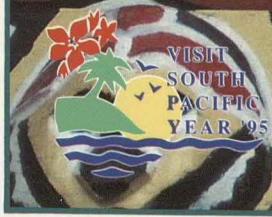


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No 111 July-Aug 1995

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Welcome aboard!

The visit to PNG of Pope John Paul II on his four-nation tour of the South Pacific reminded us that as a sovereign nation in the modern world we are the product of many influences, home-grown and imported.

On other pages, Holger Braun reminds us of the early European influences as he reminisces about his German predecessors.

Of more recent concern, Susan Turner laments the end of a cultural tradition as she describes the last of the great annual singsings at Sogeri National High School.

Scenic grandeur on the coast and in the mountains is the subject of two articles which we hope you will also find interesting.

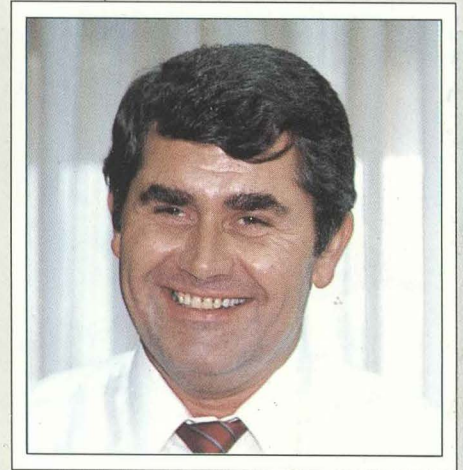
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Dieter Seefeld
Chief Executive & General Manager
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Cover: Carved and decorated facade of the East Sepik house at the Sogeri National High School 'village' (see page 5).
Photograph by Susan Turner.



Dieter Seefeld
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Editor – Geoff McLaughlin MBE
Consultant – Bob Talbot
Editorial – Ross Waby
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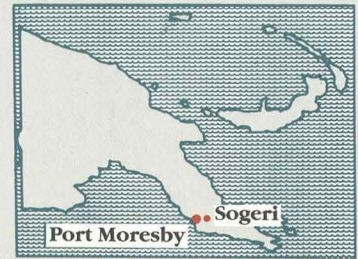
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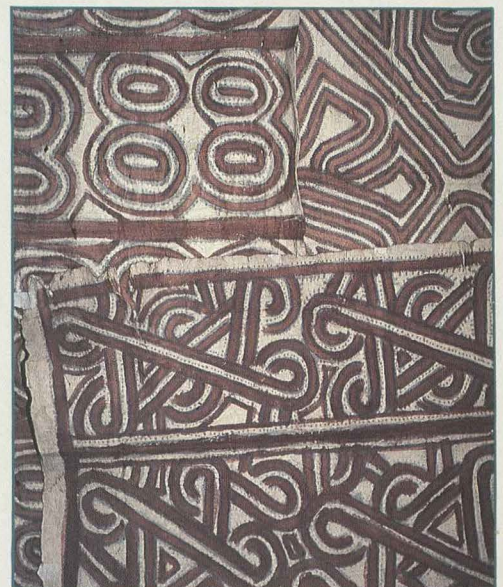
Sogeri is 40km from Jackson's International Airport, Port Moresby, headquarters of Air Niugini.

Left Performer from the Mekeo and Roro area of Central Province.
bottom Painted tapa (bark cloth) from Oro Province.

1994 was a sad year for the famous Sogeri National High School, performing its famous singsing for the last time. The Sogeri singsing had been one of the most popular events on the Papua New Guinea cultural calendar since it began in 1972. Each July, hundreds of visitors from Port Moresby and surrounding areas drove the winding, 46 kilometre road to the school located on the Sogeri Plateau, 600 metres above Port Moresby. As well as being one of the cultural highlights of the year this exuberant and colorful festival of traditional dance and music was the only event which all of Papua New Guinea's 19 provinces were represented.

FINAL *Sogeri* Singsing

Story and photographs by Susan Turner



Sogeri National High School, the oldest and best-known of PNG's secondary schools, was founded in 1944 when 18 young men, former pupils of Central Training School, moved into buildings vacated by the Australian army. The objective of the school was to train desperately needed teachers.

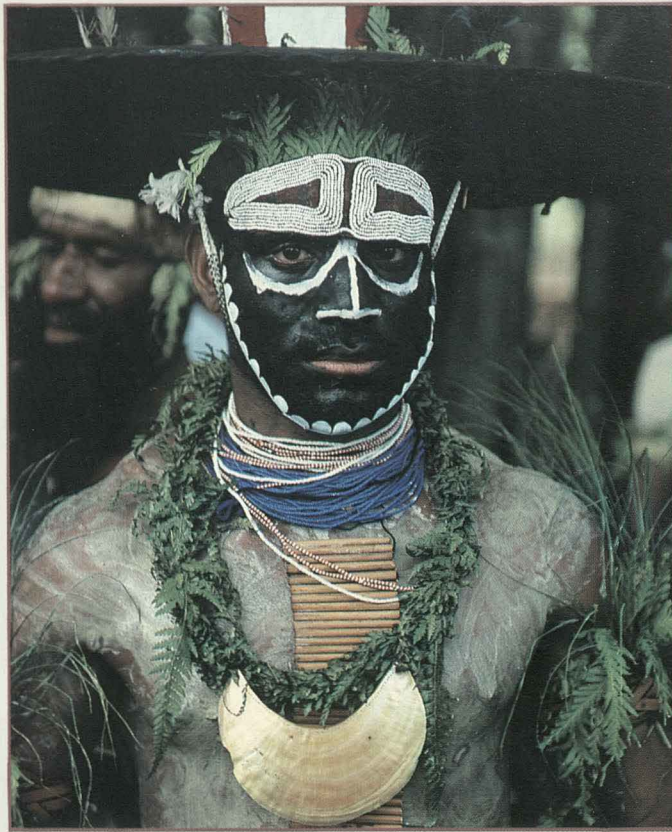
It took years to develop a curriculum but by the mid-1950s, the school was considered 'the jewel in the crown' of the administration's educational program, training future leaders of the fledgling nation such as Sir Michael Somare and Sir Seri Eri.

Sogeri became the first of the new upper secondary schools in 1968. That year, 97 young men, and for the first time, women, entered the school to become the most senior students PNG had ever produced.

In 1975, special honor was bestowed upon the school when it was chosen to represent the nation at the Independence Day celebration.

The singsing prepared for the occasion was the result of weeks of hard work by the students and staff of the school. Many of the schools 500 students had grown up away from their villages and had little practical experience of their own unique culture. Thus, the event was not only for the education and entertainment of visitors, but also a way for the students to learn and respect their own traditions.

It was always best to arrive at the school's 40 hectare site, well before the dancing began at noon. This gave the visitor a chance to walk around the school 'village' of houses each representing a different province, and to see demonstrations of tribal warfare and traditional skills such as sago-making (edible starch from palm trees).



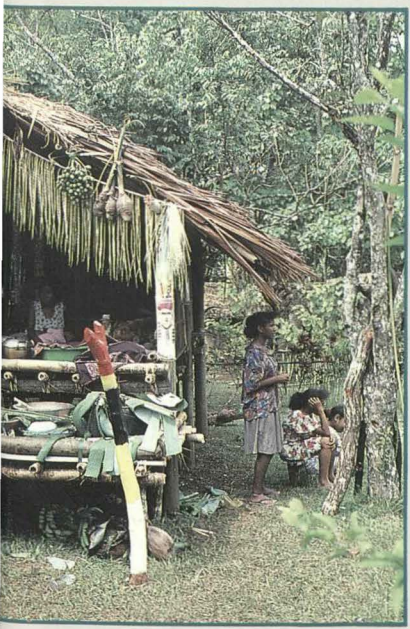
Left Performer from Enga Province. below school 'village'



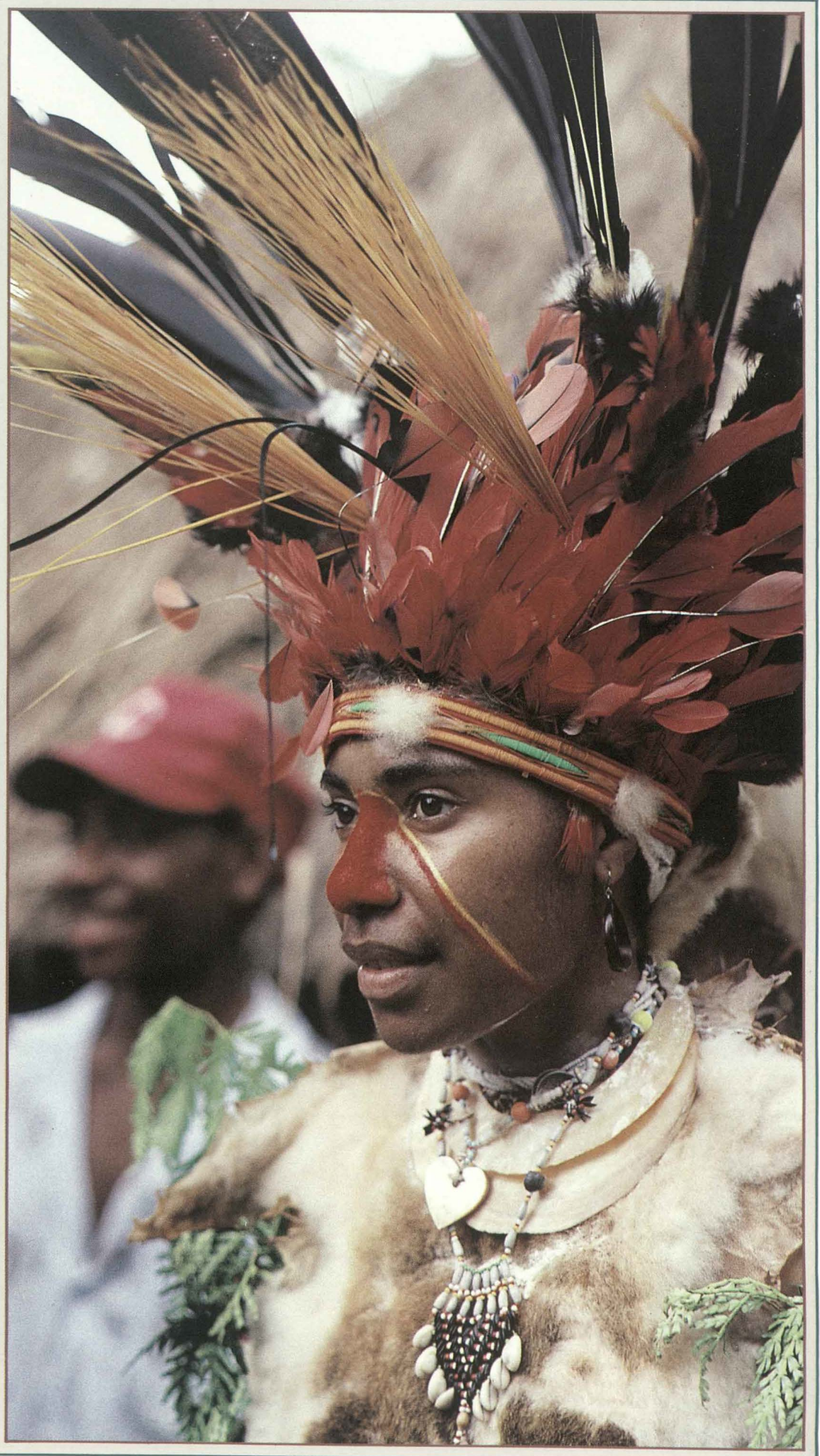
Right Performer from Simbu Province. below Singing group goes through



Central Province house in the



low Eastern Highlands Province
ugh its paces.





Far left Another of the houses in the school 'village' displaying regional culture. left Sea shell and turtle shell bilas (finery) from Central Province. below singing group from Central Province.



It was equally fascinating to watch the young dancers putting on their bilas (body decoration and traditional dress), before the dancing began. The most common garments were purpur (grass skirts), malo (men's handwoven aprons), and tapa (bark cloth), and the dancers applied detailed body and face paint with scrupulous care. The crowning glory was an elaborate headdress made of bird of paradise and parrot feathers, such as those worn by dancers from Simbu Province.

One by one, the different dance groups would perform in the arena. The serious, almost scary Western Highlanders marched and hissed, while the lascivious antics of the Manus dancer had the audience rolling with laughter. The brightly painted Mekeo and Roro group from Central Province were always beautiful.

Education reform meant that 1994 was the last year in which students from all 19 provinces attended the school. No longer representative of this culturally rich and diverse nation on the year of its 50th anniversary, the school's administrators decided that the 1994 singsing would be the last.

For the hundreds who had attended over the years the last Sogeri singsing was a wonderful but sad day. As if out of respect for the end of a special tradition, the rain waited until the last dancers had left the arena before crying on the Sogeri Plateau.

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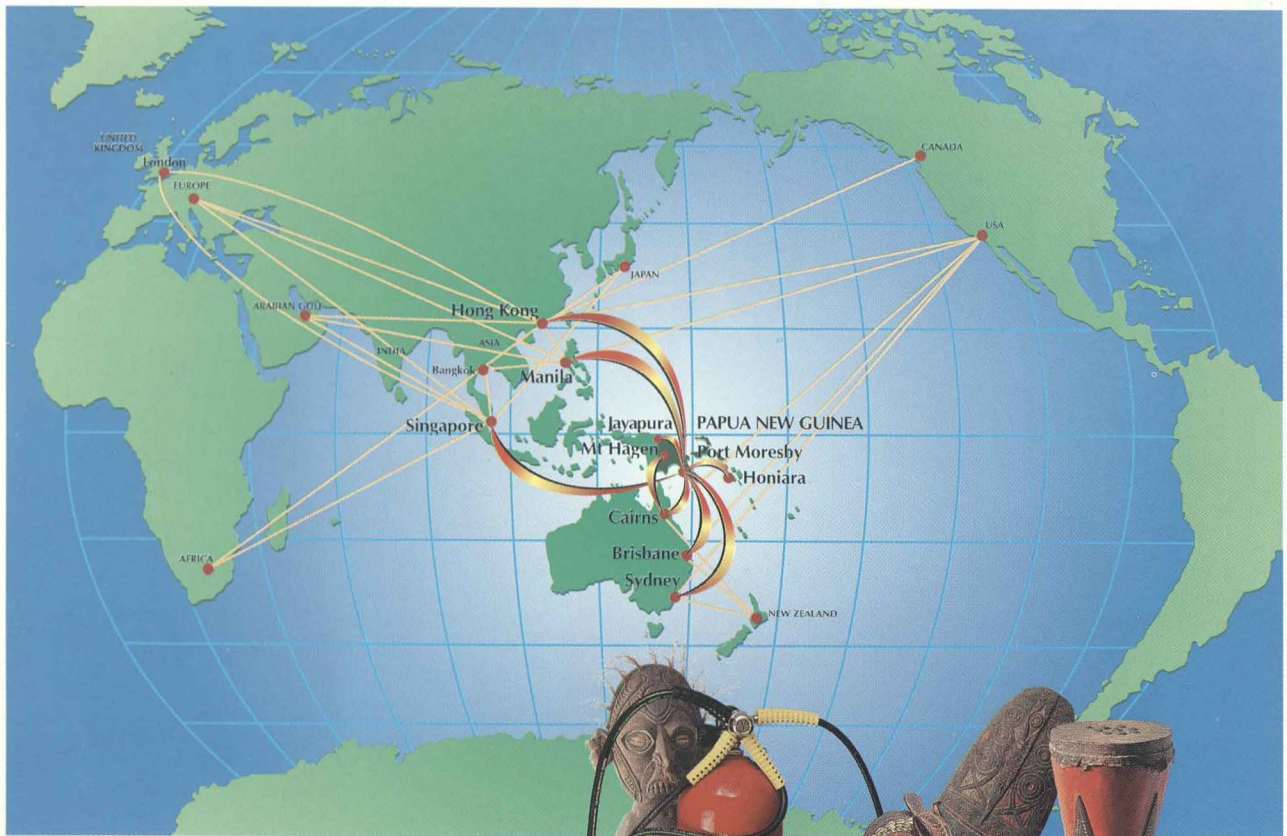
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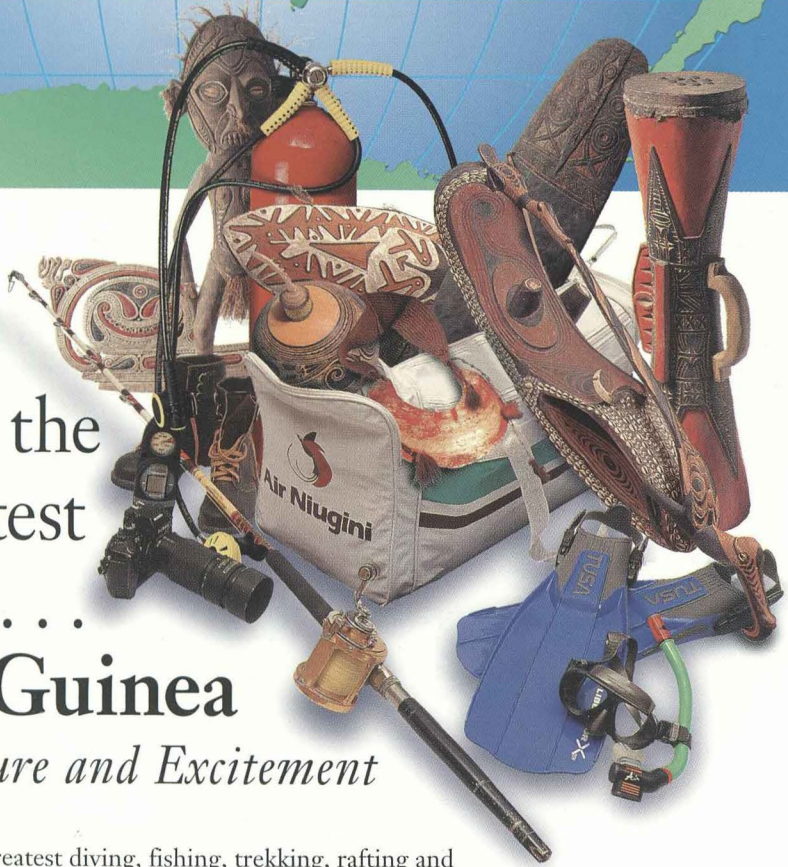
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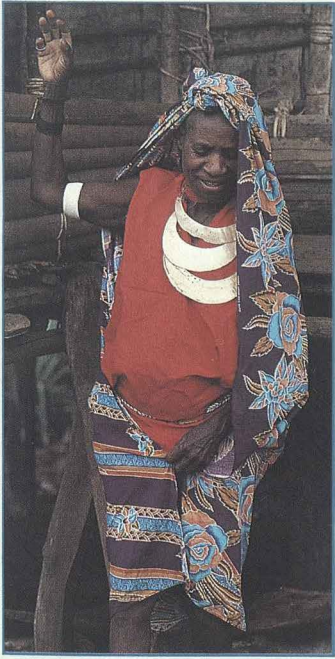
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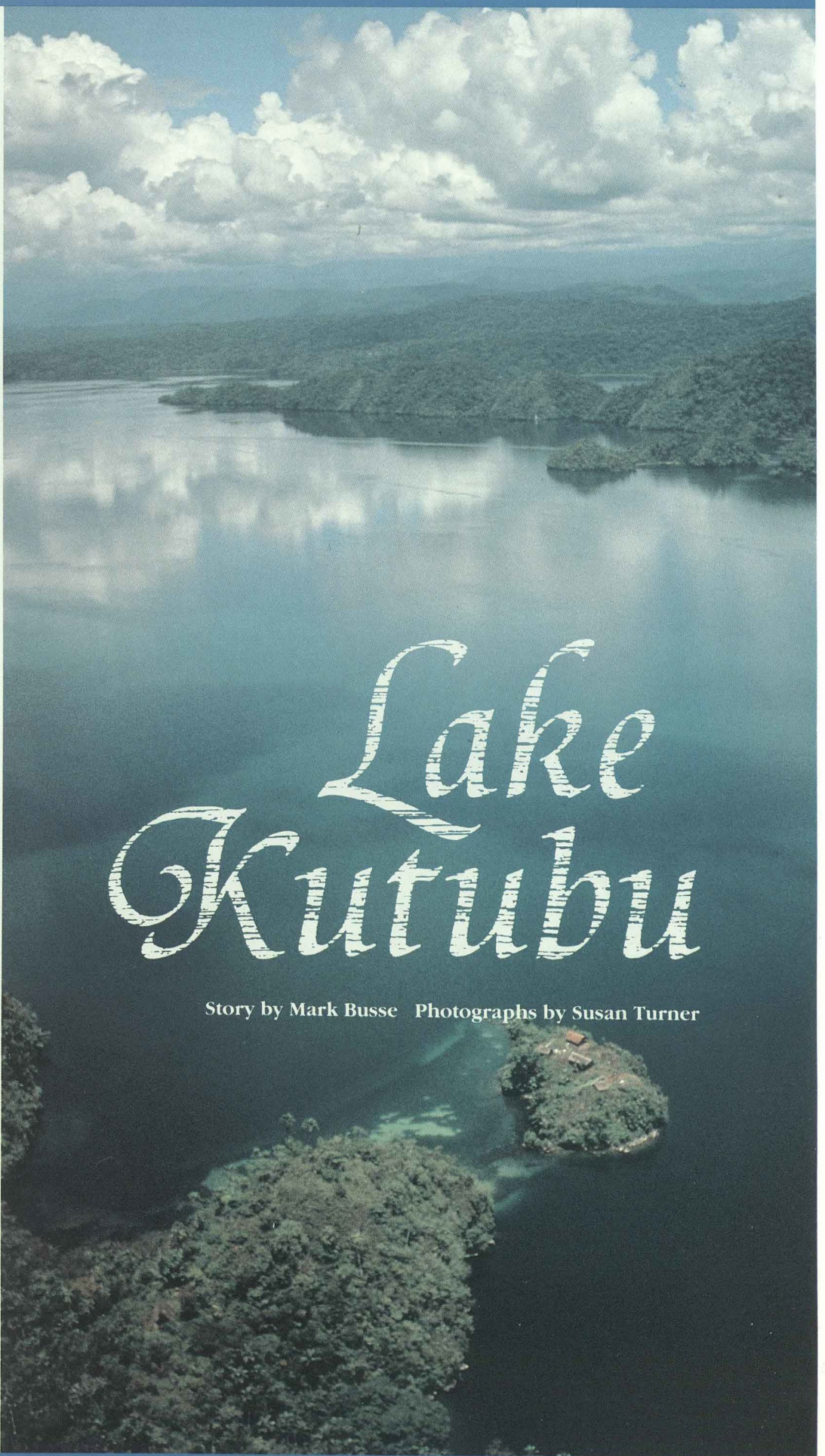


Above Yo'obo village woman wearing pearl shells, a traditional form of wealth. **right** Lake Kutubu with Gese Island in the foreground.

Lake Kutubu in the rugged Southern Highlands Province, is one of the most beautiful places in Papua New Guinea, and because of the nearby Kutubu Oil Project, it is now accessible to tourists and other visitors.

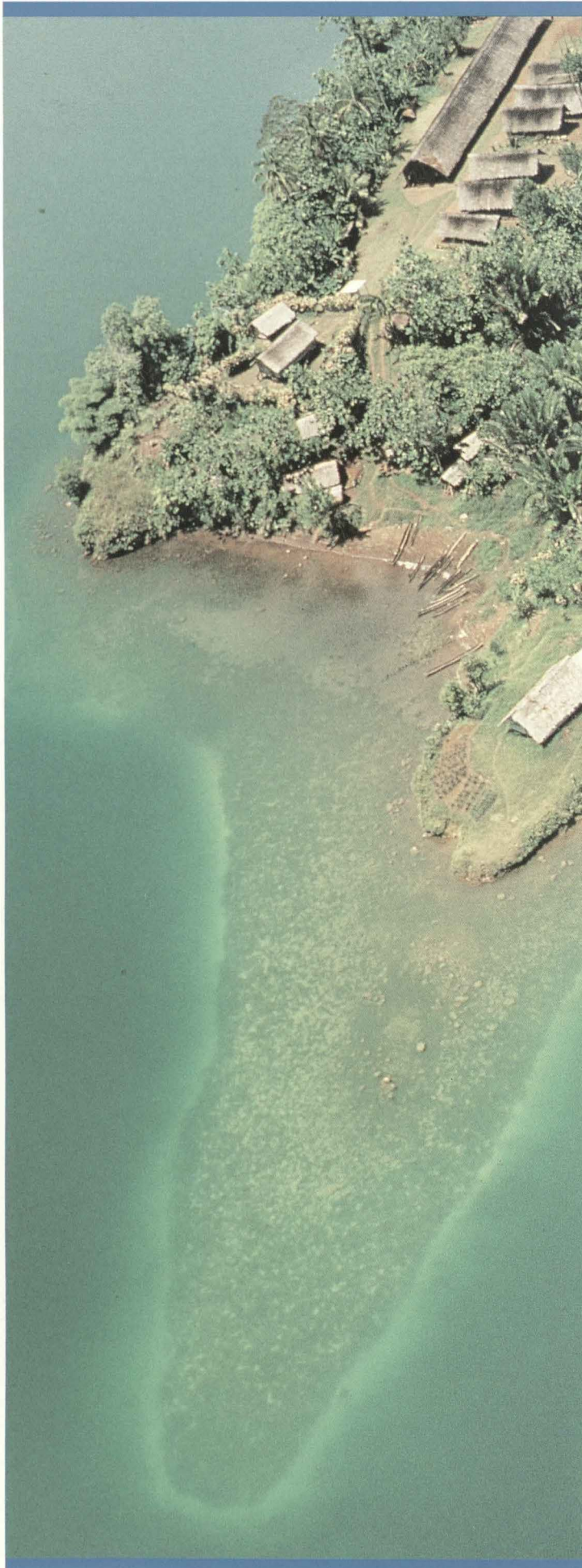
The lake, 800-metres above sea level, is in a narrow valley about 20 kilometres long and five kilometres wide, between two steep limestone ridges. The lake was formed when the southeast end of the valley was blocked by volcanic deposits thousands of years ago.

The Foi-speaking people who live along the shores of Lake Kutubu also think the lake is beautiful, and they call it ibu hua or 'mother of water'. They believe the lake was formed long ago when there was no water in the Kutubu area and only women lived there. The women were very thirsty because their only water was rainwater which they caught in leaves.



Lake Kutubu

Story by Mark Busse Photographs by Susan Turner

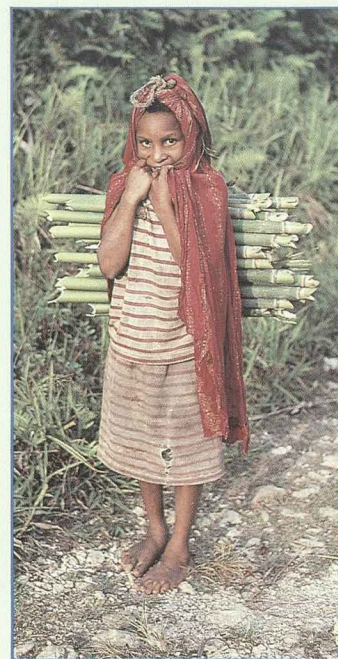


One of the women had a dog who was a very good hunter, and he frequently went to the bush and killed animals. One afternoon when he came home, the woman felt his whiskers and found they were wet. She decided that the next time he went to the bush she would follow him so she could see where he got his water. The next morning she tied a long string to his leg, and when the dog went to the bush, she held onto the string and followed him until she came to a very big tree. The woman could hear the dog drinking water inside the tree.

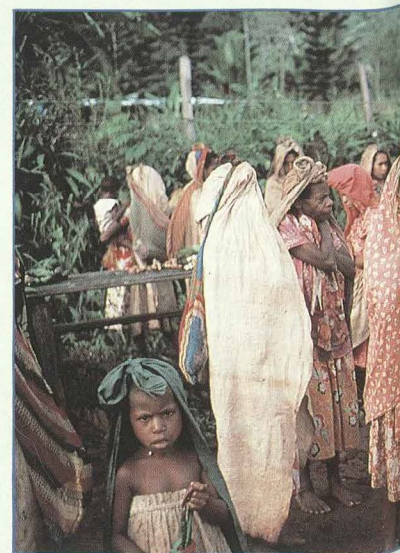
The woman went back to the village and told her sisters about the tree. The next day, they took their stone axes and began chopping it down. It took them five days to chop it down, and as it fell the women ran to the top of a small hill. When the tree hit the ground, water poured out of its stump, covering the tree and all the sweet potato gardens. The water continued rising and almost covered the mountains between Lake Kutubu and the Hedinia Valley to the southwest. Then it broke through the mountains and formed the Soro River which flows from Lake Kutubu to the lowlands.

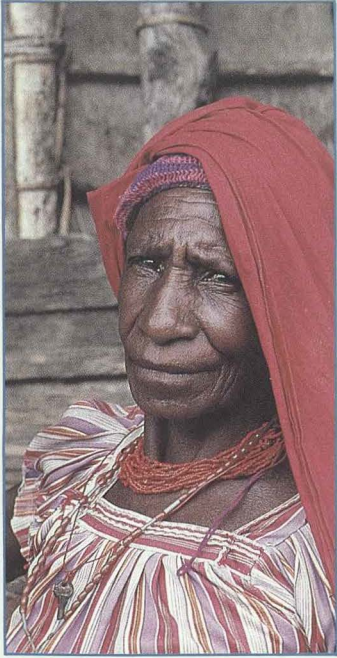
Lake Kutubu was first seen by white people in February, 1936, during a reconnaissance flight from Mount Hagen to Mount Bosavi. One of the men on board, Jack Hides, named it Lake Marguerite in honor of his wife.

Later that year, Ivan Champion and Charles Adamson became the first white men to visit Lake Kutubu after they walked east from Mount Bosavi. The following year, a police camp was established on the island where Yo'obo village is today. The camp was supplied by sea plane,

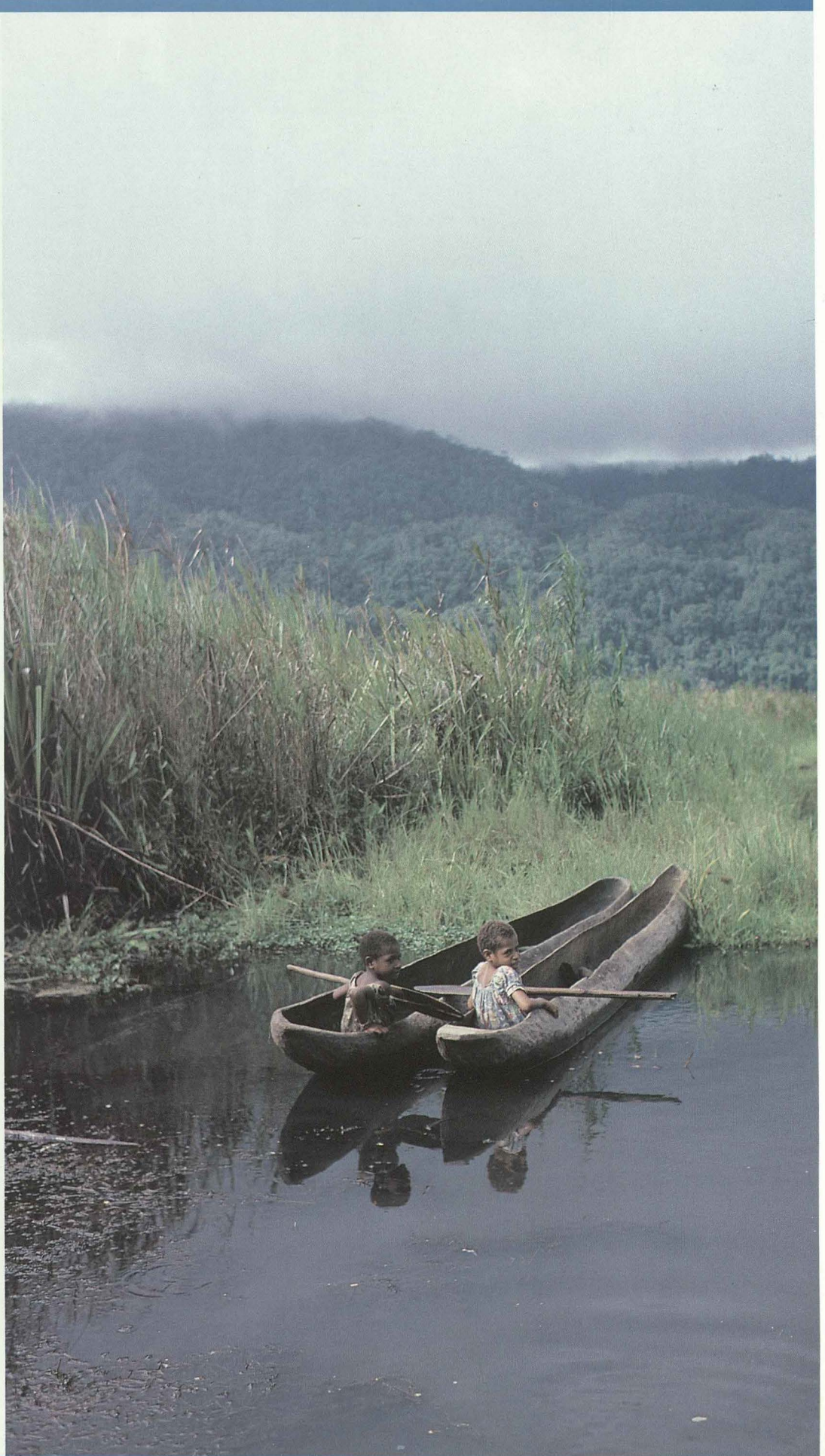
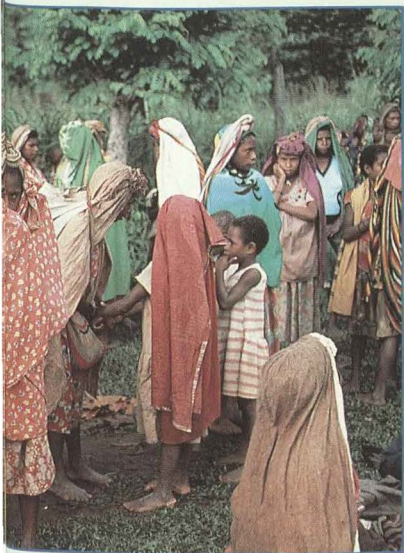


and between 1937 and 1940 the Australians introduced large numbers of pearl shells into the Kutubu area, using them as payment for food and labor. During this time, government patrol officers also tried to put an end to warfare which was an important part of life in the area.

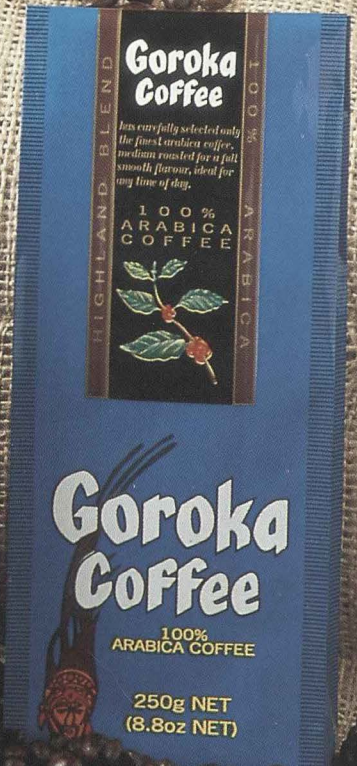
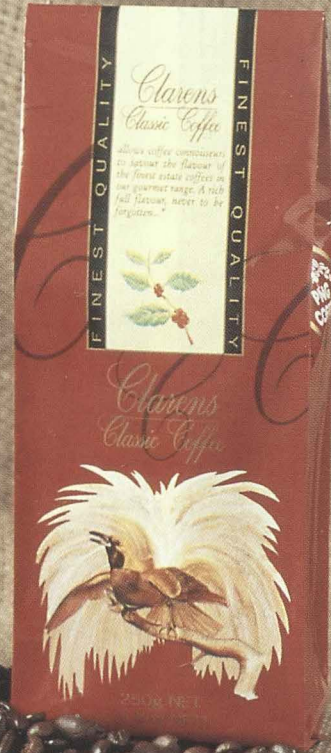




Far left Wasemi village on a Lake Kutubu island. **above left** Bamboo tubes carried by young woman are used for cooking instead of pots. **above** Yo'obo village woman. **below** Morning market at Pimaga. **right** Lake children quickly become adept canoe handlers.

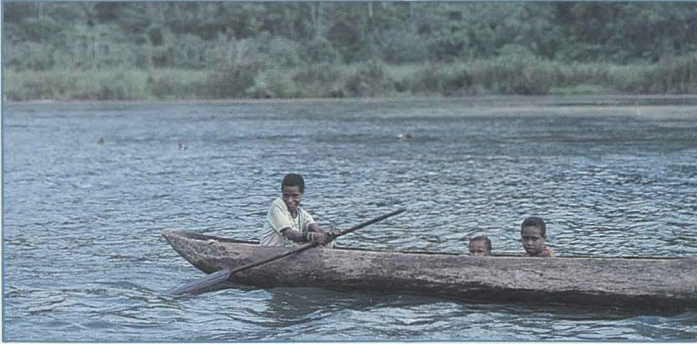


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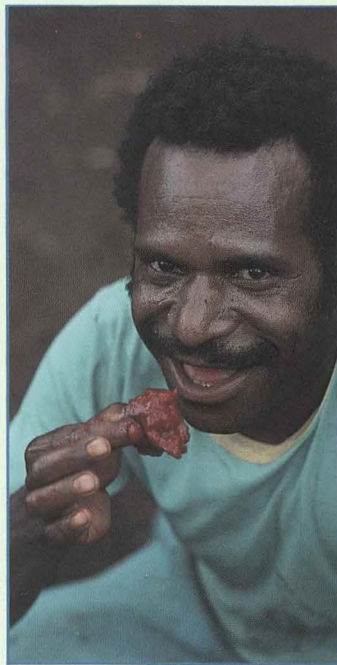
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Top Woman and children on a fishing trip. **right** Savouring the succulent pandanus palm.



From 1938 to 1939, the government anthropologist, F.E. Williams, based himself at the Lake Kutubu camp for six months, and his research led to the first detailed description of the people living around the lake.

After the police camp was abandoned at the start of World War II, it was nine years before the colonial government returned. Then, in 1949, a new station was established and regular patrols to more remote areas began. Two years later, the Unevangelized Field Mission built a station at Inu on the north shore of the lake. Today the people of Lake Kutubu consider themselves Christian and have given up many of their traditional practices including healing cults and mortuary exchanges.

At the same time, some aspects of traditional life continue at Lake Kutubu. People continue to make sago with traditional implements including chert tools that are traded into the area from the Upper Kikori River, and gardening, hunting and fishing are still important sources of food. For outsiders, however, probably the most obvious features of traditional life are the beautiful longhouses which stand at the centre of each village. As many as 40 men and boys live in these large communal houses which are flanked by smaller women's houses.





Above Yo'obo village woman tends her garden. **right** Jungle-clad islands in the northern reaches of the lake.

This physical segregation of men and women symbolises their social separation which is a cornerstone of the social and symbolic worlds of Foi speakers.

Today, Lake Kutubu is linked to Mendi and the rest of the Highlands by road and to the rest of PNG by plane. The days are pleasant, and nights can be cool. The area receives heavy rainfall which is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. Kutubu Lodge, which offers basic accommodation, is located on the shores of the lake and is run by the local people. The Local Government Council runs a guest house at Pimaga which is an easy four-hour walk from the lake. Tourists can hire canoes to visit the villages around the lake and take in the stunning scenery.





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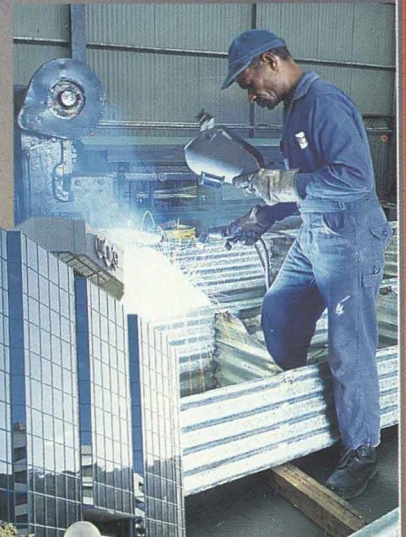
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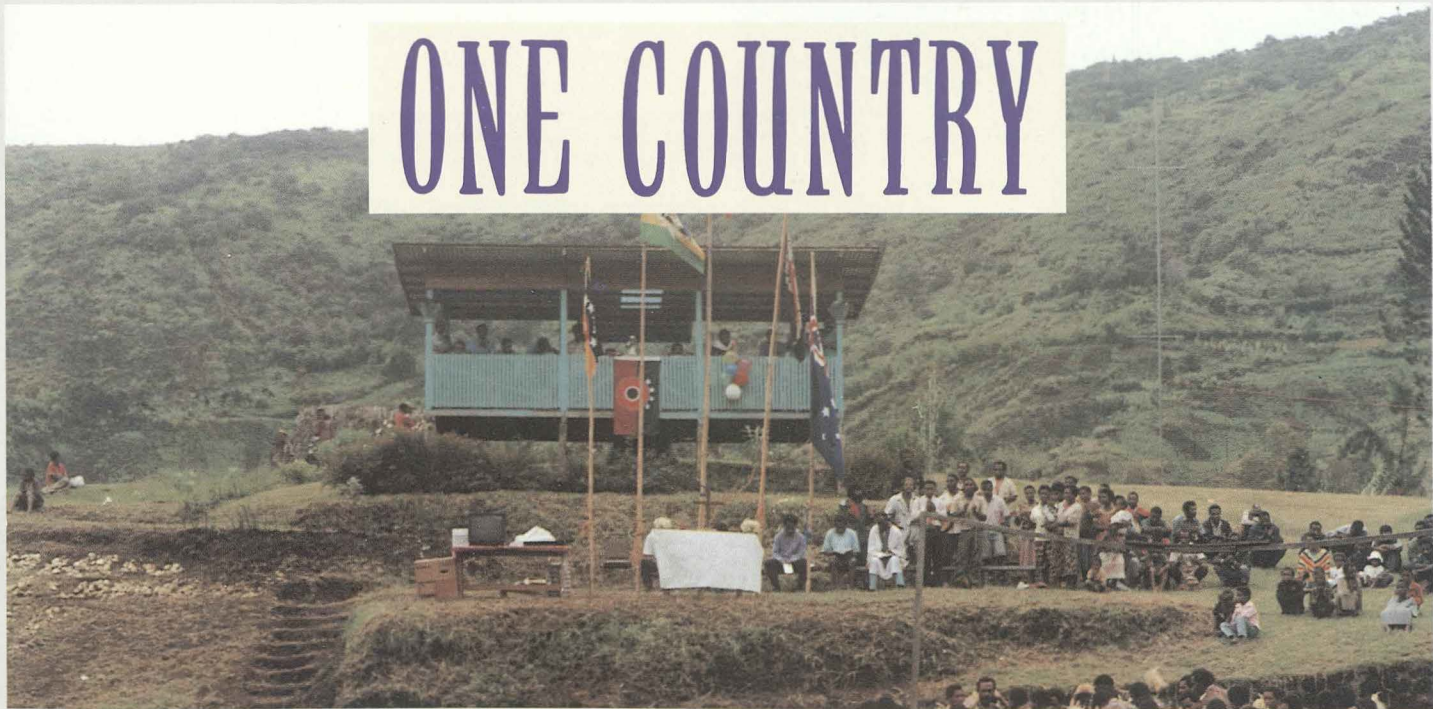


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ONE COUNTRY



When the Acting Director of Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Museum asked me to represent the Museum at the official launching of a video produced by the National Culture Commission of the people of Teptep (on the border of Raikos District in Madang and Kabwum District in Morobe), I was eager to go. Little did I know that much

of this part of PNG has yet to undergo the developmental changes experienced in many other parts of the country.

To get to Teptep one can fly in by charter aircraft or a regular flight from Lae or Madang. The airstrip is extraordinary — built on a hillside, it stops at a platform-like top and landing is uphill. On take-off, the aircraft speeds downhill and drops off the

runway. The aircraft then slowly meanders through deep gorges before gaining altitude.

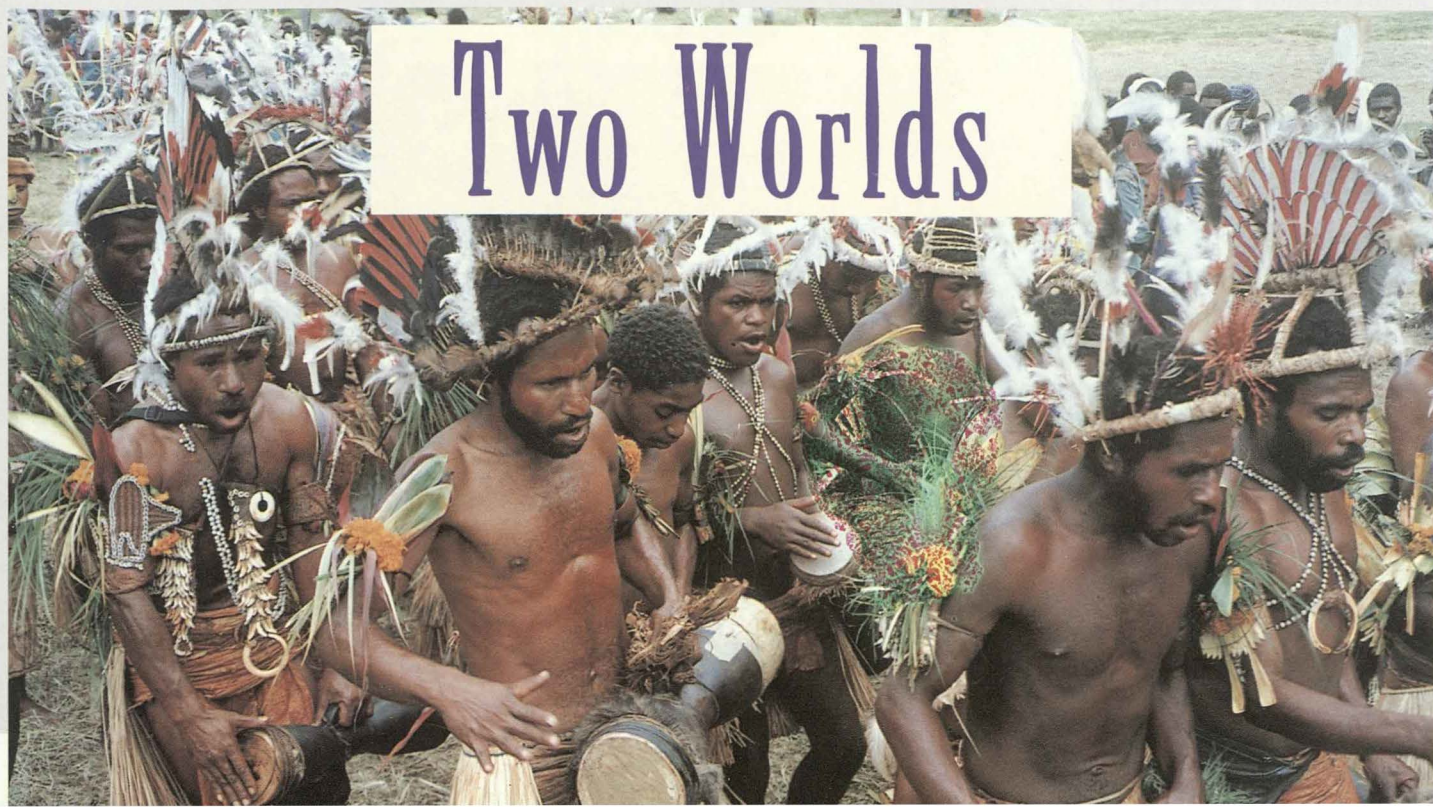
**Story by Julie Kuira
Photographs
by Wally Ainui**

Top Crowd begins to gather for the handing over ceremony of the video documentary. **below** One of the singing groups celebrate the recording of the Nayudos Amun culture.



Air Niugini operates regular services from Port Moresby to Lae and Madang where connections can be made for Teptep by light aircraft.

Two Worlds





The people of Teptep also known as Nayudos Amun' ('people' in local vernacular) were excited when they heard that the video was to be officially launched by the National Culture Commission, as most had never seen themselves on film. The Nayudos Amun kalsa video is a cultural preservation documentary produced by the National Cultural Commission's Skul Bilong Wokim Piksa. It includes scenes of the first Cultural Show staged at the Teptep station in January, 1994.

At one of the sporting Ovals at Teptep, the Australian flag is flown alongside the Madang and Morobe Provincial flags in honor of funding given by the Australian Government.

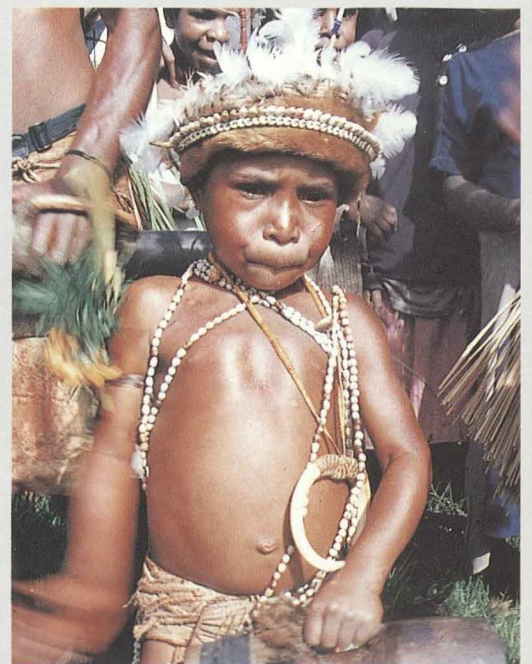
When we landed at Teptep we were greeted by a huge crowd including various singsing groups.

On arrival we were met by church and village elders who led us to the guest house at the Nayudos Amun culture centre, which is on the side of the airstrip. There are no cars in Teptep and our cargo was carried



to the guest house by the village people. The culture center, including the guest house, is built with local materials.

Although Teptep is situated on the Finisterre Range, in the coastal area of PNG, at some 600 metres above sea level, much of its





vegetation, climate and physical surroundings are similar to that of the cool Highlands. The nights are cold and vegetables such as English cabbages, cauliflower, broccoli, English potatoes and lettuce grow well and are plentiful.

Economic and social development in this part of the country is hampered by a lack of infrastructure development such as good

roads to link the area to developed centres like Lae or Madang. Many locals have never seen a car and they walk long distances following tracks through rugged mountains, valleys and gorges to reach their destinations.

It is easy to understand that when an aircraft flies into Teptep, it is generally greeted by a large welcoming crowd.

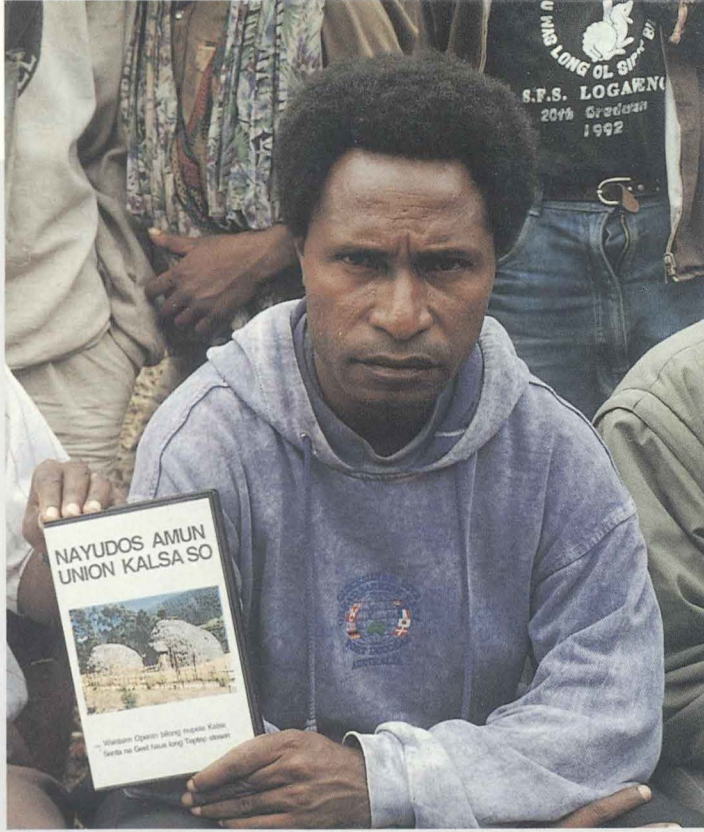
Missions, particularly the Lutheran Mission, have played a very large role in the development of literacy and education within the Nayudos area. Religion and culture play an equally important role in the lives and upbringing of the Nayudos people.

The National Government is represented by a small district services office which is staffed by a patrol officer. Means of communication is either by mail or a two-way VHF radio system.

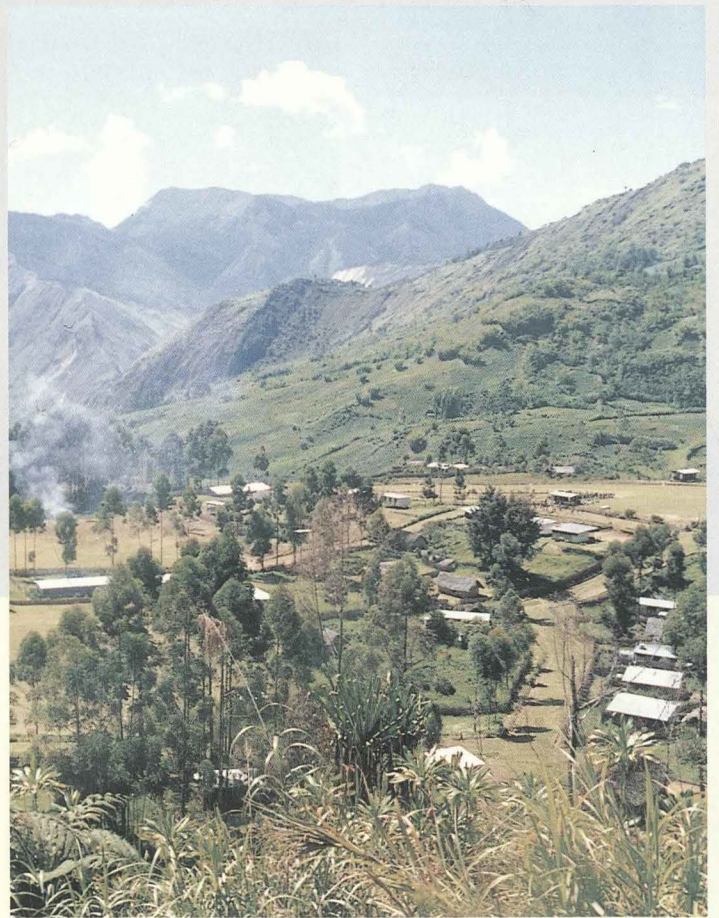
Member of Parliament, Ginson Saonu, is one of the



Upper, far left Landing up hill at Teptep. **upper, centre** Teptep airport, the runway at right. **upper, right** Handing over the video. **lower, far left** Teptep Culture Centre, men's meeting house on the right. **lower centre** Singing performer at launching ceremony. **lower, right** Singing groups at the ceremony.



Left Ginson Saonu MP, with the documentary video. below Teptep in the Finisterre Range. bottom The audience at a showing of the video documentary.



first three graduates from the area and he has strived to bring development over the past 14 years.

He is the initiator of the Nayudos Union Club formed to promote sports and to establish and promote unity among his people. His hope of an opportunity to act as a bridge between his people, the Morobe Provincial Government, the National Government, the Churches and private organisations, to develop the area seemed unlikely at first. Perseverance eventually

gave him an opportunity when he won a seat as a member in the Morobe Provincial Government. Now he is a member of the National Parliament.

The name Nayudos is an abbreviation used for Nambis, Nangkina, Yupna, Domong, Orowai and Som — all villages around the outskirts of Teptep. The Nayudos Amun have their own unique culture and are planning to stage their second cultural show in January, 1996.

On the day we were leaving, the sun came up,

clearing away the heavy clouds that normally cover the surrounding mountain tops and hillsides. I felt a little sad to leave my new-found friends but was happy at the same time to be on my way home again.

Returning home to Port Moresby on Air Niugini that day, I formed the opinion, that where I had just been, is certainly a world of its own, and the thought of one country, two worlds, crossed my mind.



Jackets and Ties not required

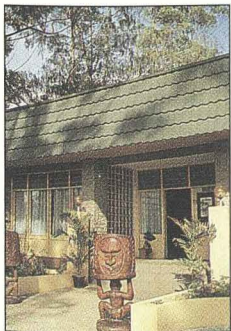


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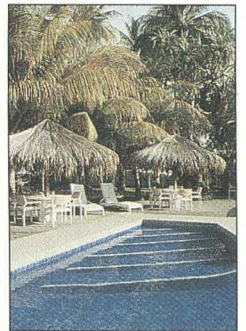


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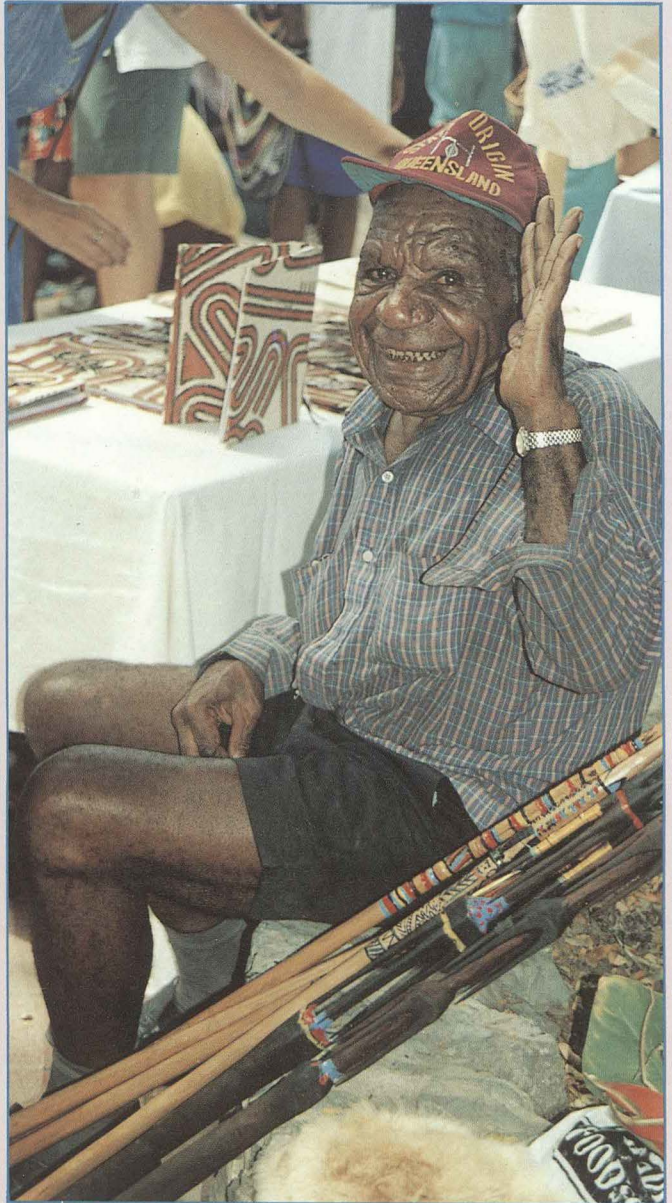


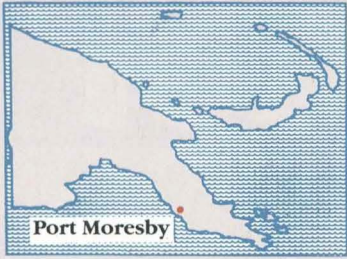
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beach market

Below, left *Bounty from the sea.*
below, right *Friendly trader greets*
his customers.

Story by Trish Berry and Bruce Mackinlay
Photographs by Annette Telfer



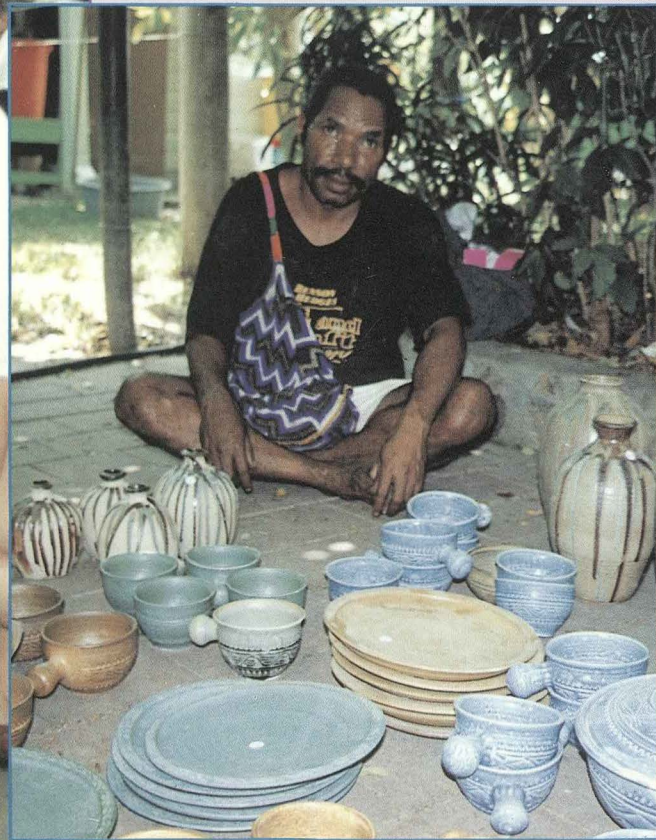
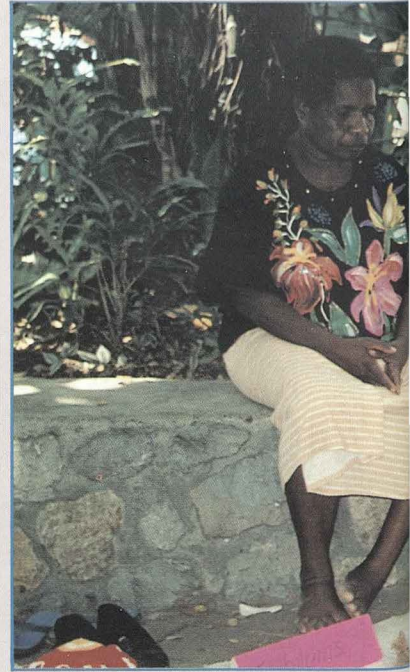


Port Moresby
Ela Beach is near the centre of Port Moresby which houses the international headquarters of Air Niugini. Jackson's International Airport, which serves the capital, is the international gateway for PNG.

The Ela Beach craft market, held on the last Saturday of each month, is lively, entertaining and popular with locals and tourists visiting Port Moresby. The market is held in the school grounds opposite Ela Beach and overlooks the tropical waters of the Coral Sea.

The craft market, originally hosted by the Ela Beach pre-school, was established 17 years ago by Mrs Elisabeth Doepke, a long-serving member of the school who coordinated the market for many years.

The craft market attracts a variety of sellers, not only from Papua New Guinea but from all over the world. The goods on display are varied and of excellent quality. Traditional and contemporary items are available. Many of the things for sale are handmade and some are transported from other regions of PNG.





While walking around and perusing the wares, visitors can see Papua New Guinean pottery, bilums, shells, coral, tortoiseshell jewellery, pig's tusk, basketry, spears, tapa cloth, shell jewellery, lakatois, prints and wooden carvings.

Locally produced, but with a more 'international' flavor, there are laplaps, water color prints, children's clothes and toys, plants, herbs, face painting, secondhand books and magazines, hand painted glasses, freshly baked cakes, Indian cooking, calendars, mobiles, and greeting cards. The community gathers to share a 'cuppa' at the coffee shop and catch up with the news. The Ela Beach craft market provides a relaxing and trouble-free opportunity to shop for souvenirs of PNG.



Far left Choosing jewellery crafted on the coast. **centre, left** Local pottery at very reasonable prices. **left** Local artist gives customers a quick lift with face painting. **above, left** Bilums (string bags) come in a multitude of designs. **above, right** Model lakatois, outrigger canoes with sails. **below** A plant seller completes a sale.



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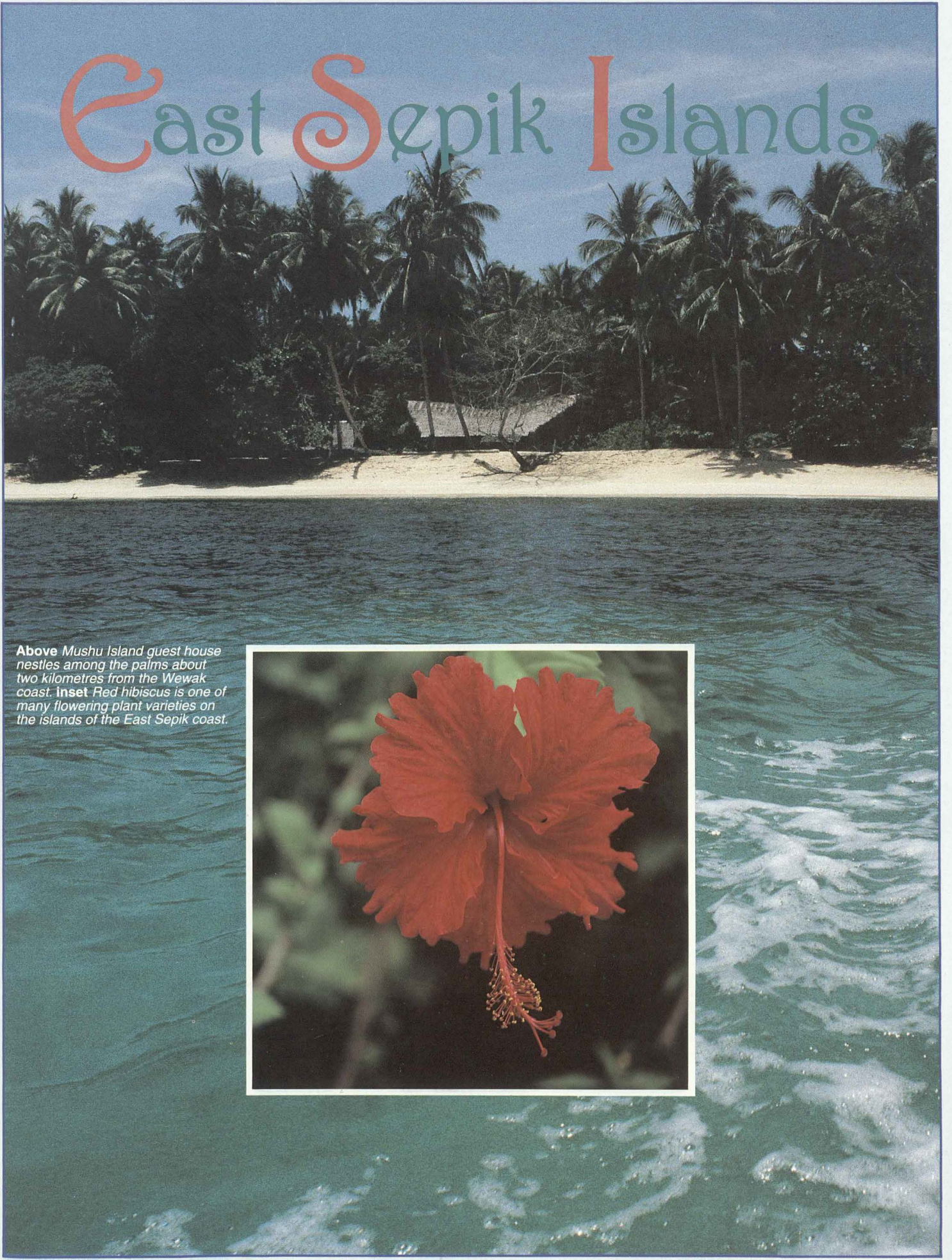
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East Sepik Islands



Above Mushu Island guest house nestles among the palms about two kilometres from the Wewak coast. **inset** Red hibiscus is one of many flowering plant varieties on the islands of the East Sepik coast.

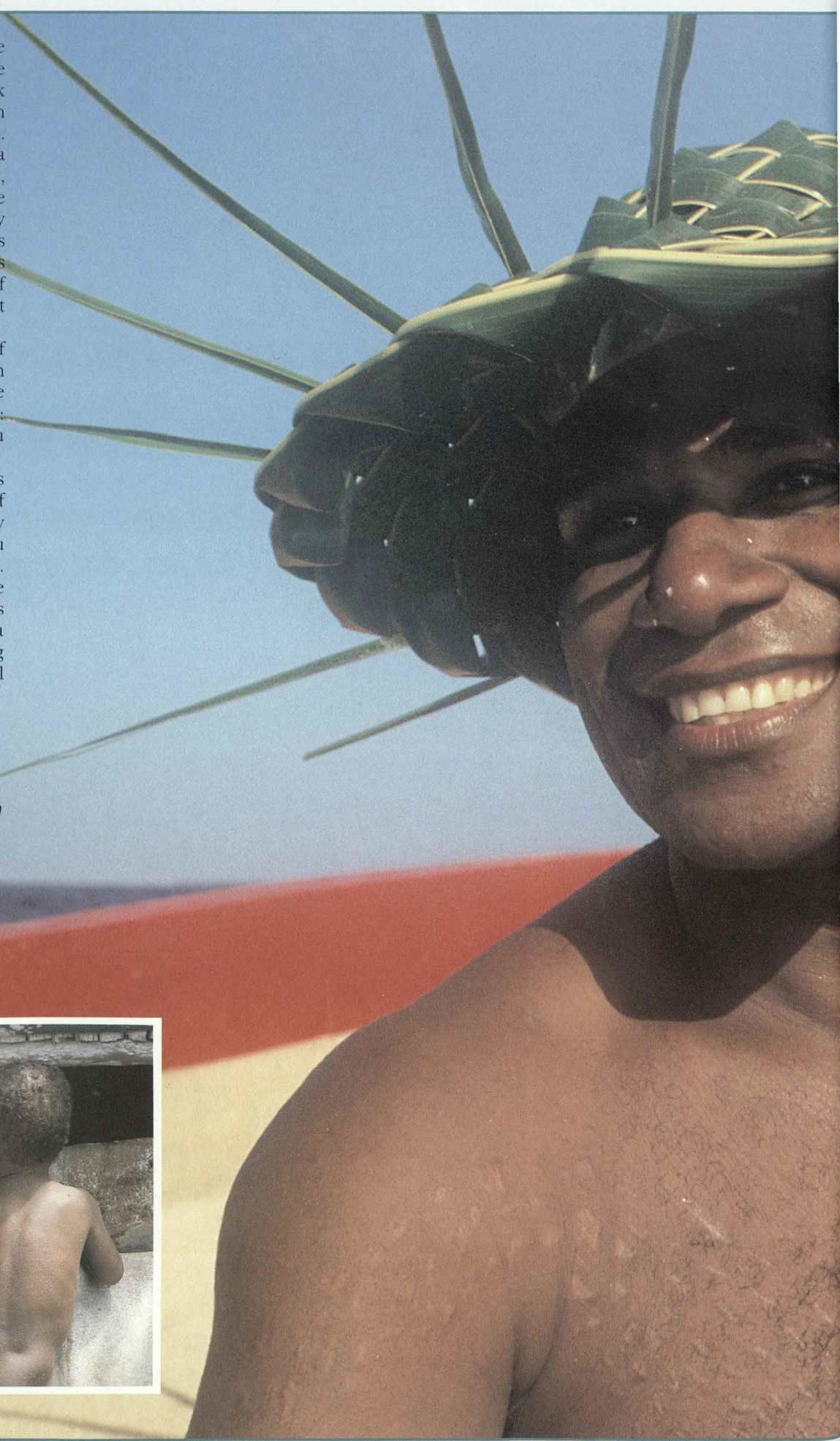
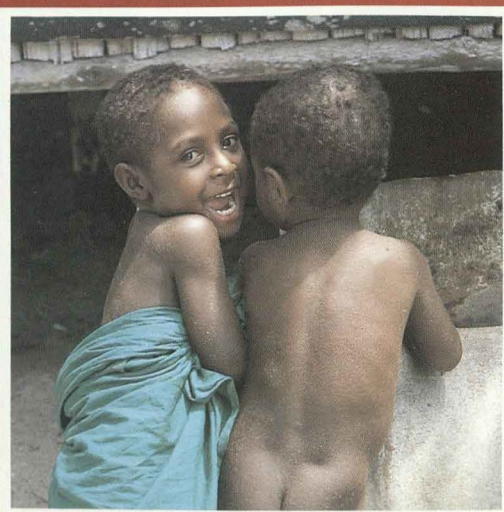


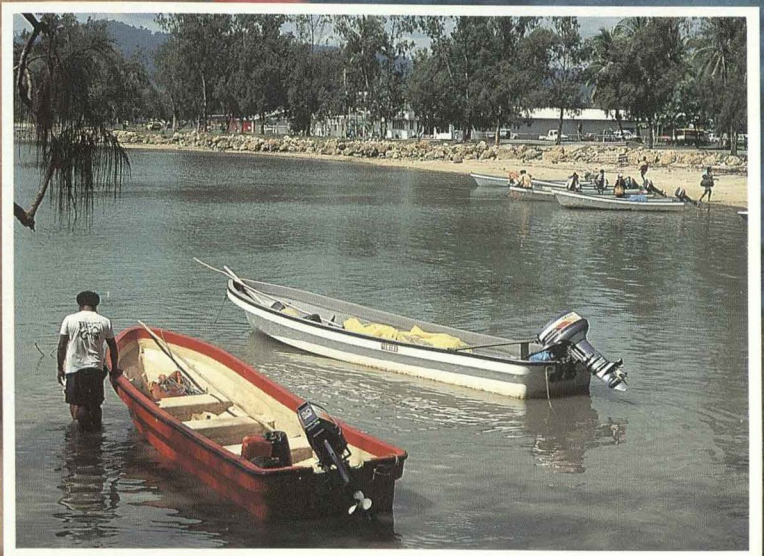
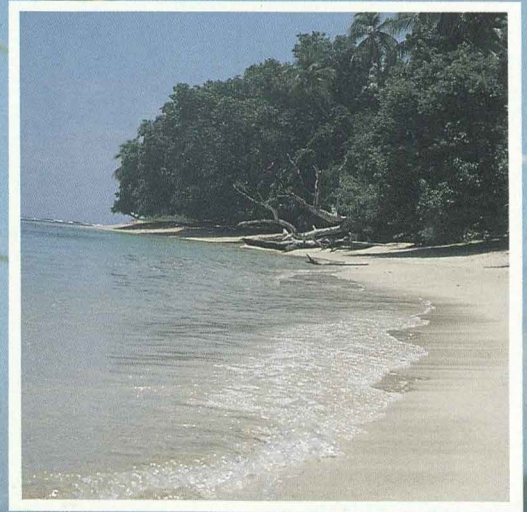
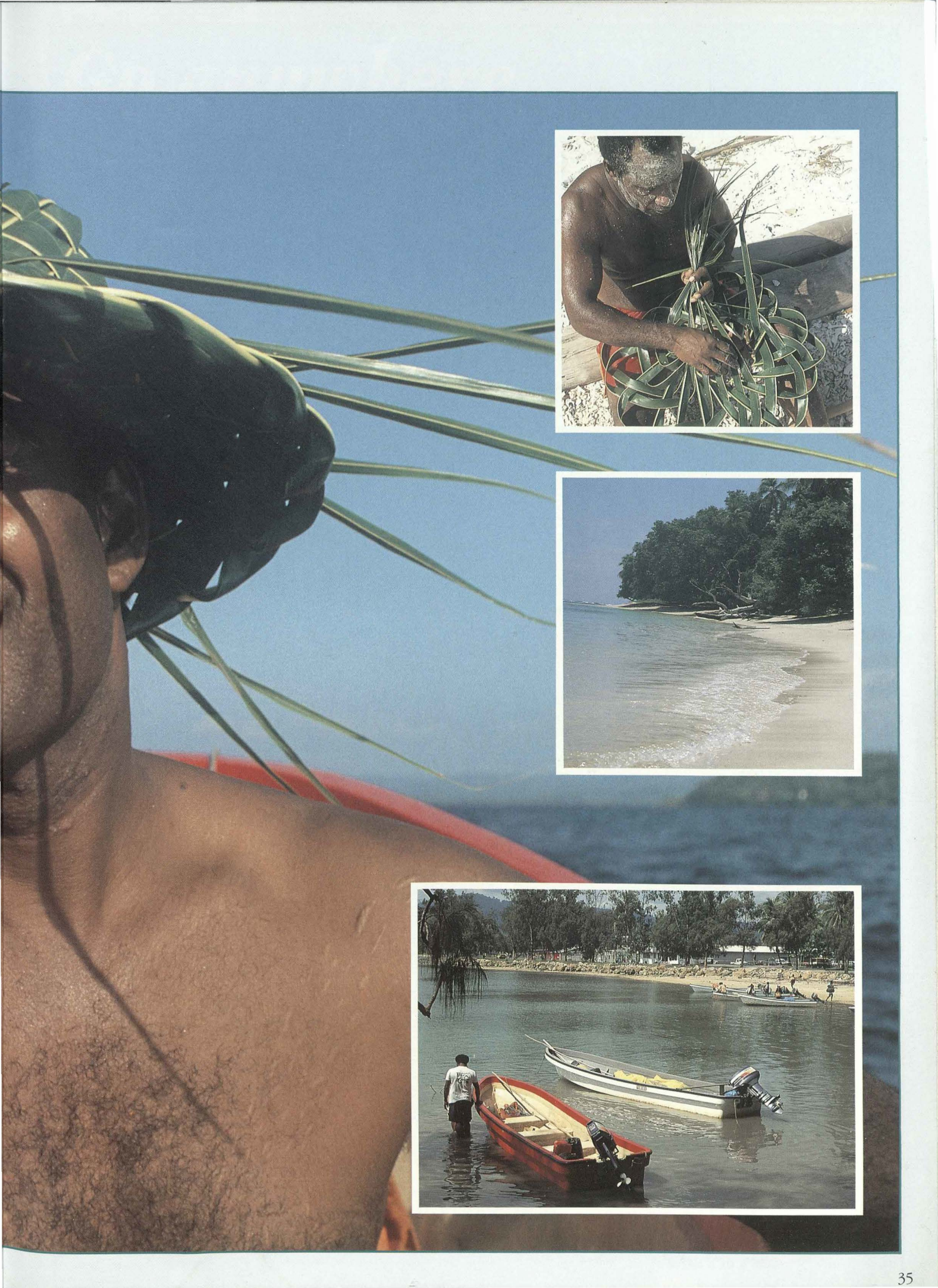
Most people associate the East Sepik province with the winding Sepik River. Home to many of Papua New Guinea's finest carvers, the villages along the edge of the river are visited by hundreds of tourists. Less well known, the province is also the location of some of Papua New Guinea's most beautiful islands.

Just off the coast of Wewak, less than half an hour by boat, lie three beautiful destinations: Robuin, Kairiru and Mushu Islands.

Unlike Kairuru, which is volcanic, and has some of the finest beaches of any island off Wewak, Mushu is basically a coral island. Previously site of one of the largest coconut plantations in the province, it is now a perfect spot for snorkelling to see the abundant coral fish.

Right Stephen, a tour guide from the Windjammer Hotel, Wewak, with a hat he made from a single palm frond. **inset, top right** Stephen, making his coconut palm hat. **inset, centre right** White sand and warm clear waters surround Mushu Island. **inset, bottom right** Water taxis await to take passengers from Wewak to the nearby islands. **inset, below** Two children beside a garamut drum.







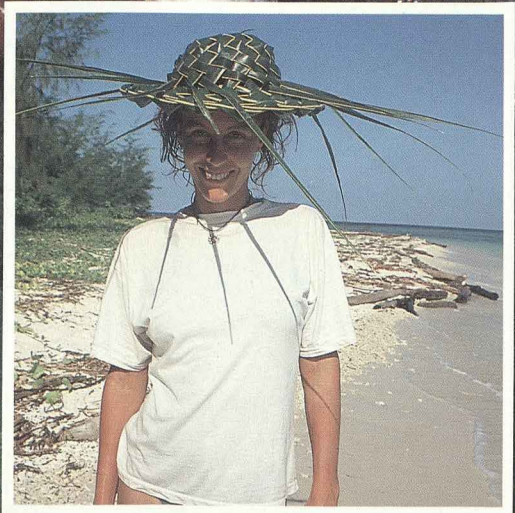
Left Tour guide Stephen cleans fish for a barbecue on Robuin Island. **inset, below left** Mushu Island guest house room on the beach, surrounded by coconut palms. **inset, below right** The author on Robuin Island.

Kairiru is also beautiful, with breathtaking bush walks up to the crater of the dormant volcano. Excellent fishing and snorkelling are to be found here. Rumor has it that a Japanese ship carrying gold stolen from Malaysia and Singapore sank close to the island. The K3 billion worth of gold believed to be on board has yet to be found.

Robuin Island is a national park established by the government in an effort to prevent the killing of birds. It is now inhabited by thousands of flying foxes who enjoy a people-free existence. All three islands are beautiful in their own way but Mushu is the best place for tourists to stay, with two guest houses. Kairuru has one guest house; Robuin has none and is suitable only for day trips.



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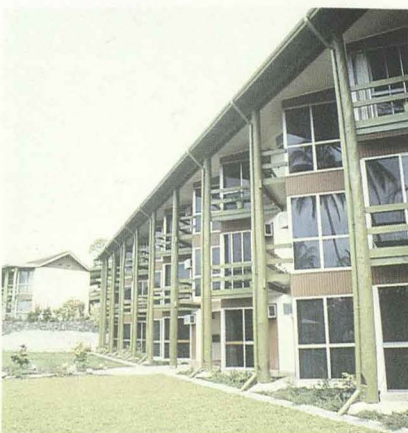
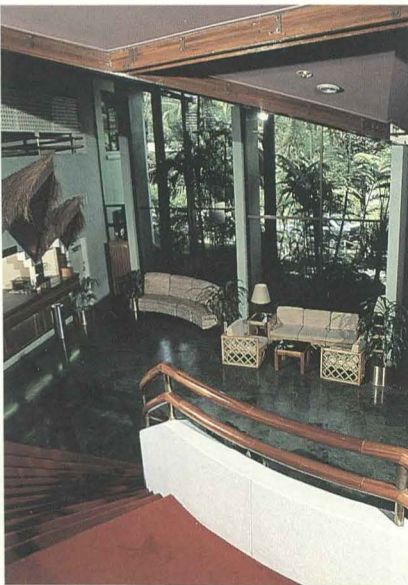
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In the Steps of the Colonisers

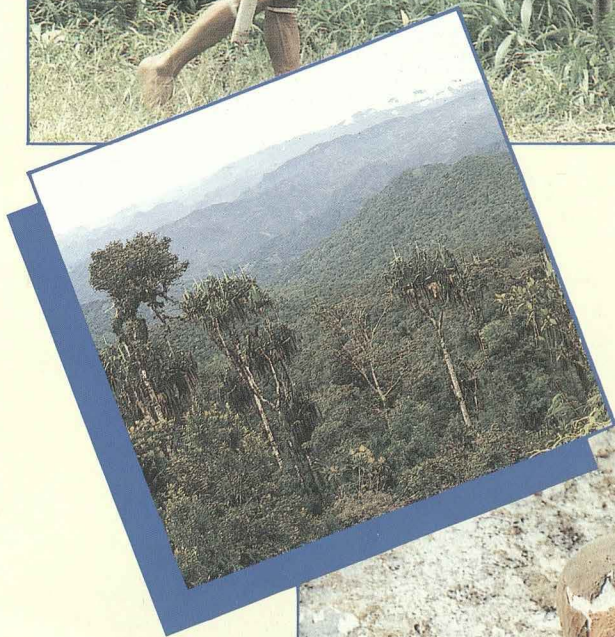
Story and photographs
by Holger Braun



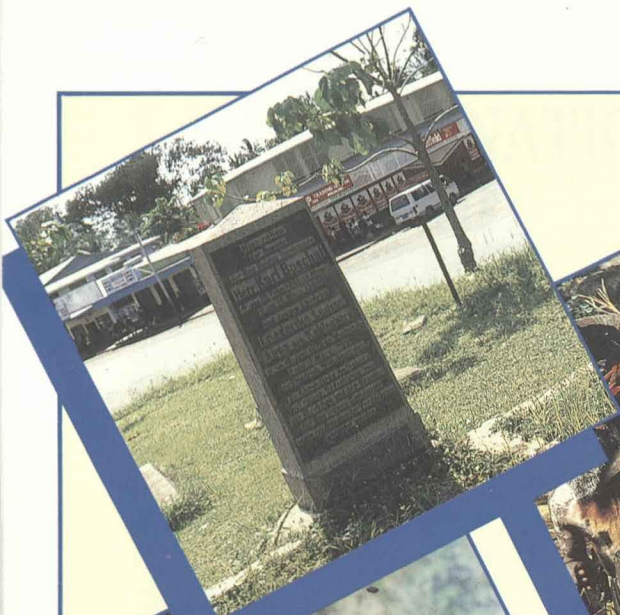
Standing on the terrace of the Ambua Lodge in the Southern Highlands at sunset, I feel the cool evening air slowly descending on the great valley. In the distance is Tari, where I landed this morning. Hidden in the lush green scenery must be the road that brought me here. Thin columns of smoke rise into the sky as the smell lags heavily in the air. This must have been similar to the view the Leahy Brothers saw as the first Westerners to Highlands of PNG in the early 1930s. To me, being

here fulfils a childhood dream - to see the country of 700 tribes and cultures, I read so much about. The reality exceeds all expectations.

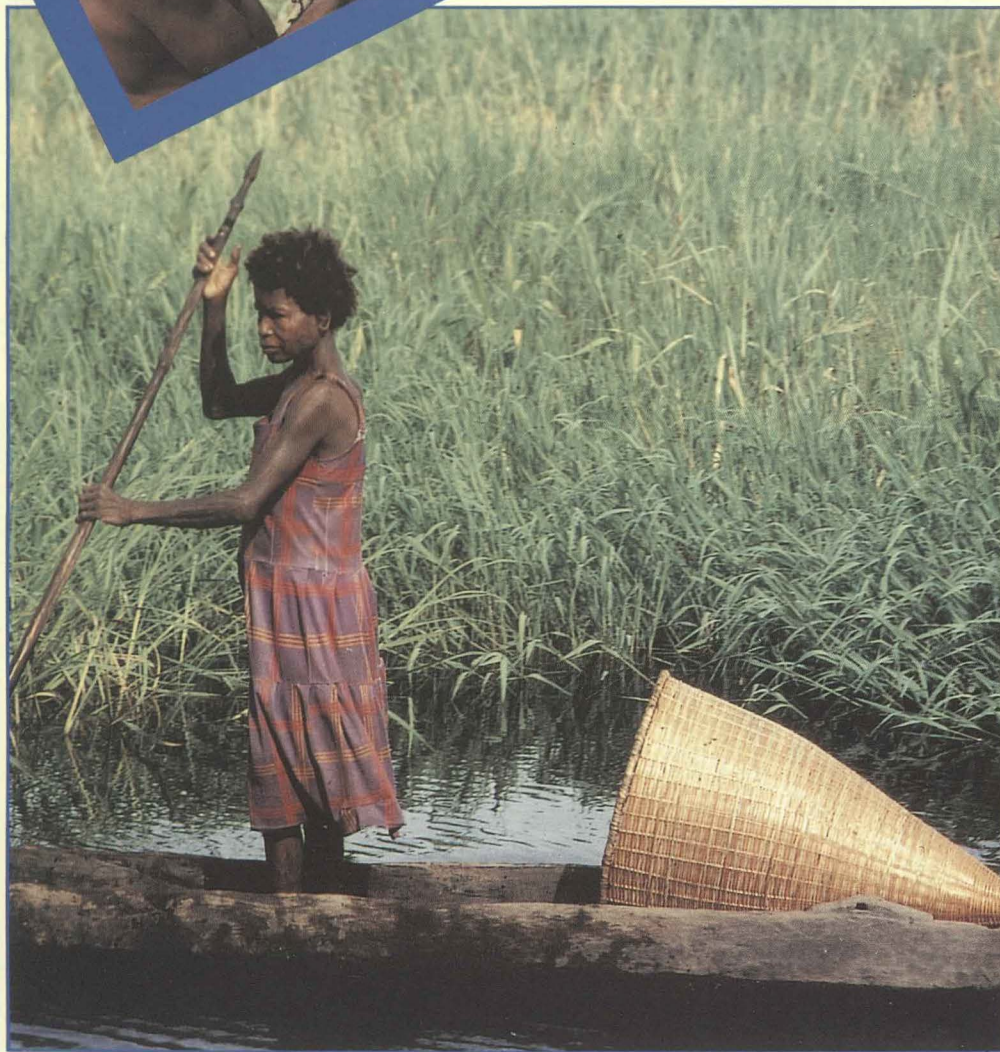
The first highlight of my visit was the smoked bodies of Aseki, a village near Bulolo in the Morobe Mountains. Along the way there, by the Watut River, grassland changed into rainforest. Dwellings of brown bush material nestled into landscape. At one stop we met a Kukuku tribesman carrying a bow and arrow. It was my first opportunity to practice my pidgin and ask him why he carried them. He proudly told me that he was hunting birds of paradise. At Aseki we stood before the burial cave. On a limestone wall several mummies (men, women & children) sat on bamboo stools. Villagers who



Top Huli villager carrying water in a bamboo pipe. centre Morobe Province mountains. right Smoked bodies of Aseki.

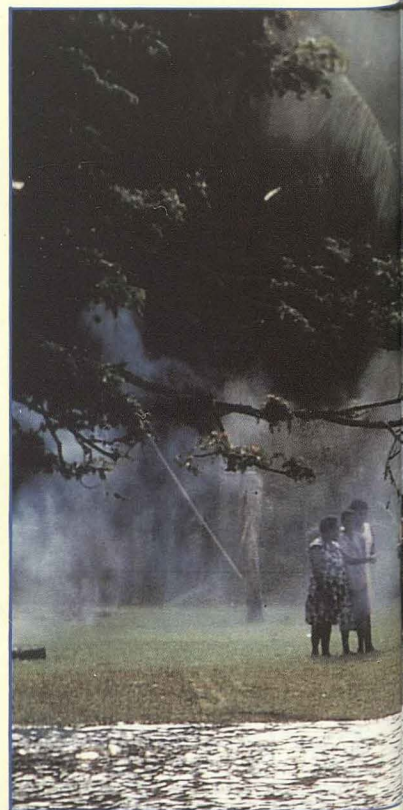


Top Headstone in the German cemetery, Madang. **left** Making fire, huli-style. **above** Mt Hagen singing. **below** Blackwater River fisherwoman with fish trap.

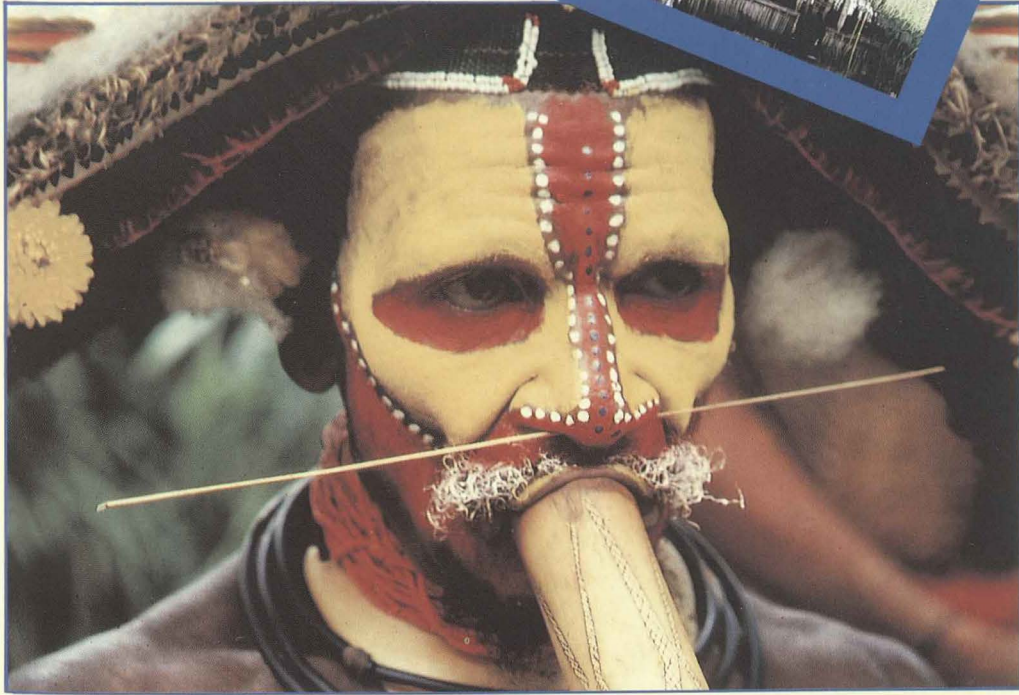
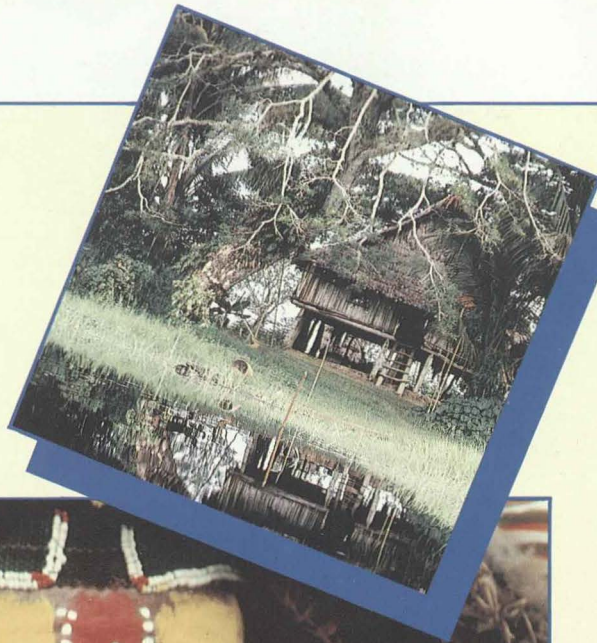


accompanied us on the visit explained that displaying the dead ensured their ancestors could watch over the living and were always remembered by them. This custom has been abandoned and the last person placed there died during World War II.

My next destination was Madang. The mysterious remains of my own ancestors fascinated me. It is a very special feeling to walk over the German cemetery near today's market place, to read familiar sounding names and to imagine how they might have lived, while working for the 'Neuguinea-Kompagnie', about 100 years ago. At that time, Madang was called Friedrich Wilhelms-Hafen and consisted of the Europeans' houses, the administration buildings, a little hotel and the much frequented hospital. When I drove north along the coastal road from Madang, I was enchanted by endless coconut plantations, built during early years of the



German colonial period (1884-1914) - an unprofitable venture as the trees did not yet bear fruits in 1914. Today the crops are still bountiful. The coconut I was given as a welcome at the idyllic Malolo Plantation Lodge that evening was like a greeting from my forefathers.



After a pleasant sojourn by the Bismarck Sea, I headed for Mt Hagen, in the cool Central Highlands. On an excursion through the huge Wahgi Valley, I saw a singsing by the Hagen people. About 20 men and women decorated themselves with the best bilas (traditional dress). Most striking were the headdresses of colorful bird of paradise plumes. The deep monotonous sound of hand drums, called kundus, accompanied by the men's singing of archaic verses filled the air. But when asked about the origin of the song, Henry, the 'Bigman' of Kumbai, explained to onlookers that every dancer invents his own words and the best are chosen. The one being sung about us was, evidence of how Papua New Guineans adapt old customs to new situations.

Top Blackwater River family house. **left** Decorated Huli warrior smoking his pipe. **below** Early morning at Mindibit village, Sepik River.





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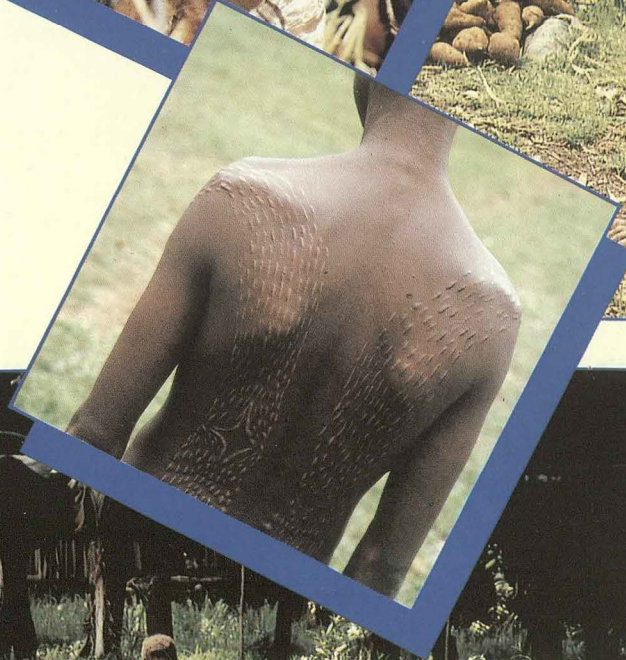
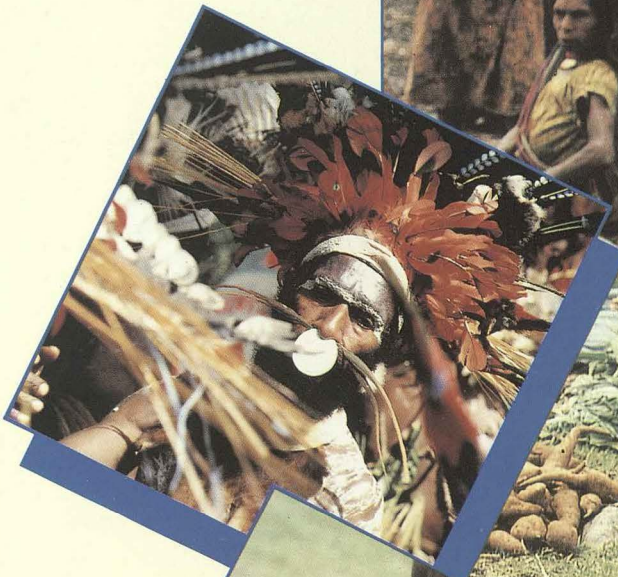
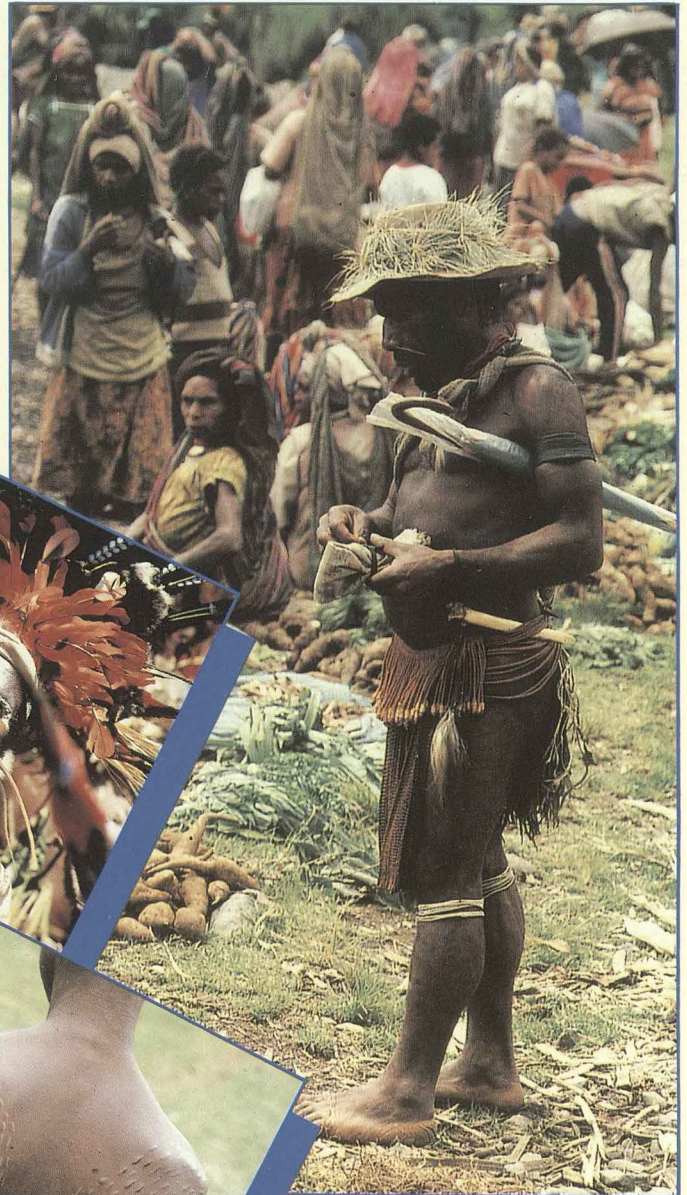
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The difference between the cool mountains and the heat of the Sepik is surprising. From Timbukne, the Sepik Spirit, a floating lodge, brought us from the Sepik into the Krosameri River and the Blackwater Lake. These waters were travelled by a German expedition in 1913. On our cruise we visited many villages selling superb artifacts. But the pinnacle of this tour was the village of Kraimbit, a remote village at the edge of the Blackwater Lake. It was dominated by an eerie haus tambaran where long-nosed initiation masks, woven from cane were stored. They had been used during a recent initiation ceremony where young initiates were scarred

on their chests and backs, the so called 'bite of the crocodile', performed by their uncles wearing the masks. In preparation, the initiates stayed several months in the gloomy haus tambaran and after the ceremony, became 'men'.



Air Niugini operates regular services between Port Moresby and Tari where tour companies provide light aircraft connections to the Sepik area. The Sepik can also be reached easily from Wewak which is also served by regular Air Niugini flights.



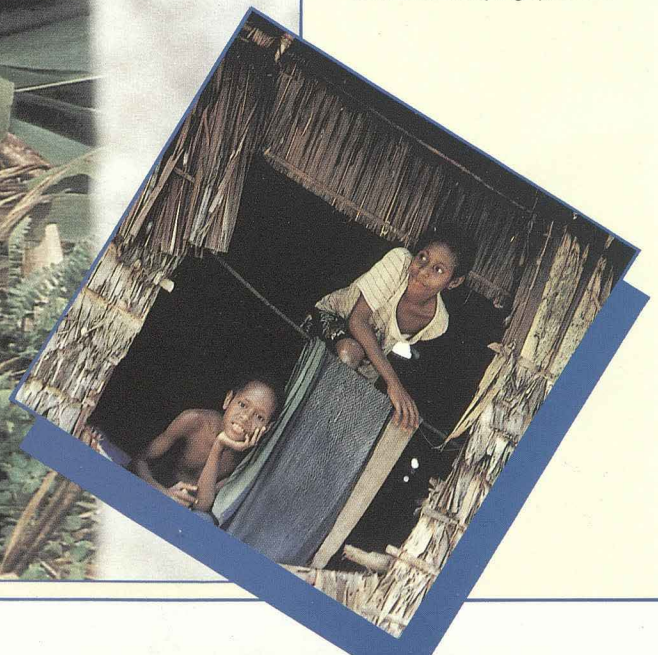
Above Prized umbrella tucked under his arm, a Huli man surveys produce at Tari market. **upper inset** Mt Hagen singing performer. **lower inset** Young Sepik man with traditional crocodile pattern scarring. **left** Karawari River children at play.



Although the Portuguese Jorge de Menezes sighted the island in 1526 the impact on local culture has been felt only this century. While the coastal areas of PNG were culturally changed during the colonial period, some of the Highland areas have just recently opened to the outside world.

I remember the Tari Valley, home of the Huli tribe. It was market day and the road pulsated with life. Women sold their garden fruits, men carrying bows and arrows walked along. The men are especially proud of their elaborate wigs of human hair, often decorated with flowers or plumes. Everywhere, the sound of strange melodies from the gulupobe-panpipe could be heard. It made me understand why the first Westerners called it 'Papuan wonderland' – for that's what it was to me, and it is calling me back.

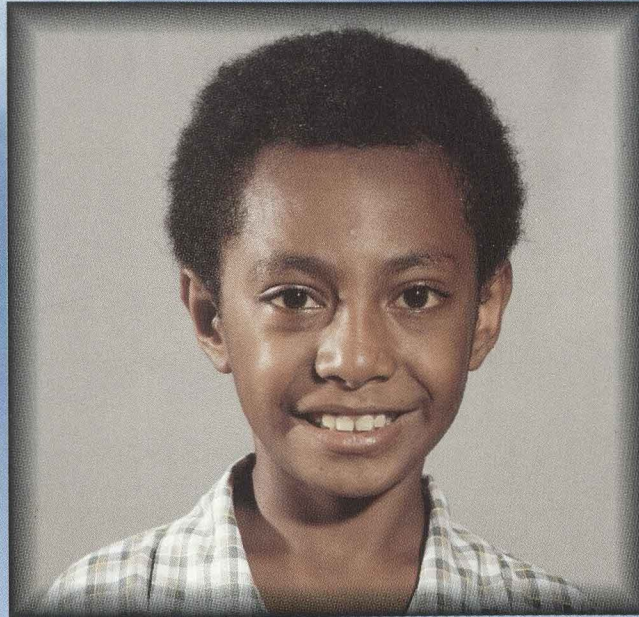
Left Kukuku woman tending her garden. **below** Sepik children peer from their sleeping quarters.



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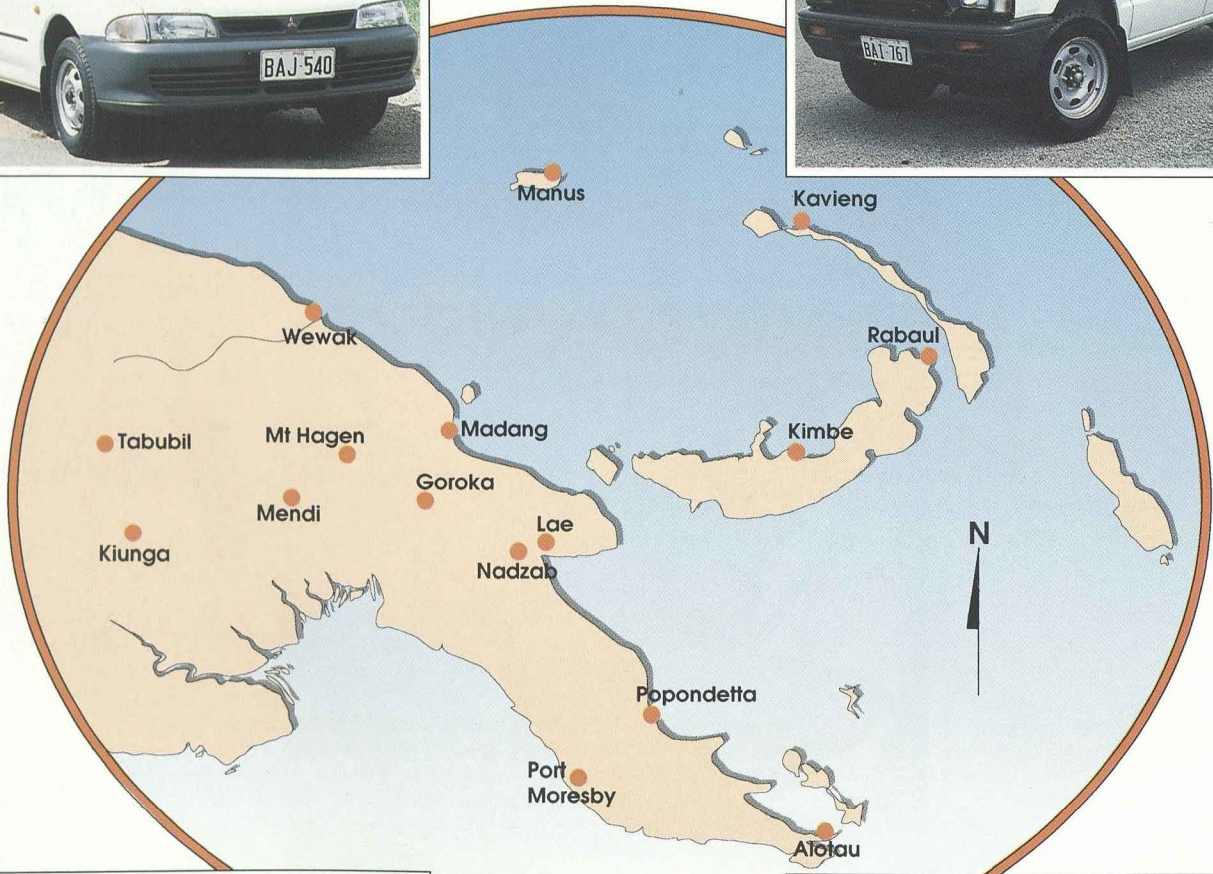


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Papal Visit 1995

Story by Lucy Palmer Photographs by Susan Turner

Right His Holiness Pope John Paul II salutes welcoming crowds at Port Moresby. **below** Thousands stood for hours in rain to attend Mass and witness the beatification of Peter To Rot.



Not everyday does Pope John Paul II get asked to bless a humble bilum, the hand-made traditional string bag carried by Papua New Guineans.

But when Sister Elizabeth, a nun from Mekeo in Central Province, went up to receive her blessing from the 74-year-old Pontiff during his recent visit to Port Moresby, she had every confidence he would happily grant her request .



Papal Visit 1995

Right Scenes of welcome and farewell for the Pope on his visit to Papua New Guinea. **far right** welcome speech is given by the Governor-general, Sir Wiwi Korowi.

Such an informal approach was the hallmark of the Pope's three-day visit in January, from his witty off-the-cuff speeches, to the sight of an ageing bishop crouching down in the back of the makeshift 'popemobile', gripping the leg of the spinning 'holy' chair.

The Pope is held in reverential awe by Papua New Guineans who hold dear their own tradition of the Big Man as head of the clan, but in the words of one of the faithful: "We regard him as our father, our brother, friend and leader".

"People here feel very much the presence of a Big Man, and they can read people, their spirit", said papal visit organiser Father Adrian Meaney. "If the Western world can say this fellow is one of the most impressive men on earth, imagine what a Melanesian feels."

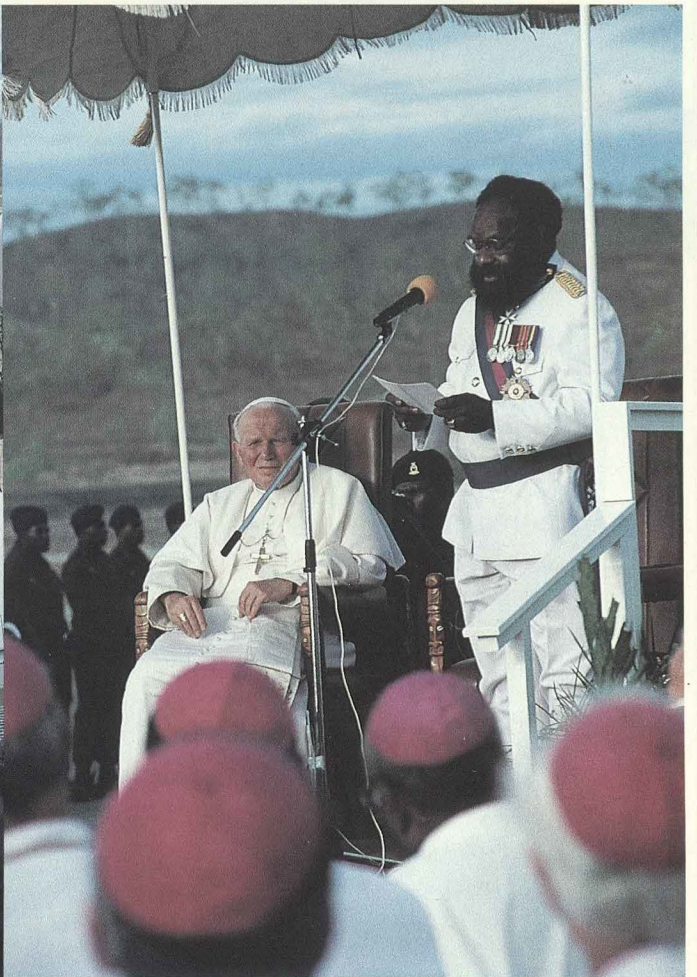
In many countries access to the Pope, who is often completely surrounded by security men and staff, can be difficult for ordinary people, but in Port Moresby, the Pope was happy to mingle quite freely.

The highlight of the Pontiff's visit, part of a gruelling four-nation tour around the region, was the beatification of the Tolai catechist, Peter To Rot, the first indigenous person in the whole of Oceania to be so honored.

Beatification is the first step on the road to sainthood, and it has traditionally taken years for a person to be beatified.

In To Rot's case, however, the witnesses to his life and his death in 1945 gave authorities ample evidence to prove that he should become the first indigenous martyr of PNG.





Papal Visit 1995

Right The Pontiff during Holy Mass at Sir John Guise Stadium. **centre** Central Province dancer who entertained His Holiness at St Joseph's Parish, East Boroko, Port Moresby. **Bottom** Mass at St Joseph's Parish.

A prisoner of war, To Rot was given a lethal injection by Japanese doctors in 1945 at the end of World War II. He had refused to stop teaching the faith to fellow villagers on the island of East New Britain, several hundred kilometres north west of the PNG mainland.

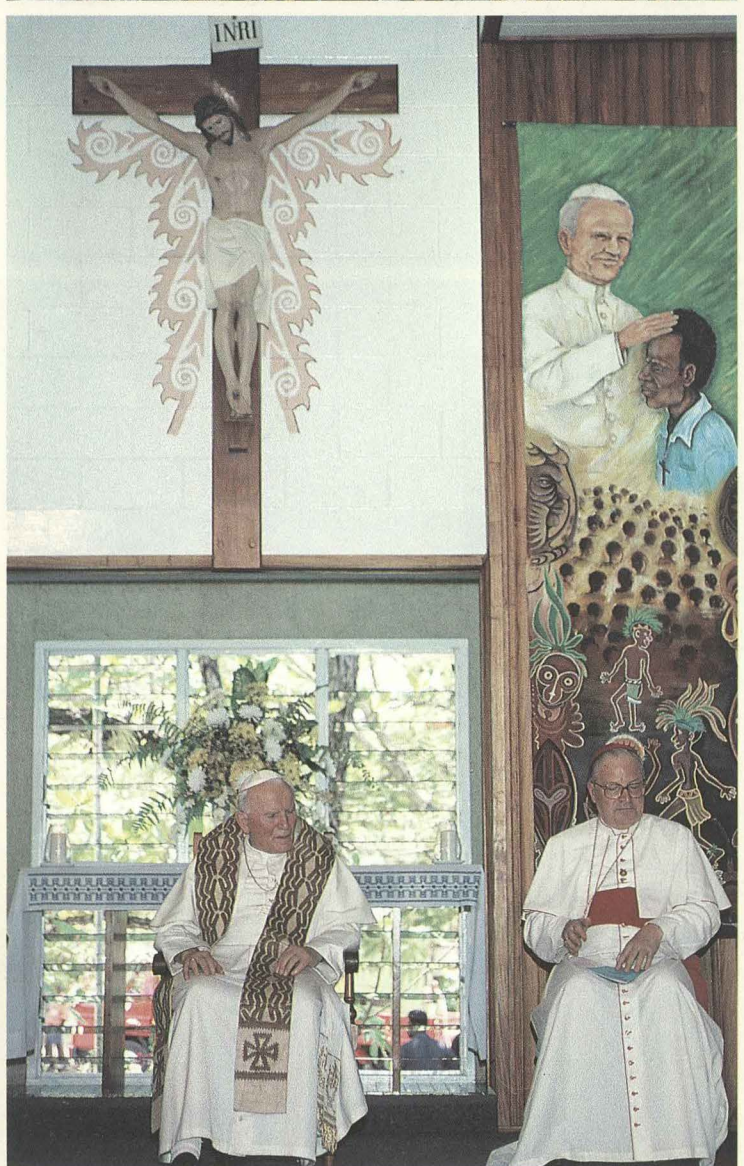
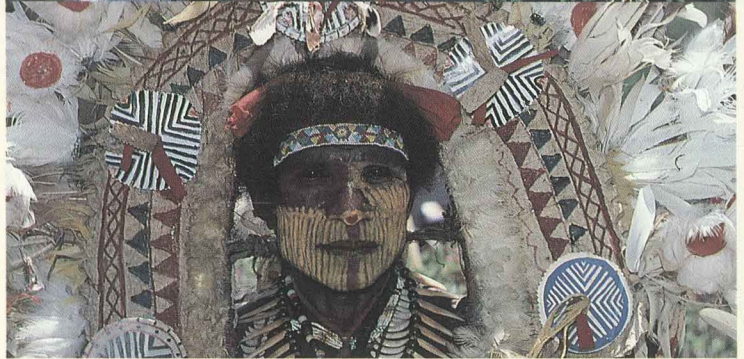
To Rot's family and a man who witnessed the killing, provided the main evidence that was used to convince the Vatican of his martyrdom.

According to Father Lucio, the decision to beatify To Rot just 50 years after his death and only 10 years after his case was first presented to Rome, set a new record for the Vatican.

Ruffina Ia Mama, one of To Rot's three children, later described the ceremony, attended by many tribal groups dancing and displaying their traditional 'bilas' of feathered headdresses and shark-tooth necklaces, as "an indescribable joy".

But there were many in To Rot's home parish of Rakunai near Rabaul, who were understandably disappointed that last September's devastating volcanic eruptions, had prevented the ceremony being held as originally planned in the new church built for To Rot, where his remains will eventually rest.

The final act of the Pope before leaving PNG was to bless the sick at a special ceremony at St Joseph's church in the Port Moresby suburb of Boroko. One woman who died shortly afterwards reportedly said that she felt a deep serenity after the Pope blessed her, and no longer feared death.



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