting raids were displayed at canoe

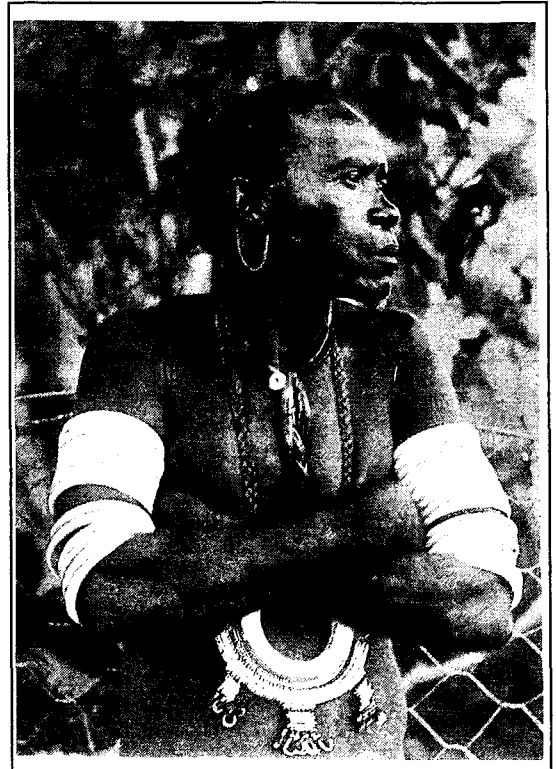


Figure 12. Hiqava (after Edge-Partington 1907: 22).

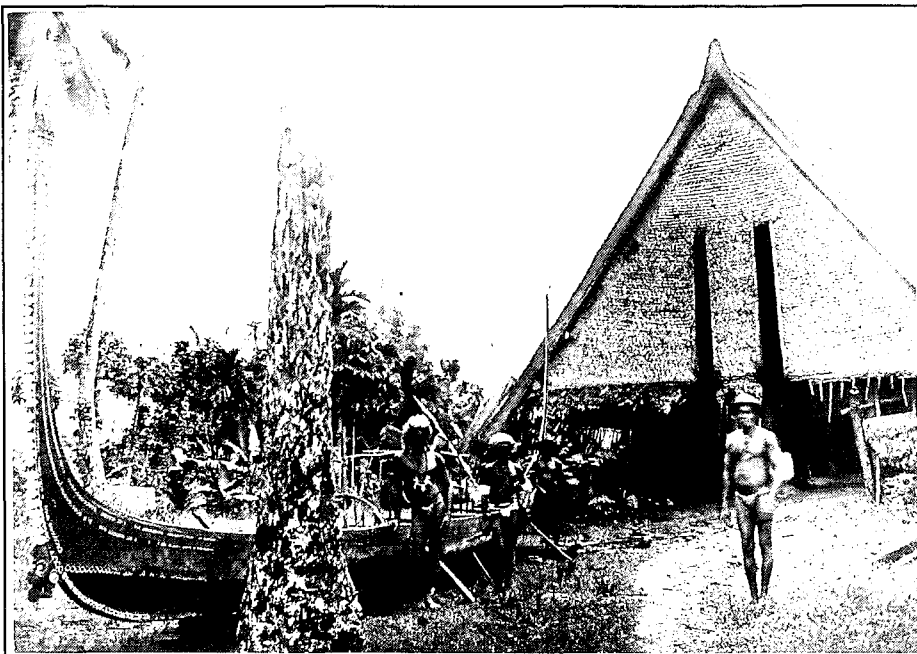


Figure 13. A *paele* at Sisiata taken by C.M. Woodford in 1886. Hiqava, Wange, unknown person, and Gemu from right to left (after Price 1980: 13).

⁹ The spirit of fighting is called Liqomo vovoso (Waterhouse 1949: 150). *Liqomo* (Figure 18c) and *vovoso* are also the charms for fighting (Schneider 1997: 92-93).

