

Presented by Jerry McCulloch
STICK GAMES (TI RAKAU)
(TITI TOREA)
(Maori)

SOURCE: There is some doubt about the correct Maori terminology for stick games. Ti is the name of a mythological type of tree which was reputed to appear to change its position as if by magic. The discovery of one of these trees in the bush was reputed to be an evil omen. It will be appreciated how a word denoting trees which changed position came to be applied to games involving the throwing of sticks. Usually "ti rakau" is used today to denote stick games generally, although one authority says it was a game played by the feet. This must, however, be somewhat suspect. The term titi is used for the short sticks used in ti rakau. Another popular name for all stick games is titi torea, which is a corruption of titi-to-ure. This term must, however, be regarded as a vulgarism, and probably applied originally to a specific game. This version is from the MYU Kia Ora Club and was used in concert on many of their tours.

THE STICKS: In old versions of the game the sticks were more like spears, and up to three feet in length. Today they are often as short as ten to twelve inches, but sticks as short as this are easily dropped and eighteen-to twenty inch long sticks are recommended, with a diameter of 1 to 1 1/4 inches. They may be painted, carved or have burnt-in designs. Brightly painted sticks give the best effect for public performance.

THROWING: Many novices make the mistake of worrying about what happens to their own sticks once they are thrown, whereas it is essential that they concentrate on the sticks they have to catch. The sticks should be thrown with a lobbing motion as this makes them easier to catch. The sticks must be held lightly with the thumb on one side and the finger tips on the other, not clasped in the fists. Each player arranges with his partner so that for the throwing movements one throws more to the L and the other more to the R to avoid mid-air collisions. One set of movements at a time should be mastered before attempting anything more and a novice should carry out the movements slowly but to a strict beat.

MUSIC: Any music in 3/4 or 6/8 time is suitable. Often a chant is used. However, the tunes included here are the ones most usually performed with stick games.

FORMATION: The version of ti rakau given below is called TITI TOREA and is carried out with the performers in pairs opposite each other, kneeling with the buttocks resting on the heels and the backs straight. When practicing for a prolonged period,

performers should sit or kneel on a cushion. The kneeling position can be very tiring at first. The game consists of a number of sets done to the tune "E Papa" or "Maku e". Each set is interspersed with a chorus to the tune "E aue!". The chorus is equivalent to marking time and gives performers time to pick up dropped sticks and generally prepare themselves for the next set. The game finishes with a very quick set of movements done to the tune "Hurihuri". Although the sets of movements given have been numbered consecutively, there is in fact no particular order in which the sets should follow one another, although it is usual to progress from the simple to the more complex. There are, of course, variations to the movements and players can make up their own as they go along.

PATTERN

NOTE: Initially the sticks are laid on the ground in front of the players. On the command "kia rite (be ready) the sticks are picked up and brought to the ready position. As the sticks come the vertical, they are rapped on the ground. The leader gives "toru wha" (one two) and the chorus begins, followed by the first set, then a chorus followed by another set, and so on. Each movement occupies one beat of music, except where sticks are tapped twice or flipped twice, in which case each tap or flip takes one beat.

CHORUS (Tune, "E aue!")

There are three movements, each one carried out on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd beats of the bar, respectively.

- 1 Sticks are rapped on the ground from the vertical position
- 2 Each player knocks his own sticks together
- 3 Each player knocks his sticks against those of his partner.

SET NO. 1-THE SINGLE THROW (Tune, "E Papa")

There are three movements which are continued over and over again until the tune finishes.

- 1 Sticks are tapped on the ground
- 2 Each player knocks his own sticks together
- 3 Each player throws his RIGHT stick to his partner and with his RIGHT hand catches his ptrs stick.

Movements 1 and 2 are then repeated and then movement 3, but this time it is the LEFT stick which is thrown instead of the RIGHT. (Variation for chorus).

SET NO. 2: THE DOUBLE THROW-(Tune, "E Papa")

- 1 Sticks are tapped on the ground
- 2 Sticks are tapped together

continued...

- 3 Player throws his RIGHT stick to his ptr and catches the Ptr's RIGHT stick.
- 4 Player throws his LEFT stick to his ptr and catches at the same time the ptr LEFT stick.

SET NO. 3: DOUBLE DOUBLE THROW (Tune, "E Papa")

This consists of six movements and is merely an extension of Set # 2.

- 1-4 As for Set No 2
- 5-6 Movements 3 and 4 of Set No 2 repeated.

SET NO 4: IN AND OUT (Tune "Maku e")

- 1-2 As for previous sets
- 3 Each player throws both his sticks together and catches those of his ptr. When they throw, one set of sticks pass between the other.

SET NO 5: SINGLE BOX (Tune, "E PAPA")

- 1-2 As for previous sets
- 3 Each player throws his RIGHT stick to his ptrs LEFT and his LEFT stick to his own RIGHT in a box pattern.

SET NO 6: REVERSE BOX

- 1-2 As for previous sets
- 3 As for Set 5
- 4 Reverse. Each player throws his LEFT stick to his ptr RIGHT and his own RIGHT stick to his LEFT hand making two box-like patterns.

SET NO 7: THE FLIP (Tune, "E Papa")

- 1 Sticks tapped on the ground on the players RIGHT, head.
- 2 Both sticks are flipped over and the other ends caught.
- 3 Sticks are tapped on ground, heel.
- 4 As for movements 3 of Set No 2
- 5 Sticks tapped on the ground on the player's LEFT, head.
- 6 Both sticks are flipped over and the other ends caught.
- 7 Sticks tapped on the ground, heel
- 8 As 4 above but with the LEFT exchanged.

SET NO 8: DOUBLE FLIP

- 1 Sticks tapped on ground on the player's RIGHT, head
- 2-3 Both sticks are flipped over twice
- 4 Sticks tapped on ground, heel
- 5 As for movement 3 of Set No 2
- 6 Sticks tapped on the ground on the player's LEFT, head
- 7-8 Both sticks flipped over twice
- 9 Sticks tapped on the ground, heel
- 10 As 5 above but with the LEFT exchanged.

FINAL SET:HURIHURI (Tune, "Hurihuri")

Hurihuri concludes the game after the final chorus. It is taken at a considerably faster tempo than the other tunes and if no sticks are

dropped makes a spectacular finish.

- 1-2 As for previous sets
- 3-4 As for movement 3 & 4 of Set No 2
- 5-end Repeat 3-4 until end of song
- End Sticks are rapped on the ground in a vertical position to signify end of game.

NOTE: Some of the foregoing movements may be performed by players in groups of four. In effect, the players work in two pairs, one of the pairs inserting extra beats into their opening movement of each set to ensure that, when they throw, their sticks do not collide in mid-air with the sticks of the other pair.