

A BRIEF NOTE ON BARTON'S DEFINITIONS OF THE hiri
TERMS baditauna, doritauna, AND darima

Tom Dutton
Australian National University

In his classical account of the hiri Captain F.R. Barton¹ describes how the two principal actors in hiri trading were the baditauna, or what we might call for present purposes the captain of the trading vessel or lagatoi (also spelled lakatoi in the literature) and the doritauna, or the vice-captain, and how, when the lagatoi was completed and the baditauna and doritauna were establishing themselves aboard, their mats were spread out end to end "invariably on the darima (outrigger) side of the lakatoi" (p.102).

However, despite his best efforts and the general excellence of his work, Barton was apparently forced to publish his account without a proper or satisfactory explanation of the origin or meaning of the three terms just mentioned: baditauna, doritauna and darima. In particular he could not explain satisfactorily why the baditauna was called that, and not some other equally good name like biaguna or raho bada or something similar which connotes the relevant status,² nor similarly why the doritauna is called that and not something else, like hakahatauna for example, to denote someone in a lesser status, or helping position.³ Instead he was forced to leave us with the following very uncertain explanations:

"baditauna...the correct translation of [this]...is probably 'the man who originates' or 'the causing man'...and [the] doritauna (a satisfactory translation of this term is not deducible; it may mean 'top man')...[so that] these two men may therefore be termed 'the man at the root' and 'the man at the top'." (p.100)

Likewise he could not explain why one side of a lagatoi and not the other is called the darima side. The best he was able to do was to point to the fact that darima has something to do with outriggers on ordinary canoes but he could not see why that particular word should be used for one side of the lagatoi, for, as he points out (in footnote 1 to p.102), "the lakatoi being a raft has no outrigger" in the ordinary sense of the word.

For some reason (and we will return to this below) he did not pursue these questions further at the time and it was only on a recent visit to Port Moresby that I decided to see what the Motu themselves have to say about them. I was surprised by the simplicity of their explanation, so much so that I thought it worth recording in this note, partly so that it does not get lost in some footnote to a larger publication and partly for its instructional value. Their explanation

was simply this:

In constructing a lagatoi the several hulls are aligned so that what were once the bases (or badi-na) of the trees out of which the hulls were made all point in the same direction, or, in other words, are all at the one end and the tops (or dori-na) are all together at the other end. Thus there is an easily recognizable badi end to a lagatoi (or any other canoe for that matter) and an equally recognizable dori end. Since the badi ends of hulls are usually larger in size than the dori ends and the badi-na of anything is the 'base, basis, or foundation' of it, it is easy to appreciate why the captain (in our terms), or baditauna, is naturally associated with that end. Indeed, that end is regarded as his. The doritauna is likewise named after the other, or dori, end and that end is regarded as his. Once these facts are appreciated the darima side is then, naturally, the left-hand side of the craft when one is looking along, or 'up', it from the bow (or badi end), just as the darima, or outrigger, is fastened to the left-hand side of ordinary canoes when looking at them from the bow.

Thus there is no great mystery about the origin or meaning of these terms. They are related directly to the manufacture of canoes in general as Barton somehow felt they were, as the last part of the quotation given above indicates, but he just could not put his finger on the connection at the time. Looking at it from this distance the explanation of why he could not appears to be related to, if not directly caused by, his focussing on one aspect of the meaning of badi in baditauna to the exclusion of another.

Thus badi has what we might call a basic meaning and an extended one. The basic meaning is 'the base or root end of a stem, trunk or tree' and the extended meaning 'the cause or reason of/for something'. Now since the baditauna is the person who initiates the construction of a lagatoi it is easy to see why he might logically be called the baditauna, that is, 'causer or originator'. But when we come to doritauna there are no such parallel aspects. There is only one meaning of dori, the basic meaning of 'top of something (such as a tree)' or 'the source of a river'. There is no extended meaning, at least not a readily apparent one, to match that of 'cause' or 'reason' of badi. Consequently if one begins by focussing on the extended meaning, as Barton's definitions indicate that he did, one could quite easily fail to appreciate the connection between the basic meanings of the terms and their relationship to the structure of a lagatoi, especially if one were focussing on the actual sequence of events underlying the organization of a hiri (in which the decision to build a lagatoi necessarily precedes the actual construction of it) as Barton was, and if one were doing one's elicitation in some location away from an actual craft of some sort. Herein lies an important methods lesson for all fieldworkers!

NOTES

1. This account appears in C.G. Seligmann's The Melanesians of British New Guinea (Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp.96-120.
2. These terms are defined in the following way in Percy Chatterton's revised edition of R. Lister-Turner and J.B. Clark's Dictionary of the Motu Language of Papua (Sydney, n.d.): biagu-na 'master, owner'; and raho bada 'term of respect, to old man'.
3. Hekahatauna literally means 'help.man/person', that is, 'assistant'.

INDEX

This account appears in U.S. Government's The Relocation of
Foreign Born (Public Knowledge Intensive Series, 1950)
pp. 105-110.

These items are defined in the following way in terms
of the author's revised edition of R. H. H. and U.S.
The University of the Pacific (1950) (1950)
to provide a better understanding of the
movement of the mass.

These items are defined in some help manuscript, pp. 105-110
1950.