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Welcome aboard!

Port Moresby was for many years a minor outpost in the British Empire. In the past 30 years it has developed into a vibrant urban centre, a hub of the South Pacific and the capital of a sovereign nation. John Brooksbank in his research of the early settlers of Port Moresby gives an account of how the first impressions of Captain Moresby and Bronislaw Malinowski, were influenced by the prevailing weather. He writes also of the historic buildings still standing.

A serene setting is a major attraction of a guest house at Woitape, an hour's flying time from Port Moresby, in the Owen Stanley Ranges. Liz Thompson describes how visitors enjoy a welcome contrast to the heat of Port Moresby.

An aspect of our culture less well known outside PNG, traditional healing, is described in this issue by Robert Simms.

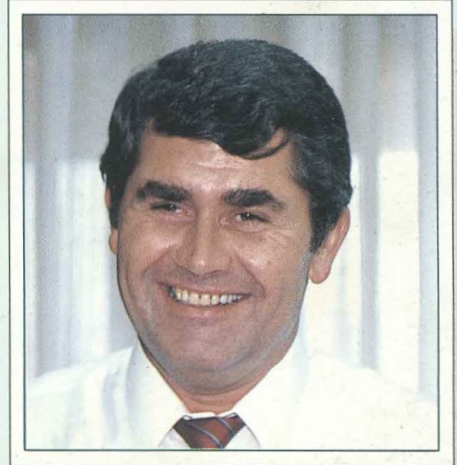
Have a pleasant flight!

Dieter Seefeld
Chief Executive & General Manager
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Cover: Young Simbari dancer, from Eastern Highlands Province (see page 33). Photograph by Ron & Georgie McKie.



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Surfing the Monsoon Coast

Story and photographs by Kevin & Trisha Glennon



Left Taking off with a north coast breaker.



We were totally surprised. Pounding waves were breaking on a reef 50 metres in front of the village. Out on the reef, in the surf zone, youngsters were vying for waves. That morning we had driven two hours west along the coast and seen promising signs of surf at the few glimpses we had of the ocean. But, here, we had not expected to compete with Papua New Guineans. We stood and watched the local children for a while. They swam out

to the reef towing short pieces of flat timber, turned where the waves were breaking on the shallow reef, gave one or two kicks to catch the wave, and rode all the way to the sandy shore on their bellies.

After thinking about it, it all seemed logical. The Polynesians of the central Pacific had surfed for hundreds of years. That was where it all began. Captain James Cook, the 18th Century explorer and navigator, wrote at length in his journals about surfing as practised by the Hawaiian

Islanders when he sailed there in 1778. Now nothing seemed more appropriate than the Melanesians of the western Pacific having fun in the surf, with their own unique surfboards and wave-riding style.

Later that morning the two of us surfed on the nearby point break. Velvety green hills rolled down through a thin band of coconut trees and gardens and then dropped across a long white sand beach into the sparkling Pacific Ocean. I kept pinching myself to make sure I was not





dreaming, that the glassy, overhead-sized waves were real.

The only negative aspect of surfing in PNG is the sharpness of most coral reefs and the ease with which cuts get infected. Tropical waters over coral reefs do provide, however, clean water and an abundance of sea life. Small fish are visible on the reef, dolphins often make their presence known, and occasionally startling things happen. On our second day, an eagle ray leapt out of the water, its long tail well clear of the surface, less than 30 metres away. Thankfully sharks, when they do appear, are small reef sharks of no threat to surfers (unless you happen to have a freshly caught, bleeding tuna tucked in your boardshorts).

We were two hours west of Wewak and that first afternoon it rained heavily, clearing later in the day. The monsoon coast is subject to two weather systems. The months of May to September are dominated



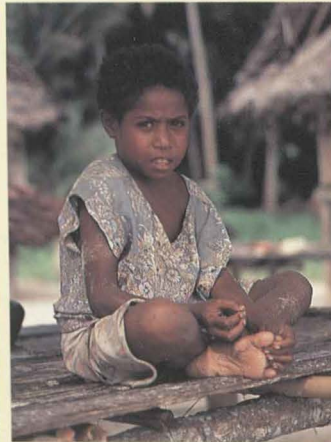
Facing page, centre & bottom Local youngsters head for shore on homemade boards. **This page, above** North coast beach-side village. **left** A shallow, fast reef break close to shore.





by the south-east trade winds, and no swell. The north-west monsoon brings moist air, down from the equator, during the months of December to March. PNG's north coast picks up ocean swells during this latter season. The best conditions occur when intense storms are located well north of PNG and the waves consolidate and straighten into smooth regular swells as they travel south. Locally, light winds, or winds blowing from the shore, are best.

A friend who surfs and flies aircraft as a hobby has the swell directions and size well sorted out for the entire north coast of mainland PNG. The coast around Vanimo picks up the biggest swells. Further east from Vanimo the swell intensity is lessened by the influence of offshore islands. The Hermit and Ninihgo Group and Manus Island interrupt the swell more the further you travel east along the coast. In Wewak the surf is also affected by the nearby offshore islands although when storm swells are



Centre Glassy sea at a point break, ideal for surfing. **above left** North coast village girl. **above right** Two of the village youngsters who ride the surf with home-made boards.

running the waves can be still well overhead in size.

Our trip along the coast west of Wewak revealed promising surf breaks though generally the wind was unfavorable, causing choppy conditions. We had more luck east of Wewak with good breaks and offshore winds at least for a few hours each morning.

That first night on the coast we stayed in the village with the permission of the elders. On arrival in the morning it had been hard to find anyone except the young children. Parents

and adolescents were off in the gardens or otherwise engaged. The village appeared preoccupied and we were hardly noticed. In the late afternoon, however, the place changed; parents and children sat around fires cooking the evening meal, and a pleasant sea breeze flew in, cooling everything down. The community relaxed. We sat and talked and enjoyed the hospitality. Throughout the evening we could hear the surf crashing on the reef out front, holding promise for the next day.



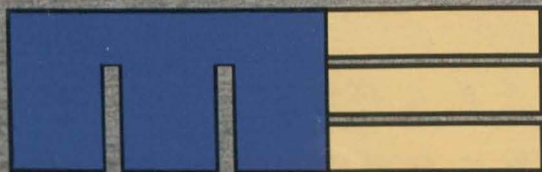
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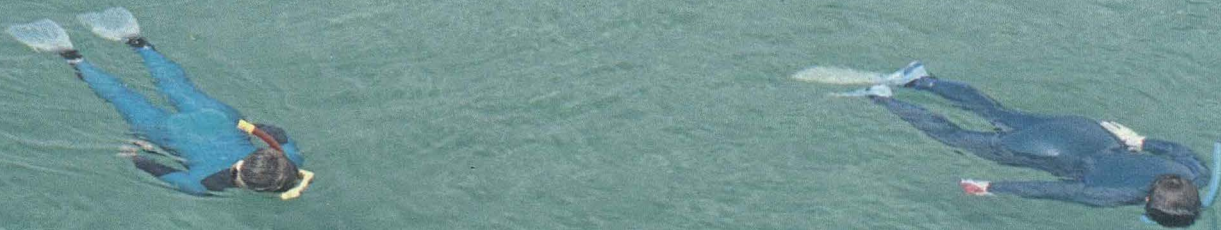
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Send in the CLOWNS



Story by Danielle Amyot
Photographs by Pat Manly





In 1987 Max Benjamin, owner of Walindi, mentioned some strange little clownfish he had found. Living by themselves in the sand, they were like nothing he had seen before. The fish were in the lagoon at Schuman Island, not far from Talasea. The sandy lagoon floor was not the usual habitat for this species.

Sea anemones and clownfish are residents of coral reefs, living in an intimate relationship. The anemones are solitary animals, living attached to rocks or other hard surfaces. Their oral cavity is surrounded by tentacles studded with stinging cells which are used to capture prey or for defence. Within these cells are structures called nematocysts, similar to microscopic harpoons. When stimulated to fire, a tubule shoots out and wraps around or penetrates the prey. Many of these are toxic.

Anemonefishes (also called clownfish because of their bright costumes) make their home among the tentacles of the anemone, with an uncanny ability to avoid being stung. They do this by gradually increasing contact with the anemone, coating their bodies with mucus from the anemone. The anemone recognises its own mucus and will not sting the fish. Only clownfish have this ability to relate to the anemone.

As I drifted over the lagoon, I was surprised to discover beneath me a small brown anemone about 200mm in diameter, sitting out on its own in the sand in less than two metres water. It was a Haddon's anemone (*Stichodactyla haddoni*) and among its tentacles were a family of black and white panda clowns (*Amphiprion polymnus*). I watched the little community from the surface for a while, then gently dived down for a closer look.

Left Panda clownfish stay close to their host anemone, their only shelter on the sandy lagoon floor, as the author swims overhead.



Left On reefs, clownfish have many places to hide. **top left** Divers relax on Schuman island. **top right** Panda clownfish show aggression to warn off perceived threat.

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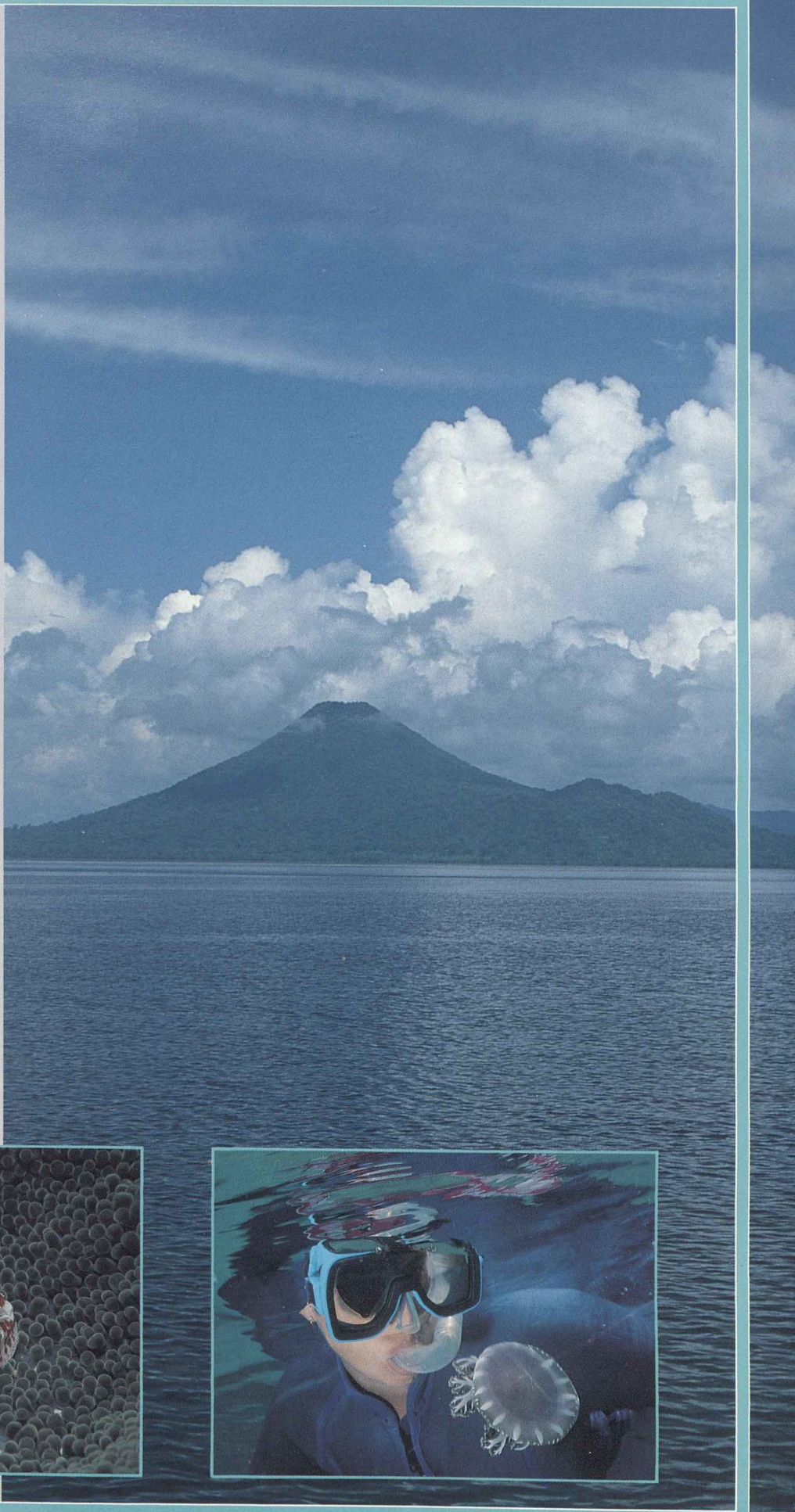
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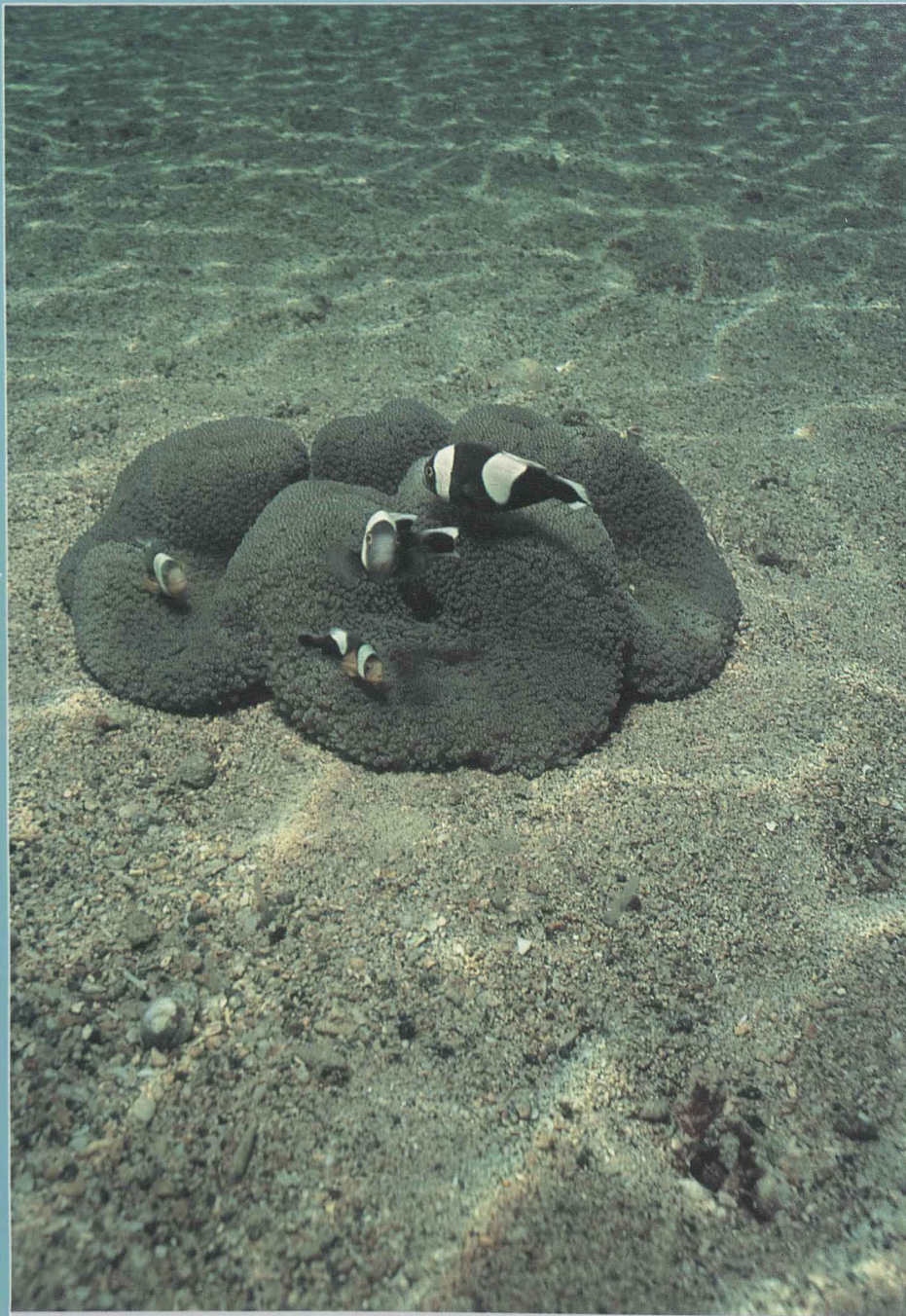
Seeing such a large creature so close to their home sent them into a panic. They darted out, trying to drive me away. There were two larger fish, which I took to be the breeding male and female pair. They were about the same size, which is unusual, as female clownfishes are usually noticeably larger than males. The advantage of this size difference lies in the unusual habitat.

These particular anemones are sand-dwelling, and withdraw into the sand when disturbed. With no coral for shelter close at hand, the anemonefish cannot slip into a crevice to await the passing of danger. Instead, they must elude their predators by erratic swimming patterns or fleeing long distances to shelter. Consequently, males are larger and are able to defend themselves and their mates.

As we prepared to photograph the little group, one clownfish disappeared into the mouth of the anemone. This astonished me as I had not seen this at all in any other clownfish. After a few moments, the fish popped out again, completely unharmed. And sure enough, whenever we got too close, the clownfish would dive into their hiding place for another 20 seconds or so. This behavior also surprised field scientists when they first observed it and the first reports were not believed.

Right *Tranquil Kimbe Bay is a diver's delight.*
below left *Porcelain crab moves across anemone tentacles.* **below right** *Jellyfish drifts by a skin diver.*





Panda clowns have other unique features, stemming from their unusual sandy environment. Whereas other clownfish species lay their egg clutch on the coral, panda clowns colonising sand-dwelling anemones have no coral reef on which to lay their eggs. This tenacious little fish solves the problem by pushing objects like small rocks over the sand back to the nesting site next to the anemone, sometimes over a considerable distance. As with other anemonefishes, up to 1,000 eggs are laid and fertilised on the nest. About 3-4mm in length, the eggs are possessively guarded by the male. He will fan the eggs with his pectoral fins, and remove dead eggs and debris with his mouth. Potential egg-eaters such as wrasses are aggressively chased away.

Getting to know the clownfish, I have also become familiar with their neighbors. Porcelain crabs live on a variety of anemones, often sharing one with the clownfish. The crab lives by scavenging small tidbits of food left by the clownfish. It filter feeds, using small net-like filaments with which it scoops out plankton which it then feeds into its mouth.

False stonefish are also members of the community, lying in wait for small fish to swim within range of their waiting mouths. And beautiful patterned jellyfish pay flying visits as they glide past in the current.

Max Benjamin's 'funny little fish', which are now better known and understood, have since been identified in areas throughout South-East Asia.

Above Mature panda clownfish pair with two young offspring.
below left Male cleaning a clutch of eggs.
below right Author moves in for a close-up photograph.



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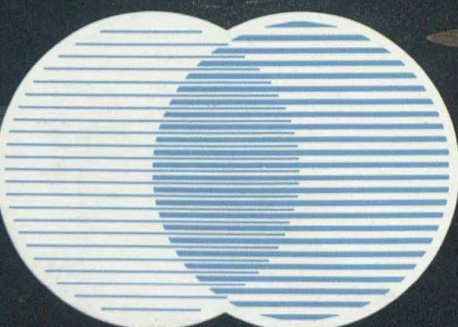


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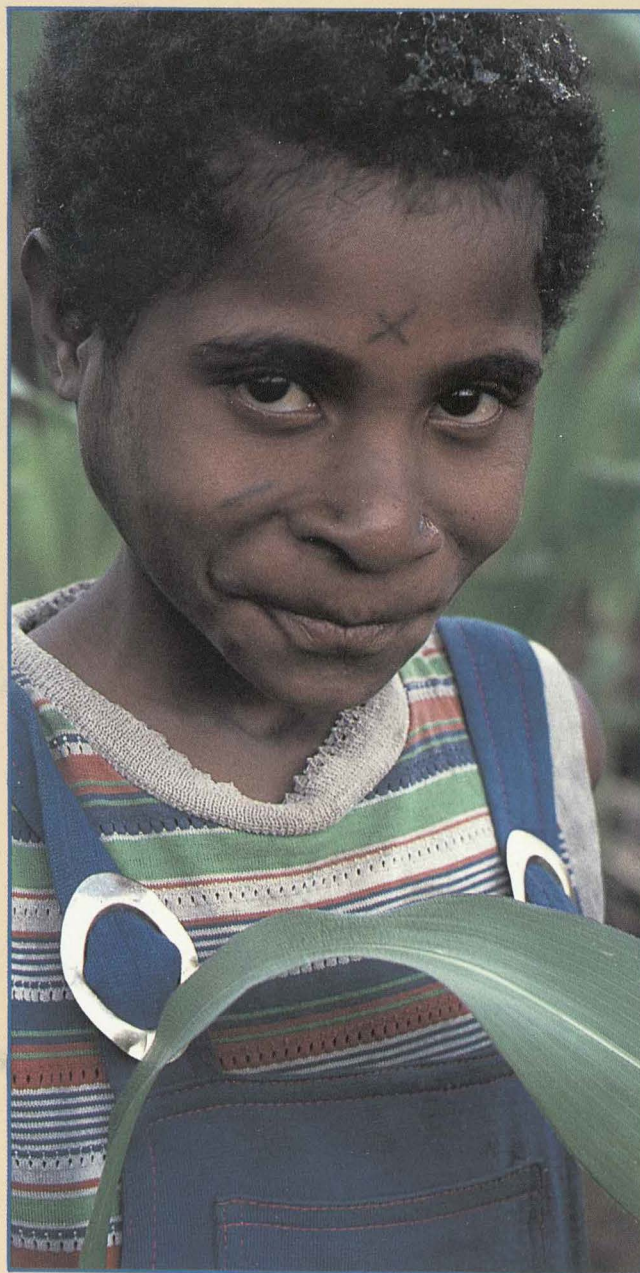


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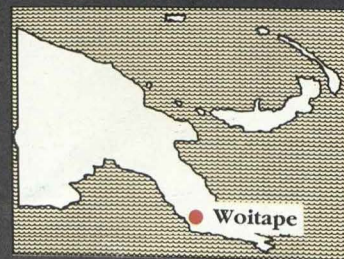


MOUNTAIN



RETREAT

Story and photographs by Liz Thompson





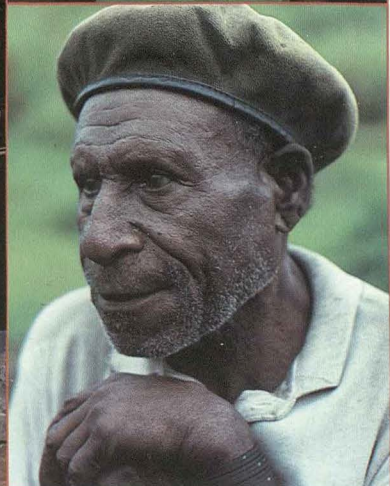
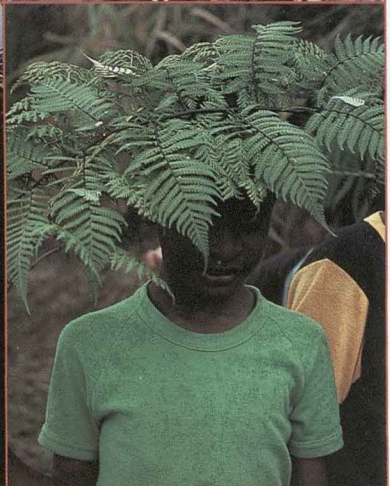
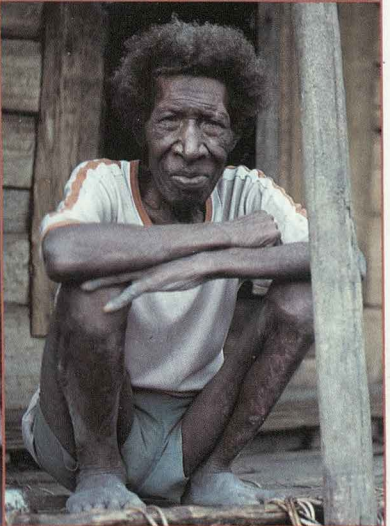
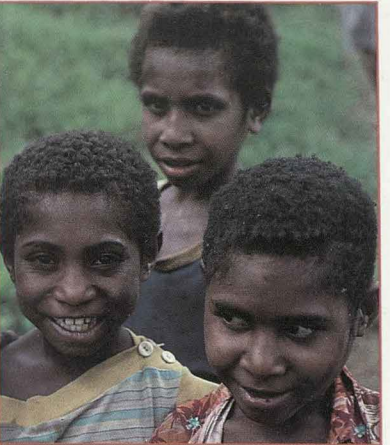
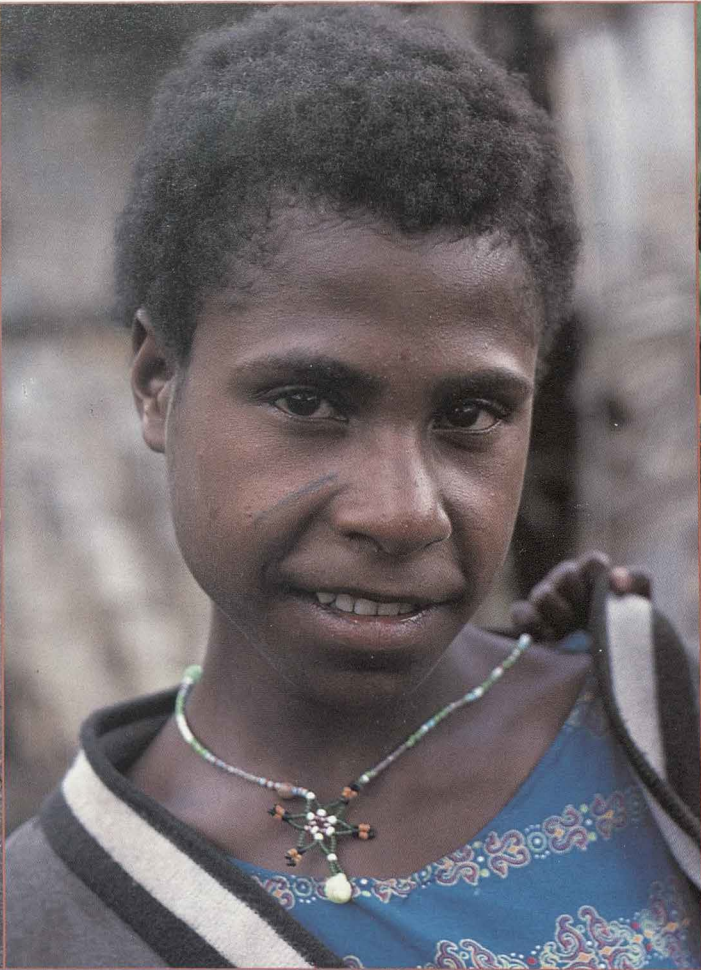
Many Papua New Guinean residents find relief from the dry season heat experienced in coastal areas by travelling up into the cooler highlands at weekends. One spot, tucked away, about one hour's flying time from Port Moresby and in the midst of the rolling green valleys of the Owen Stanley Ranges, is Woitape.

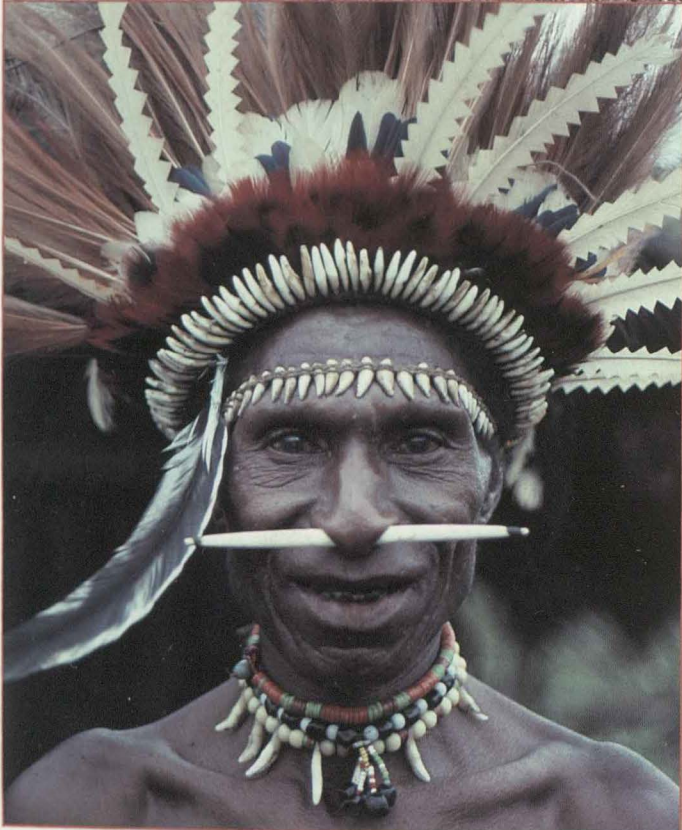
Flying into Woitape, some aircraft on pleasure flights initially land at Tapini, an extraordinary airstrip carved into a hillside which runs uphill into a sheer face. On take-off, aircraft speed downhill and appear to drop off the end of the runway which ends at a sheer dropaway of 350 metres. At Woitape, the landing strip sits in a remote glen, around which the hillsides are dotted with tiny village gardens. At the small airstrip, the aircraft stops almost outside the Owen Stanley Lodge which is the destination of most visitors to this area.

It offers another of Papua New Guinea's many diverse faces to the visitor. Away from the heat of the coast, the lodge provides an ideal weekend escape. The hotel, its ceiling covered in animal hides, is unlike any other in the country.

Large sofas and armchairs are gathered around a raging log fire. Strawberry Daiquiris made from fresh strawberries grown in the region are usually on offer.

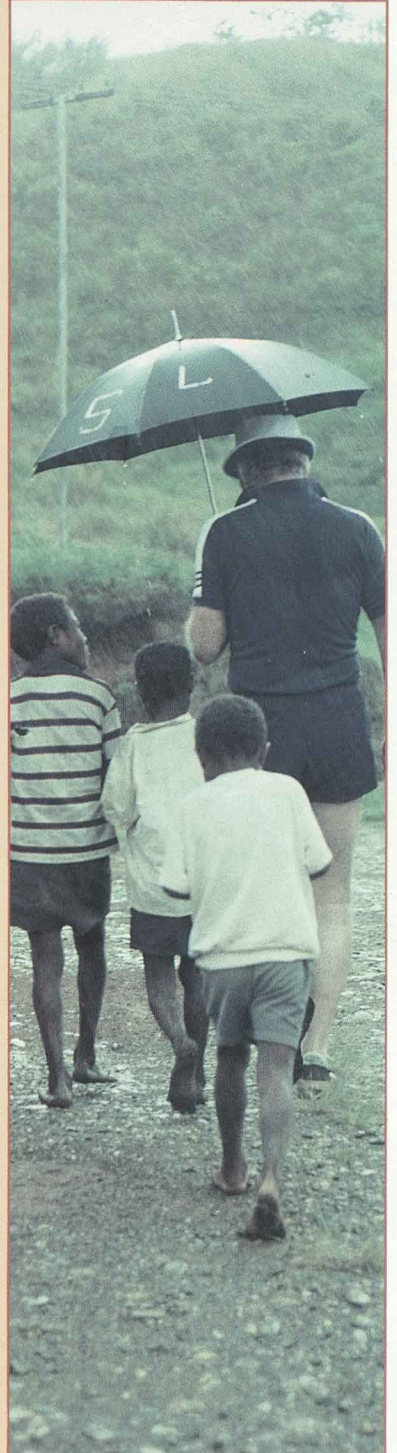
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Relaxed quality of life and tranquil mood of Woitape is reflected in the faces of the residents, seen at work, rest and play.



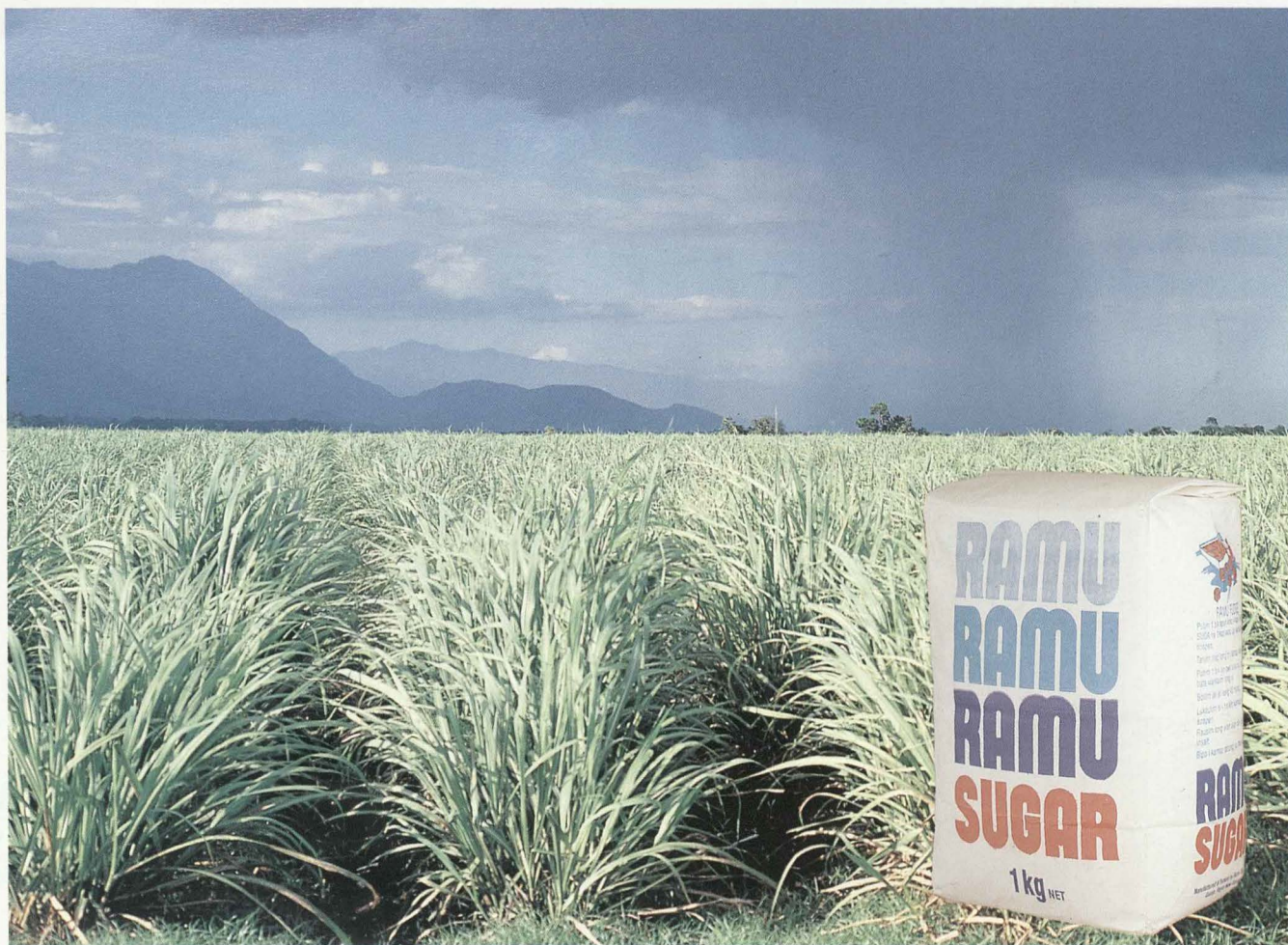


Warm quilts cover the beds in this mountain retreat. And perhaps one of the most appealing things on offer is the extraordinary nouvelle cuisine. On arrival, I and other guests were greeted with large jars of freshly squeezed lemon and mandarin juice. While we sat by the fire, we were provided with endless cups of tea and coffee, home-made cakes, and biscuits. The end of an exquisite three-course meal in the evening was topped off with blackberry ice cream and home-made chocolate leaves, Highlands coffee and liqueurs.

When guests tire of reading by the fire and eating beautiful food there are numerous pathways and walks they can explore in the surrounding areas. While walking on one of the main paths around the base of the valley we visited a small school in which the children showed us their gardens and ran with us sheltering their heads from the rain with large ferns they grabbed from trees and roadside vegetation. Footpaths are cut through some of the stunning forest and villagers display bilums and local artefacts for sale outside their huts. Whether guests want to simply sit and indulge themselves in the heat of an open fire, good books and cuisine or want to trek in the valley and meet local people, Waitape offers all this. It is hard to believe that this idyllic spot, so cool and green, is tucked away only an hour from the heat and bustle of Port Moresby.



Above left and right Schoolchildren like to share Waitape with visitors. **left** Western garb is forsaken in favor of bilas (finery) on special occasions. **Top right** Haute cuisine is one of the attractions at Owen Stanley Lodge.



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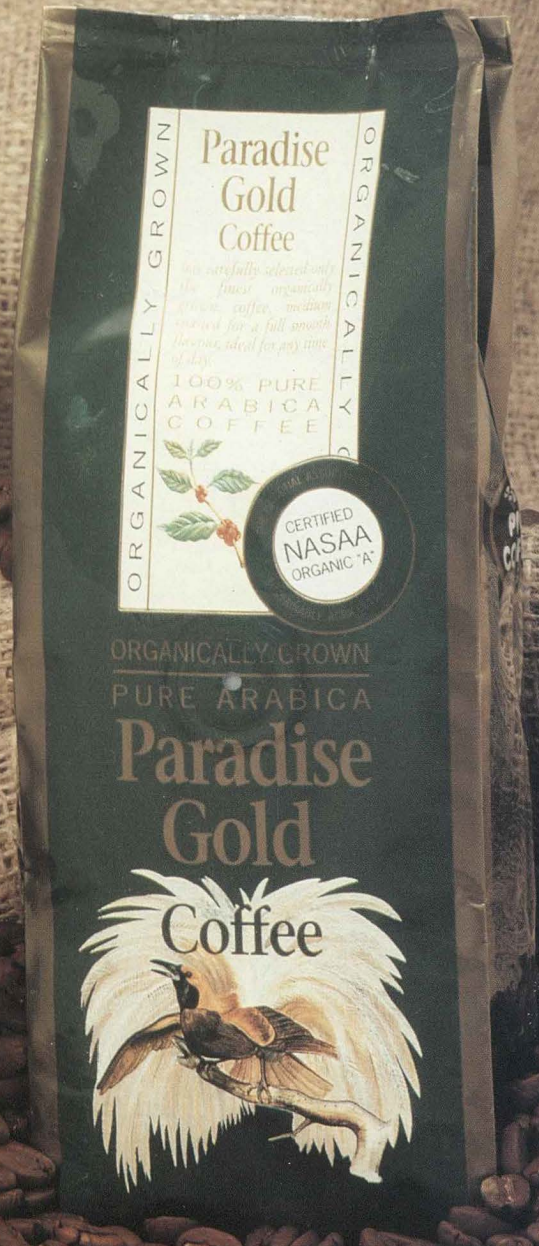
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Once a Colonial Outpost

Story by John Brooksbank

During the past 30 years Port Moresby has developed from a quiet colonial outpost into a bustling metropolis. Unlike other sleeper South Pacific capitals the traffic here never seems to stop.

Significantly perhaps, a jail was the first building the colonial administration constructed on the East Granville township site in Port Moresby in 1886.

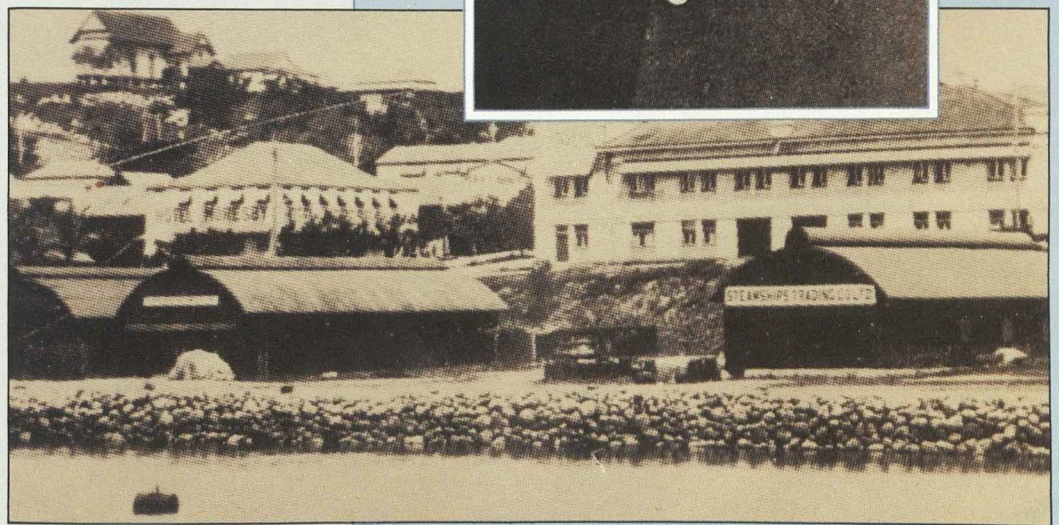
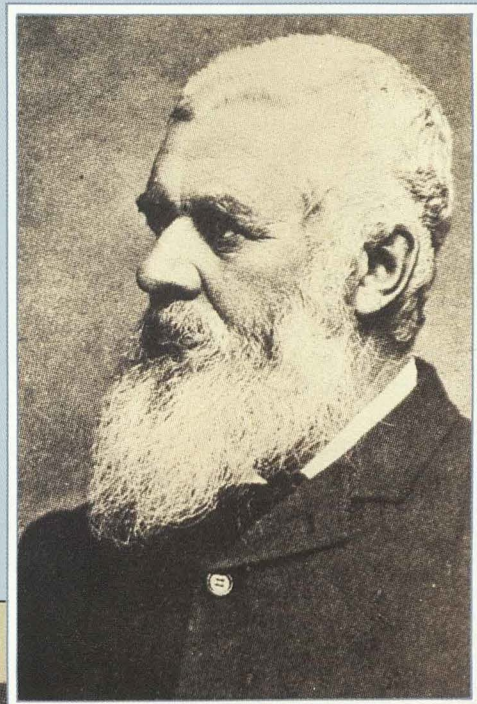
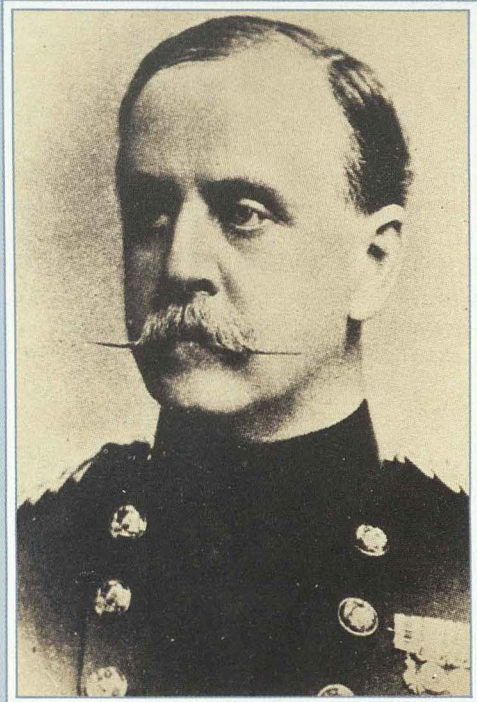
Public servants of the time often found the journey back to their homes in West Granville, near present day Hanuabada, along the bridle track around the base of Touaguba Hill and across the Konedobu mangrove swamp, tedious and opted to cross Fairfax Harbor by boat. The use of the name Granville, after the British Foreign Minister of the time, lapsed as Port Moresby gradually expanded as the seat of government for the Territory of British New Guinea.

The jail has now gone and the first wharf replaced but the original grid layout of downtown Port Moresby remains in the saddle between Paga and Touaguba hills. Despite the growth of concrete and steel highrise towerblocks along the streets named after early government officers, a few of the older buildings remain. These include the distinctively turreted Burns Philp store and the Post Office - both of which were on a grassy slope leading to the water's edge. The oldest structure however is the tiny

wooden Ela Church, now dwarfed between the ANZ Bank and United Church buildings.

The natural break in the reef and huge enclosed bay had been discovered on 21 February, 1873, during the surveying expedition of Captain John Moresby in the paddle steamer HMS Basilisk. He anchored off Hanuabada village, named the passage after his vessel, the harbor after his father, and described the place to be "girt with mountains and beautiful with its lake-like harbour".

The safe haven Captain Moresby had found had been a centre of trade for hundreds of years before the coming of the Europeans. Large double-hulled seagoing canoes, known as lakatois, from nearby villages, loaded with clay pots, assembled at Hanuabada prior to departing on often treacherous 'hiri' voyages.



Top Major General Sir Peter Scratchley, Special Commissioner of British New Guinea, 1884-85. centre John Douglas, Special Commissioner, 1886-88. above Stanley Esplanade, 1925.

These traditional journeys westwards across the Gulf of Papua were made annually to trade for sago. The advent of white settlement made Port Moresby a port of call for itinerant traders of beche de mer, copra, trochus and pearl shell.

The first Special Commissioner appointed to look after the affairs of the new colony, Sir Peter Scratchley, chose Port Moresby as the capital. He established his residence and offices on a hillside near the beach at Konedobu, the first but certainly not the last bureaucrat to rule from that part of town.

The East Granville location was chosen as being the healthiest site, with the ocean on both sides and away from the mangrove swamps at Konedobu and behind Hanuabada, where there was concern about the villagers burying their dead in shallow pits.

Opinions of visitors to Port Moresby over the years have depended to a large extent on the season. Captain Moresby was impressed by the green hills he saw during the wet season of 1873. Renowned anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, obviously experiencing the dry season, found it "stony and pitted, littered with all kinds of refuse, a little like a dump sloping down to the sea".

There is no doubt that the early township was not particularly beautiful. The mangrove swamps at Konedobu had yet to be drained and the hills grew only a few scrubby eucalypts. The development of reticulated water supply and the planting of trees in residential suburbs since has gradually improved appearances.

The vestigial city grew

only slowly; in 1897 the 33 permanent residents of the town were overwhelmed by the sudden influx of 400 prospective gold miners. They had arrived in the mistaken belief that there was an easy route across the Owen Stanley range to the Mambare, Gira and Yodda rivers where alluvial gold had been discovered. By the early 1900s the European population had grown to only 64, while main exports were sandalwood, beche de mer, pearl shell, and copra. Rubber and coffee were grown on plantations on the coastal Sogeri plateau.

In 1906 the territory ceased to be a direct possession of the Crown and Port Moresby became the capital of the Australian Territory of Papua. Judge John Hubert Murray was appointed as Lieutenant Governor; his initial intentions of encouraging European settlement resulted in improvements to the capital.

Musgrave Street was substantially upgraded, linking the wharf area to Ela Beach, new administration buildings were built in Hunter Street, the British New Guinea Development Company established itself, while Burns Philp constructed its distinctive head office. Social life revolved around billiards and drinking at the Papua Club, The Papua and Moresby hotels.

For those with less liquid tastes there was a choral society, an arts theatre, a rifle club, the Ela Beach baths, canoe races, and tennis and cricket on the Ela Beach oval, now the site of the International Primary School, as well as occasional horse races along Ela Beach.

The First World War had little impact on the capital. European population was 4500, having increased with

the development of the copper mines at Laloki and the establishment of companies exploring for oil in West Papua.

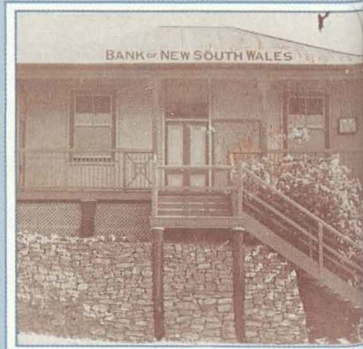
Little happened in the 1920s and 1930s. A few streets were sealed, a road was built to Koki and a power station was opened on Port Road to supply electricity to the increasing number of residences. Public servants apparently preferred Paga Hill while private citizens lived along Ela Beach where an avenue of trees had been planted in anticipation of the town having a rail link to the thriving copper mine community at Tahira.

With the advent of aviation, aircraft landed on Ela Beach until the Pari airstrip was built outside town near Kila Kila village. Soon there were official airmail and regular passenger services between Port Moresby and Australia.

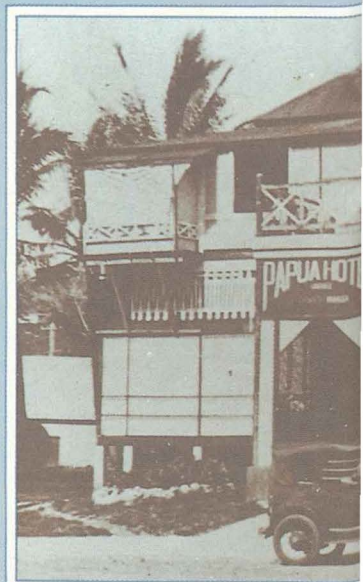
In 1940, Port Moresby still remained essentially a small, quiet and peaceful colonial capital with few luxuries and clear delineation of the role and status of its European and Papuan residents. This situation was shattered completely and forever by the Second World War and its aftermath.

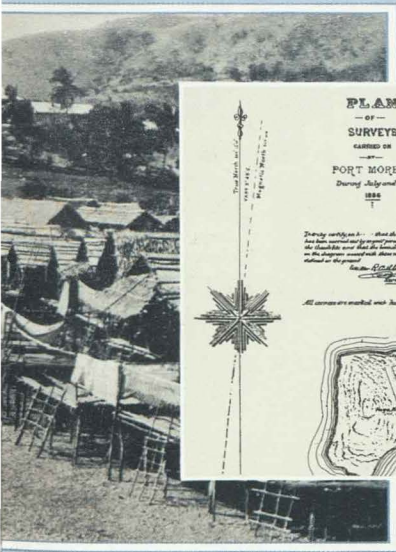
The War changed the quaint country town character of Port Moresby. Most European residents left to be replaced by a huge influx of allied servicemen. The town became one big armed camp with army depots established outside town at Goldie River, Taurama Beach and Taurama on the road to Laloki.

Seven airstrips were built including Seven Mile (Jacksons), Waigani (Wards), Rorona, Bomana and Laloki. A wharf was constructed on Tatana Island together with a



Top left Hanuabada village and London Missionary Society (rear). **top right** Original survey plan. **above** First Bank New South Wales branch, 1910. **right** World War Two military hospital off Scratchley Road. **below, left** Papua Hotel 1928. **below, right** Pacific Place on old Hotel Moresby site.





causeway to join the island to the mainland and a road connecting the wharf areas to airstrips in the Waigani Valley.

Civilian administration was suspended during the war years and the country was run by ANGAU, the Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit. They were housed in a complex of 'temporary' quonset huts at Konedobu that served many

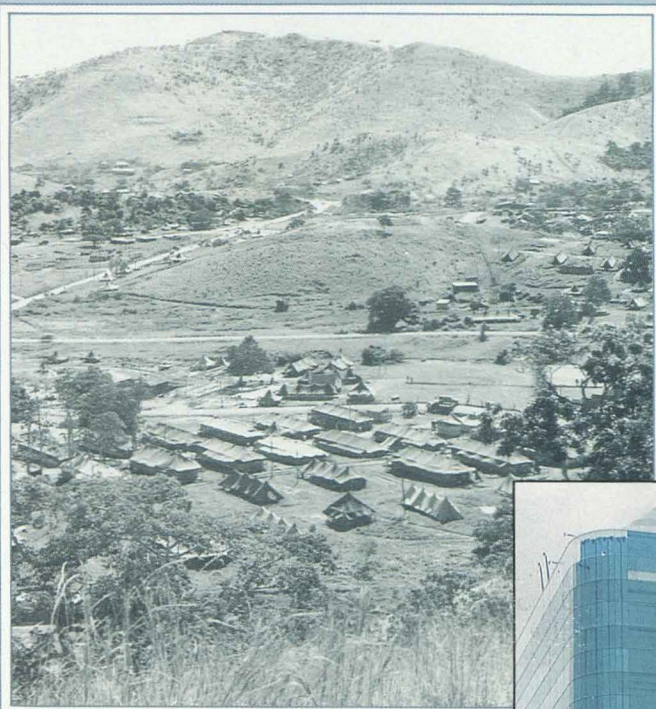
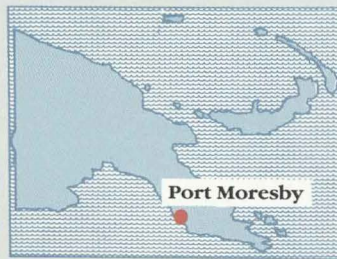
Government Departments until only a few years ago. Minerals and Energy and the Police Department are still to be found there.

Hanuabada had unfortunately burnt down during the war. It was rebuilt in traditional layout and style but using permanent materials such as corrugated iron. Not as picturesque as the original thatch, it was stronger and healthier. It remains much the same today except that now the roofs are adorned with aials and the glow of television sets illuminates the night.

The officers' club on Ela Beach became the home of the library and the RSL Club and, with the passing of the Papua and New Guinea Act in 1949, Port Moresby officially became the capital of the two united Territories. The 1950s saw the start of new suburbs at Boroko and further down the Waigani valley, once the swampy haunt of wild ducks.

The establishment of the University of PNG campus at Waigani, the construction of the Hubert Murray Stadium for the 1969 South Pacific Games and dormitory suburbs at Korobosea, Tokarara and Gerehu extended urbanisation. Building of industrial areas at Gordons and Six Mile as well as the Waigani Government Central Government offices as the new city centre all slowly expanded city limits during the following decades. In 1971 the population was 71,000 but has now swelled to about 250,000, of whom at least a quarter live in squatter settlements.

Today tower blocks continue to sprout in downtown Port Moresby and Waigani matures with Parliament House, the South Pacific Games sports complex and the transfer of most Government departments and overseas embassies almost completed. Port Moresby is truly a nation's capital.



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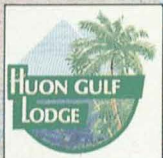
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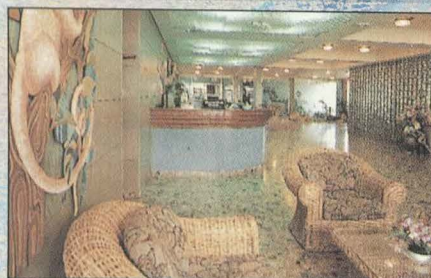
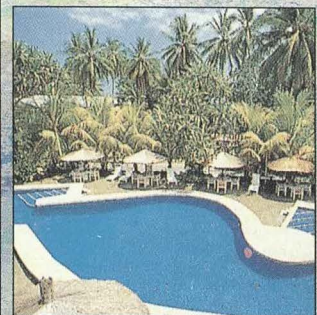


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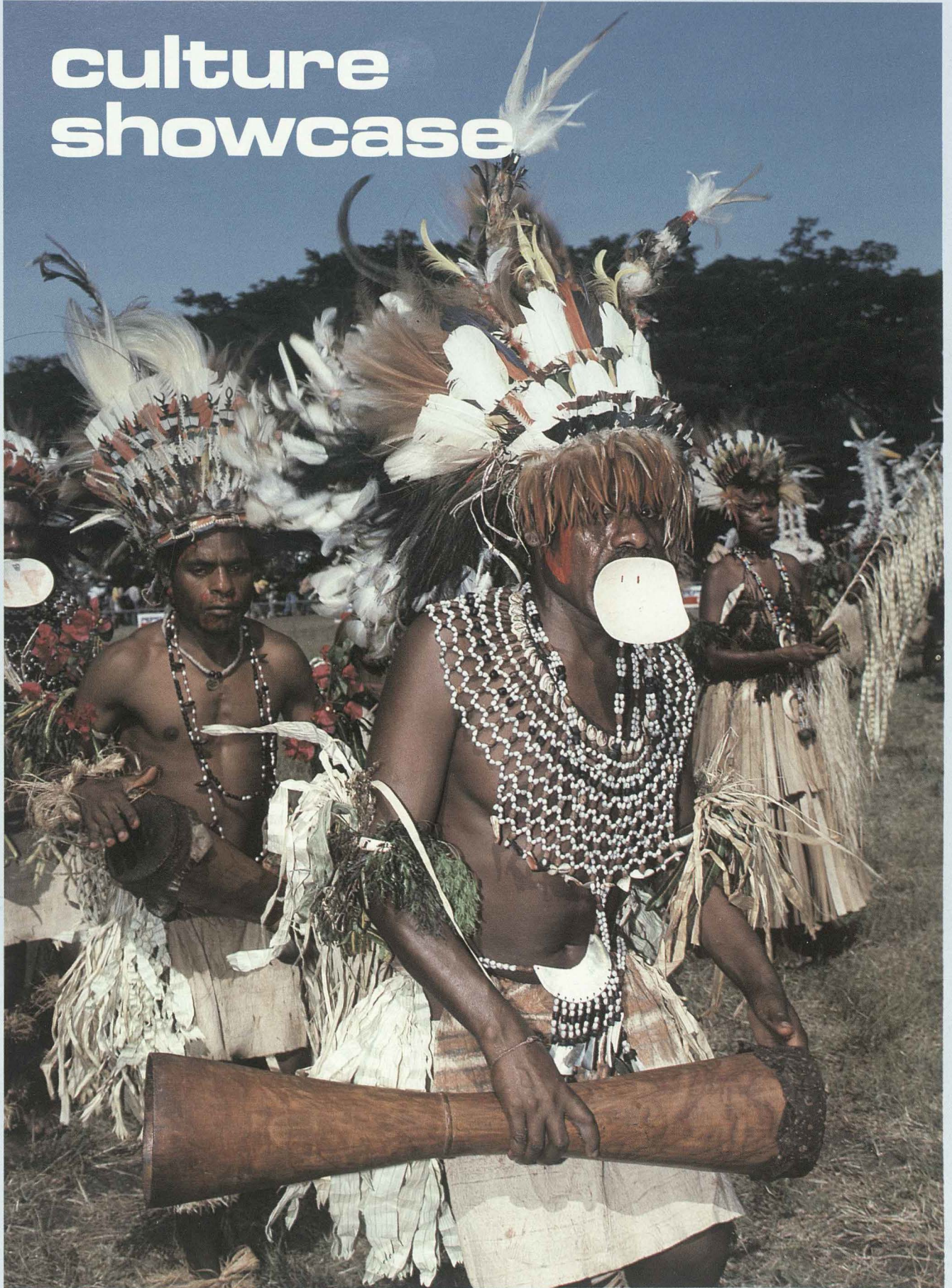
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Story and photographs by Georgie & Ron McKie

culture showcase





Above Nipa group, from Southern Highlands Province. right Bundi woman, from Madang and Chimbu.

Each year, three significant cultural events are held in Port Moresby, the nation's capital. The first is the Independence celebrations which coincide with the hiri moale festival, a celebration of largely Papuan dance and tradition. A re-enactment of the famed hiri trading voyages is the focal point of the festival, with massive lakatois (canoes) returning to Ela Beach as they once did carrying sago and other traded goods.

Second, in July, Sogeri National High School holds its annual Sogeri singsing, in the cooler environment of the Sogeri Plateau, north of Port Moresby. The National High School has teenagers from each province, and the retention of cultural heritage is actively promoted. The students spend weeks rehearsing dances and traditional activities unique to their areas, sharing them with the hundreds of Moresby visitors who flock to this event.



The third significant event in the area is the traditional dancing competition held as part of the annual three-day Port Moresby Show. This competition carries substantial prize money and great kudos for the winners.

From early in the morning until late in the afternoon, the arena reverberates to the deep beating of kundu drums, the sound of stamping feet and a cacophony of song.

Bilas, or decoration, is at its vibrant best as groups vie with each other for the prize money. Great emphasis is placed by the judges on the authenticity of bilas. Christmas tinsel is definitely discouraged.

Port Moresby is the most cosmopolitan of Papua New Guinea's towns. Large groups of people from every province now live in Moresby and the show provides a wonderful opportunity for groups to present song and dance from their home areas. Many of the groups are composed of local residents and some have members who come to town for a few days, to participate and to spend time with 'wantoks' before returning to the village with all the gossip and stories about the 'big smoke'.





Above Opau group, from Kerema, Gulf Province.
 left Mekeo headdress, Central Province. lower, left
 Abi family group, Rai Coast, Madang Province.
 right Mussom group, Morobe Province.

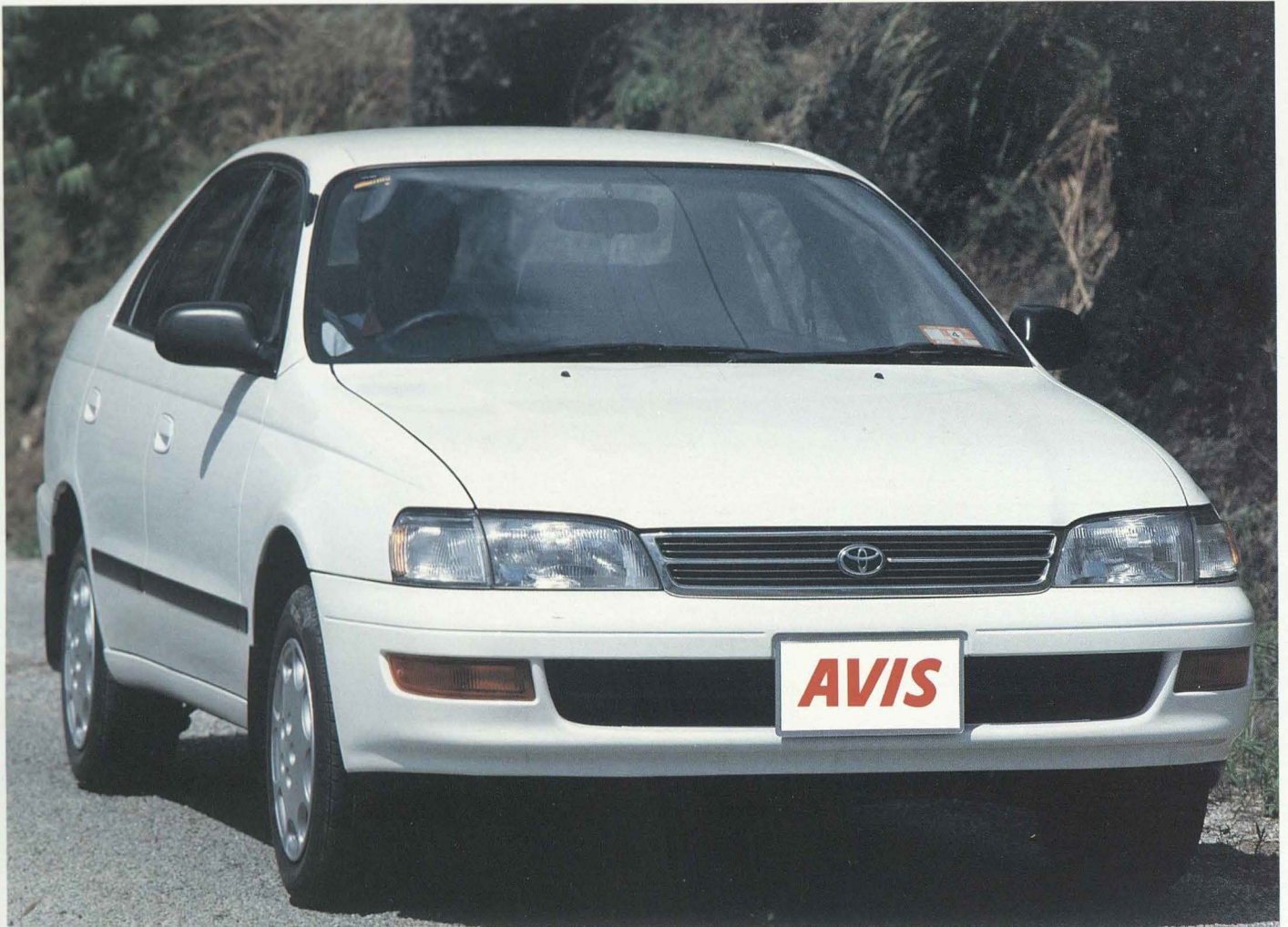


Increasingly, village elders are using the competition as a means of passing on traditions to their young people. It is a common sight to see youth groups, under the watchful eye of two or three elders, who have trained and rehearsed their young charges for this event. It is evident that the young people gain much from participating.

Regular show goes expect to see certain groups which participate every year. Always playing to the crowds are the spectacular Hulis representing the Tari region of the Southern Highlands. Not only do many town-based men dance but it is not unusual for prominent dancers to fly down to ensure that the performance is up to the very high expectations of the elders. Dancing the 'mali', the Hulis work around the perimeter of the arena in two lines, with hand drums beating and a distinctive birdlike cry.



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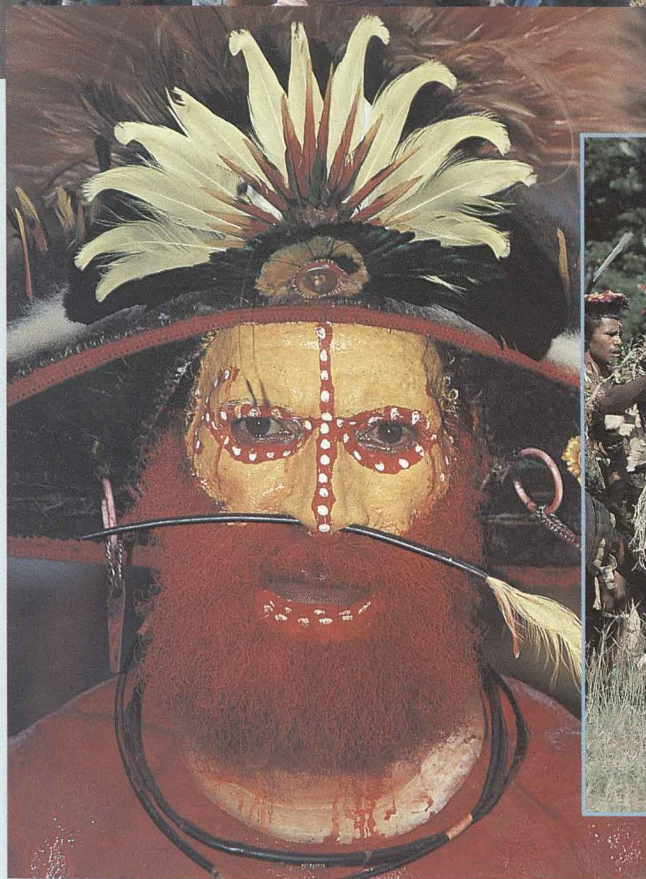
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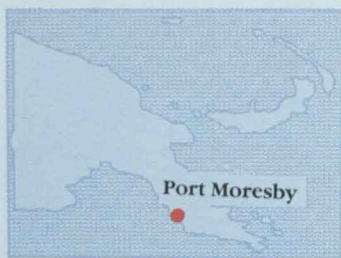
Faces glow with bright yellow, red and blue, and the famous wigs are bedecked with raggiana bird of paradise plumes, ribbontail plumes and parrot feathers. Daisies edge the wigs. Bodies gleam with oil. Each man wears the beak of a hornbill on his back, and exquisitely patterned bark belts anchor bushy tails of green leaves.

Top Spectators get bird's eye view of arena. **above left** Huli man, Tari, Southern Highlands Province. **above right** Ebaddi Bolubolu, Fergusson Island, Milne Bay Province.

Papuan groups feature a disappearing art form. Traditionally, women were tattooed on their faces and all over their bodies. It is possible to see this on older dance group members, but today it is more likely that the body tattoos are the results of felt-tip pens. Nevertheless, the traditional patterns and designs are maintained.

Groups from the Mekeo region make a spectacular entry as the men carry massive head-dresses of cane and feathers. Dancers perform set pieces around these men. The women's skirts, thick and golden, have red and green patterns. Yellow tapa cloth leggings cover the lower legs, and strings of dogs' teeth are layered across chests. The men's faces are painted with fine, intricate yellow and orange patterns. Brilliant yellow flowers and leaves adorn the hair of the girls.

It is also usual for a stunning Western Province group to appear. They are not spectacular in dress, but rather the lack of it. A group of tall, beautifully built young men perform highly disciplined dances, clad only in small bailer shells, and covered with charcoal and oil. Cassowary plumes are worn, almost as crowns, accentuating the height of the group. It is a great pity that these young men rarely win prize money. Perhaps it is the lack of brilliant finery, but they are among the most disciplined and attractive dancers appearing.



Above left Numbyen group, Finschaff, Morobe Province. **above** Kivori group, Bereina, Central Province. **left** Duna group, Lake Kapiago, Southern Highlands Province. **below** Baniara group, Milne Bay Province.



The Show Society offers five categories of competition. Attempts to have a school section is one way in which the society hopes to encourage children into performing. The other categories have the groups competing on a regional basis, covering the Highlands region, the Southern region, the Northern region, and a Best Overall. Each year there seems to be a spectacular new comer. Few would forget the young group of Kokoda teenagers who formed the Meta Community Theatre Group. Their performance, a high energy series of dances, was done after the group had walked across the mountains, following the Kokoda Trail, to compete in 1990. And when the show was over, they walked back to Meta again.

Another unusual group was the small group of men from Oksapmin. This is a particularly mountainous and rugged part of West Sepik, and the dancers contributed performances rarely seen in the Moresby area. These were judged to be the best entry of that year.

For anyone who makes the effort to go to Moitaka showgrounds, a cultural feast awaits.






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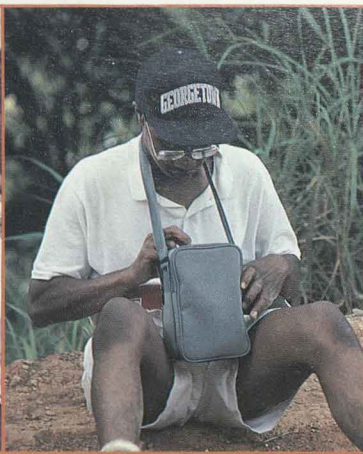
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HONG KONG to HIGHLANDS

Story and photographs by Peter van Fleet





Creeping up the mountain like a sinuous white serpent, the evening clouds gathered in the mouth of the Minj River valley and began their nightly assault of Mt Kubor at the river's origins. A group of girls and boys, Chinese, American and South American among them, gathered at the edge of the camp with hot mugs of soup in their hands to watch nature's evening grand performance. Many of the students were tired after a trek along the mountain that day, and the aches and pains were being replaced by a feeling of well being at the sight of the natural beauty of the Papua New Guinea Highlands valley in which they were camping for the night.

Only two days before, 20 students and two teachers from the Hong Kong International School had arrived from Hong Kong with Air Niugini. They were to spend a week in PNG exploring the diverse PNG culture and fantastic natural environment. Many of the students were from America and many were from other countries which send their people to work in cosmopolitan Hong Kong. The cultural leap from modern Hong Kong to PNG's unique Highlands was still bewildering some of the students. The cool and beautiful green mountains were a revelation to most, expecting hot steamy jungles or humid

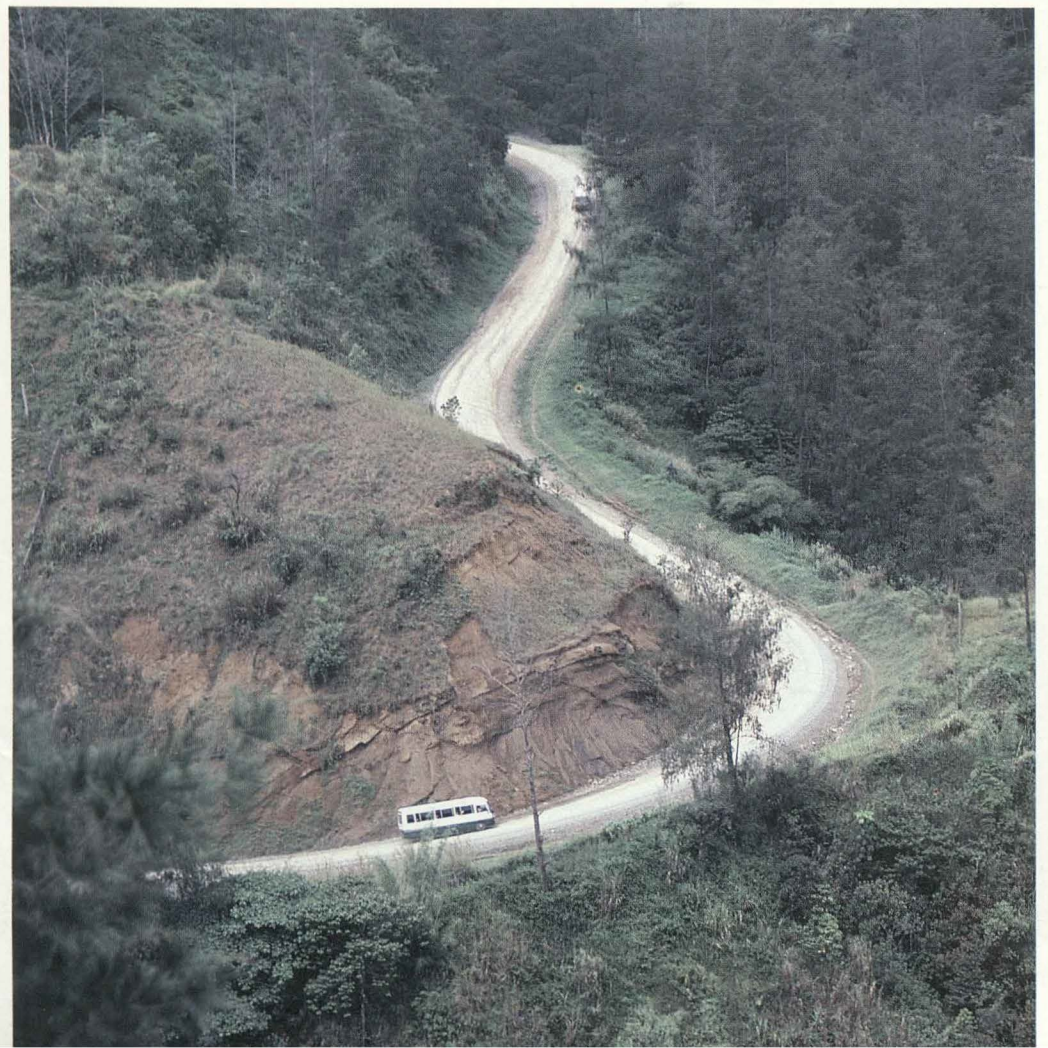
swamps and rivers rather than this emerald tranquillity.

After a good night's rest in tents, and a hearty breakfast, the students were immersed in studying the culture in a village. Traditionally dressed villagers wove bilums (string bags) from bush rope, dug earth oven mumu pits and cooked vegetables and meat. Old men ground stone axes on blocks of sandstone. One lass made a determined attempt to learn

how to play the twanging jew's harp made from bamboo. Her chagrin at failing to make the right sounds was quickly softened by her instructor's soft laughter and repeated attempts to instruct her again. Eventually a soft twanging rewarded her attempts and it was smiles all around.

Doubting faces were soon wreathed in smiles as the delicious leafy plates of fresh hot sweet potatoes, corn, kumu greens and

Above, from left Learning the jew's harp; buying a bilum bag; resting after a hike; breakfasting at camp. below On the bus ride to Goroka.



meat were handed around. Steaming hot from the mumu oven, the food answered many questions about the diet of the sturdy Highlands villagers. After lunch, a lecture on the gardening systems which dotted the mountain sides engrossed everyone and questions flew back and forth. The arrival of a pet tree kangaroo had several girls crowding around and soon the animal was nestled in eager arms.

An impromptu market of necklaces, axes, woven string items and the ever popular bow and arrows had everyone trading and haggling over prices. Soon villagers were sporting digital watches, shirts, earrings and bangles and victorious girls and boys were streaming back to their tents clutching prizes for display back at home. Everyone seemed to be happy except for Mutsui, a Japanese lass, who had missed out on a traditionally made work axe. Chris Muglua, the Tribal World tour guide had another produced and a deal made. Once again, smiles all around.

That evening, after a barbecue meal at Tribal Tops Inn, mudmen crept through the gloom towards the group. Several students backed off as the ghostly mudmen crept closer. Groups of students and



Above The camp at Kameng village. **below, from left** Resting, dining and making friends with a village pet, a tree kangaroo.

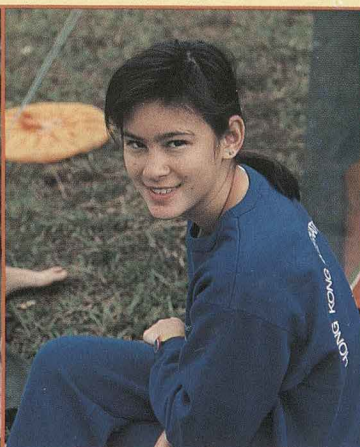
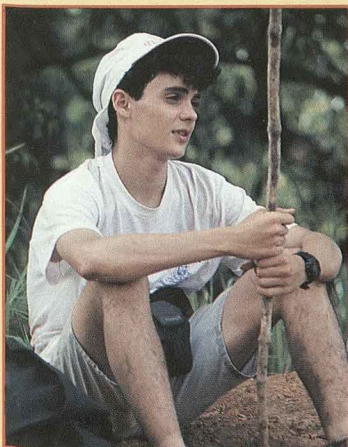
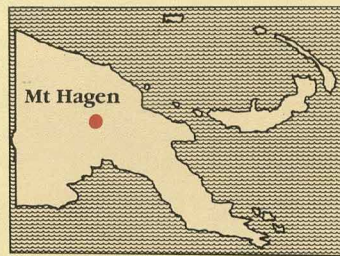
mudmen soon resounded with laughter as several people tried on the mudmasks and had their pictures taken.

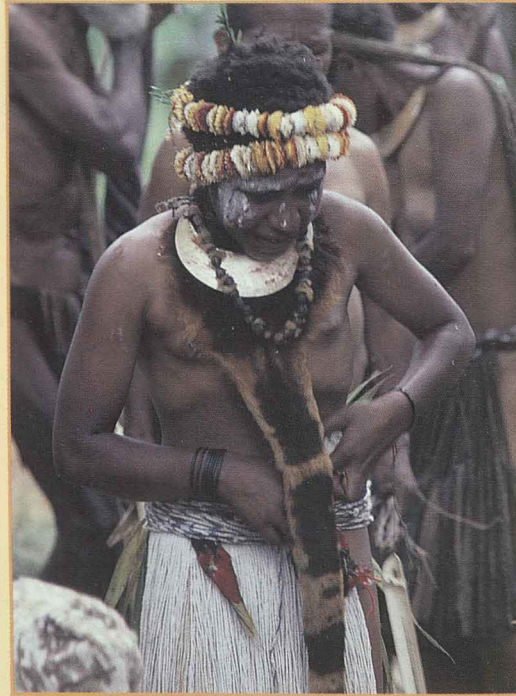
Early next morning, a short trek across the rushing Minj river to Pugamil village had the students face to face with a newly constructed 'haus bolim'. The villagers were ready to re-enact the famous kuma bolim konggar - a special dance done to thank and encourage the pig spirits to help the village become strong and wealthy in the best kind of wealth - fat, squealing pigs!

The grandly befeathered and painted warriors and young women stood patiently until a signal from Dorum, their leader, had kundu drums thundering and throats vibrating to traditional chants. The

student group occupied one side of the clearing, perching on bush seats of casuarina tree trunks and posts. The chanting dancers occupied the centre stage and hundreds of excited local villagers lined the other boundary. Many had not seen the bolim spirit dance before, especially the youngsters and they were as interested in the activity as the expeditioners.

The soaring mountains of the Simbu province and Goroka were the next day's target and the student group marvelled at the deep gorges and steep, garden-studded slopes. The grisly remains in the Pari burial cave excited some and the deep river valley amazed others. Colorful markets with brightly colored wool, green vegetables, purple sweet potatoes and crisp





fried flour donuts dotted every corner along the winding Highlands highway. A short stop at a large store soon had everyone's thirst quenched as the bus made the climb up to the 2,500m Daulo pass. Resting for a while at the top, the group donned the pretty red and yellow flower headbands sold by children to passers-by.

Embarking next day for Port Moresby and home, each member of the group was weighed down with trophies of their highlands expedition - spears, bows, axes, shells, necklaces and string bilums, fulfilled expectations, happy thoughts and just a few aches and pains.

Above Pugamil and Kameng villagers in their bilas (finery) to host their visitors from Hong Kong International School. **below** Pugamil singing performers with their face-painted guests.



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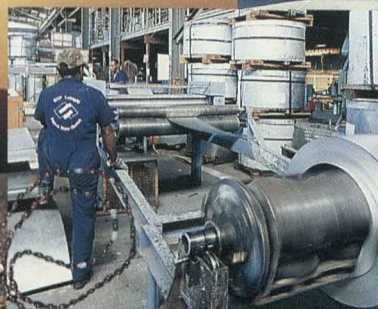
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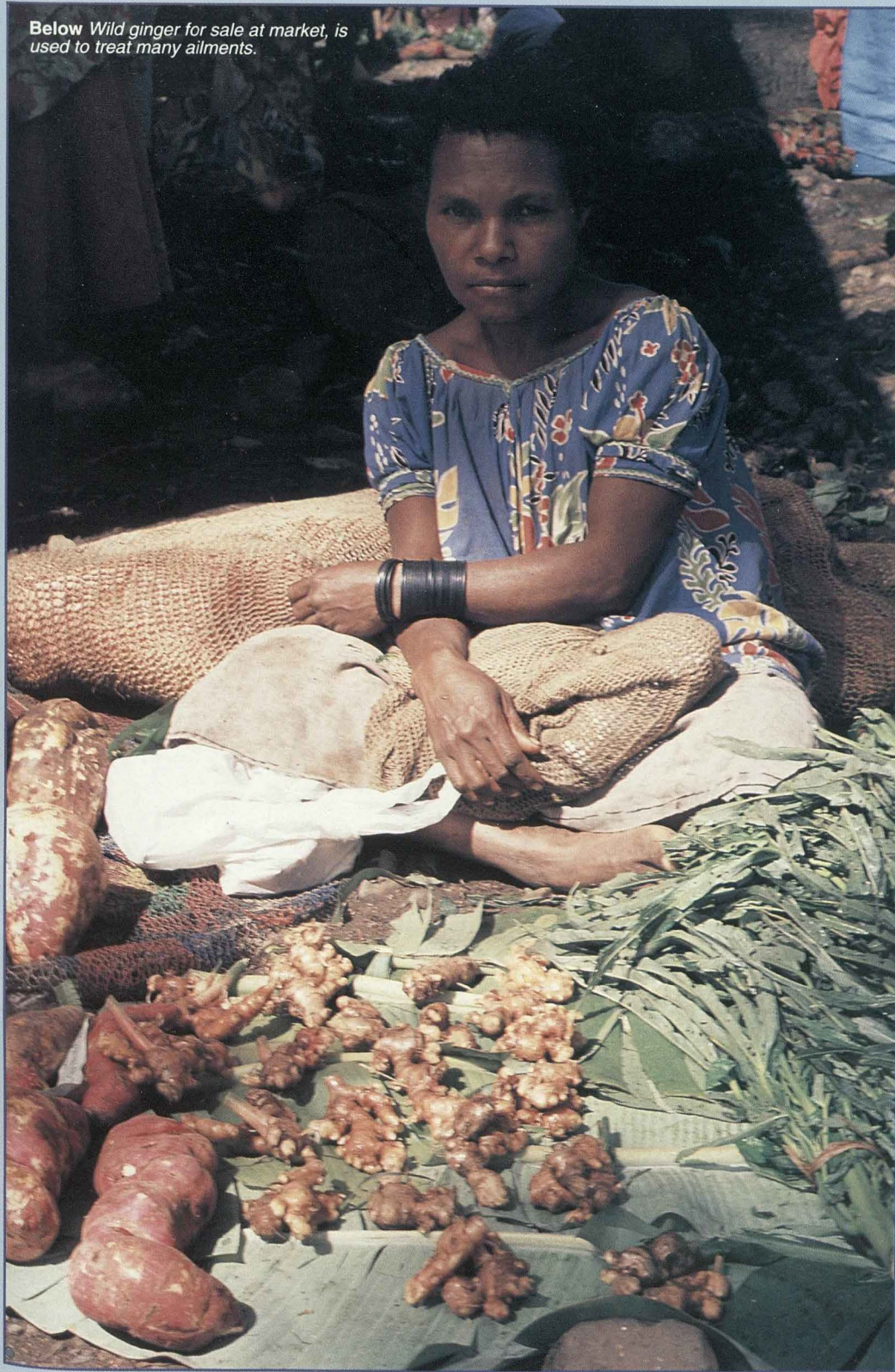
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Causes & Cures

Story and photographs by Robert Simms

Below Wild ginger for sale at market, is used to treat many ailments.



Sorcery and magic may be leftovers from the middle ages in Western society, but in Papua New Guinea, belief in the power of medicine men is still strong. Often in the community, serious illness is not looked upon as the result of chance infection. The questions are asked: why this person and who has caused this illness? Sorcery, or the intervention of a malevolent spirit, is usually the answer.

Many herbal mixtures and plants are used in treatment rituals, but it is the magical rather than the pharmacological value of them that seems important. Dr Carol Jenkins, a medical anthropologist with nine years' experience throughout PNG, said that this aspect of traditional medicine can work only if the patient believes in it.

"It cannot be denied that the use of incantations or sorcery has an effect psychologically," she said. "Disease is often not perceived to be caused by naturalistic things, so the people don't look for naturalistic cures."

She added that people seek treatments that relate to what they think is the cause of the disease. "If there is a spirit cause, you appease or roust the spirit," she said.

Dr Jenkins believes that the systems of therapy do not compete with each other. "With one, you're treating the poison or ill-will, the anxiety, worry and fear associated with illness; and with the other you're treating the germs," she said. "The systems can, and do, co-exist."

Although the Government does not officially recognise traditional healers, they do not attempt to hinder their activity. Many government ministers believe that traditional medicine is part of the nation's cultural

heritage. By contrast, scientific medicine is perceived to be foreign and Western.

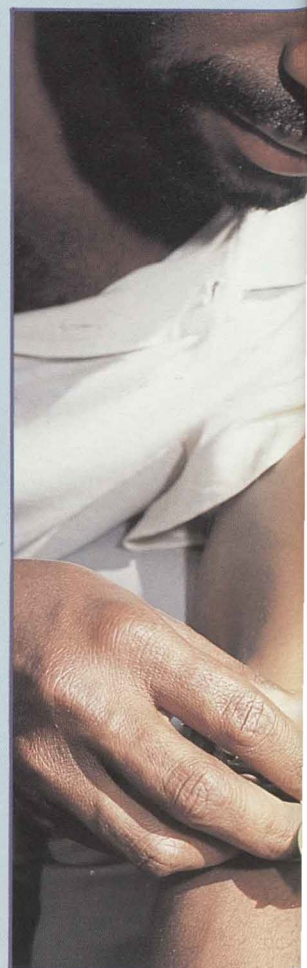
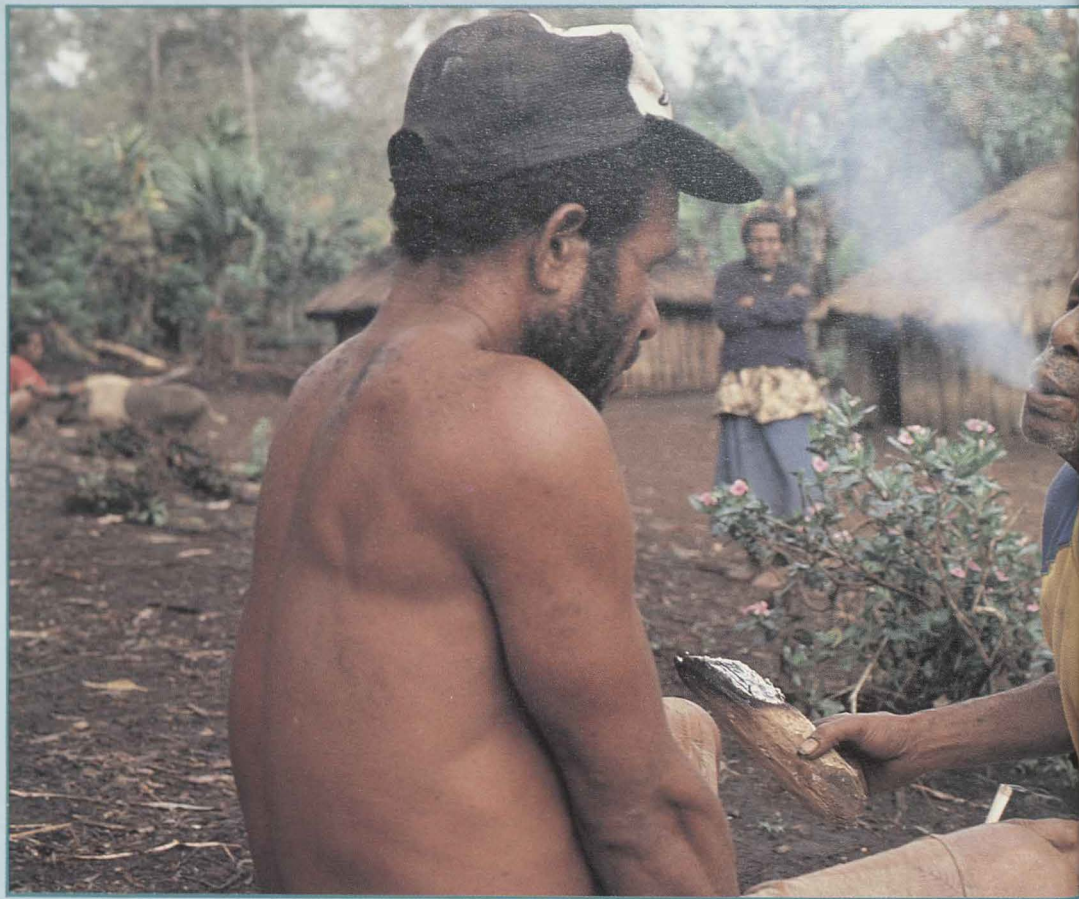
In effect, traditional healers provide a psychiatric service to many patients. "Some Papua New Guinean doctors have been known to send patients to traditional healers if the medical treatment is not working effectively, because of the patient's mental attitude or fear," said Dr Jenkins. "Clearly, the relief of fear is very important in curing disease."

The integration of scientific medicine and traditional healing is becoming more common. Provided with a choice, the people seek the more appropriate service for their ailments. Traditional healers are often consulted first, but in the case of chronic illness, the tendency to use modern medicine, when available, is increasing.

Medicinal plants and herbs are used widely for skin disorders and minor illness. For example, the new leaves of *Cassia alata* are widely used to cure the skin disease *tinea imbricata*, while wild ginger is commonly ingested to treat malaria fever, toothache, tropical ulcers, rheumatism and numerous other ailments. It is evident that many of these plants do help in some cases, but the effect of those used in conjunction with sorcery or incantations is questionable.

At the Wau Ecological Institute (WEI) in Morobe Province of PNG, a medicinal plants project is endeavoring to prove the value of traditional cures. Reagent chemical tests indicate whether the plants contain active substances such as alkaloids and steroids. If results appear promising, samples are sent to the University of PNG or overseas for further testing.

However, Dr Jenkins said



Top Gimiseve Woikoi, traditional healer of Godonova village, near Goroka, treats a patient with back pain. **above** Mother and child await their turn with the medicine man. **above right** *Cassia alata* is used widely to cure fungal infections of the skin.



Left and below Women of Godonova village, near Goroka.



that apart from some anti-fungal treatments, few of the plants used in traditional medicine show much promise. "Most of the herbs and plants used by the healers are ineffective," she said. "There seems to be little point in trying to develop treatments using these plants when cheap Western alternatives are already available."

Dr Jenkins feels that, regardless of the government or religious attitudes, traditional medicine will be a part of PNG life for a long time.

"Nothing will stop the native medicinal culture unless so much of the forest is destroyed that they can't get the plants," she said. "Even some educated people, under psychological or emotional stress during serious illness, still try traditional healing, and have expressed the fear that the illness was perhaps caused by sorcery."

She concluded: "It has been only a generation since the introduction of Western medicine to much of PNG, so to suggest that traditional healing would cease to be used so quickly would be absurd."



Top Fishermen's stilt homes near Port Moresby where traditional healing is sought. **above** Market sellers are source of herbs, leaves and roots which heal. **right** Markham River valley, Morobe Province.



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