

have formed from the liquor. This they steep for two days in sea-water, and then wash it with fresh water. And the result is the best paste in the world, from which they make whatever they choose, cakes of sorts and excellent bread, of which I friar Odoric have eaten: for all these things have I seen with mine own eyes. And this kind of bread is white outside, but inside it is somewhat blackish.<sup>1</sup>

By the coast of this country towards the south is the sea called the Dead Sea, the water whereof runneth ever towards the south, and if any one falleth into that water he is never found more. [And if the shipmen go but a little way from the shore they are carried rapidly downwards and never return again. And no one knoweth whither they are carried, and many have thus passed away, and it hath never been known what became of them].<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Though Odoric's account of sago is incorrect, I think it is that of an eye-witness who did not clearly understand what he saw. The palm is a good deal thicker than the coco-palm, but not nearly so tall. The trunk is cut down and lopped; a strip is then removed from the upper side, exposing the pith, which is hewn out with an adze of stone or bamboo. It is then carried to a stream, washed and strained into troughs made of the sago-trunk, and in that the starchy matter deposits. This is packed away in conical baskets made of the sago-leaves (the *sacci de foliis facti* of our author), and this is the raw sago of commerce.

In some parts of New Guinea the sago pith is filled into a house with an open floor, and trampled with water till it flows through into troughs made of the sago-trunk which are placed below. It is thus intelligible how the friar supposed the sago to flow in a starchy state (*in modum collæ*) from the stem.

The Chinese at Singapore pass this crude sago through several additional processes to produce the granulated sago of our markets.

Raw sago boiled with a little water forms a starchy mass eaten with chopsticks. More commonly it is baked into cakes in small clay pans. Fresh from the baking, these are said to taste like hot rolls.

The total cost of a sago tree, and labour in preparing the sago, is about twelve shillings; and this feeds a man twelve months. But Mr. Wallace justly remarks that this excessive cheapness is no blessing. Industry is not acquired; labour is distasteful, and sago eaters have generally the most wretched of huts and clothing. (*Wallace in J. R. G. S.*, xxxii; *Journ. of Ind. Archip.*, iii, 288).

<sup>2</sup> From PAL. De Barros says that the natives believed that whoever