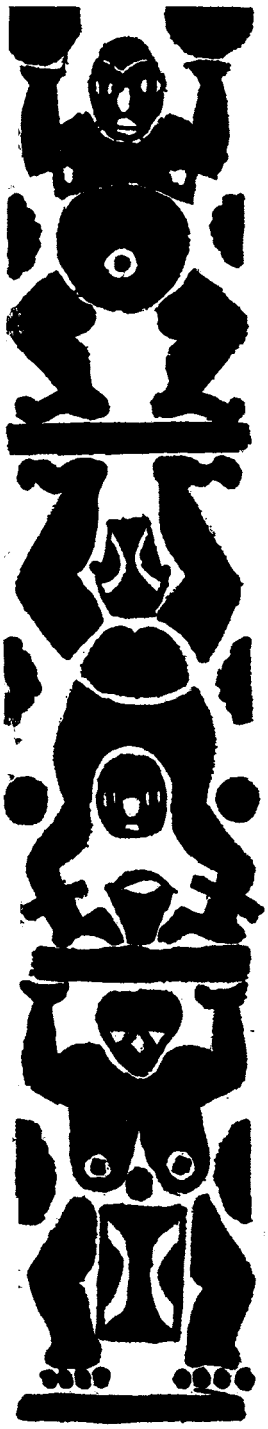
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

EPW-28
Tourism

P.O. Box 628,
Port Moresby,
Papua,
Territory of Papua
and New Guinea

January 5, 1971



Mr. Richard H. Nolte,
Executive Director,
Institute of Current World Affairs,
535 Fifth Avenue,
New York, New York 10017,
United States of America

Dear Mr. Nolte,

Until quite recently, tourists were almost positively discouraged from visiting Papua and New Guinea. Large areas of the country were not safe for travel by outsiders; there were few facilities available for internal travel or accommodation — and the few hotels there were had relatively unsavoury, if colourful, reputations; and the government was anxious not only to supervise the growth and nature of the indigenous people's contacts with the outside world, but to control the type and numbers of their visitors too. Only in the last few years has tourism received official encouragement — to the point, now, that the fostering of a tourist industry is an avowed objective of the Administration's five year plan for Papua and New Guinea's economic development. This "Newsletter" is the product of some recent musings on the growth of tourism in Papua and New Guinea, and some experience of its consequences.

Some History

"Contrary to received opinion," Beatrice Grimshaw wrote in a special appendix (entitled "How to Reach Papua") to The New New Guinea, "Papua is not very 'out-of-the-way'." At time of writing, 1910, it took only six weeks to travel by sea from Tilbury to Sydney, ten more days to Cooktown (in North Queensland), and two more days across Torres Strait to Port Moresby. For the better-off traveller, the trip to Sydney cost £41 by P and O, but for anyone who did "not mind a good deal of 'roughing it' and some mixed company," there were boats that did the trip for £20. The journey from Sydney to Port Moresby cost but a further £12.

However, opinions varied as to the inducements that would draw a traveller to Papua. Alexander MacDonald, who wrote of his travels some three years before Miss Grimshaw clearly

felt that some people went to Papua for no better reason than that it was simply there:

> "To the wanderer there are few spots on the earth's surface which remain long unknown, for the dark corners of our little planet exercise for him a peculiar attraction which malarial swamps, hostile natives, voracious mosquitoes, and kindred pests can in nowise lessen or subdue."

To Miss Grimshaw, it seemed advisable to add a note of caution for the wouldbe adventurer:

> "Exploring expeditions into the interior should by no means be undertaken 'lightly or inadvisedly.' There is no country in the world that makes a greater tax upon the pluck, determination, strength, and organising power of explorers than Papua; nor can the unknown interior be reached without considerable expenditure. Hundreds are not much use when it comes to serious exploring; unless the traveller's pocket will stand a call of at least four figures, he had better not try to tempt the fascinating unknown. It must also be added that exploration in Papua is surrounded by restrictions that do not obtain in Africa. If a Papuan explorer were to hang his men for misconduct, he would run a fair chance of being hanged himself when he came back."

While the Lieutenant-Governor (Sir Hubert Murray) deprecated the value of tourism to Papua, in that the money spent by tourists went into the tills of a single large company, while the Papuans were "spoiled" through being taught to beg, the official Handbook of the Territory of Papua encouraged Australians to "visit their own Territory and their own subjects." In the words of the 1912 edition:

> "To the tourist, Papua offers a rich and varied field of unique interest. If the desire of Australians is to see primitive native races, magnificent scenery, and a tropical country possessing conditions in every way dissimilar to those obtaining in Australia, they have truly to spend a month or six weeks in visiting their own Territory and making the acquaintance of their native subjects."

The 1927 edition cautioned the truly venturesome that "to visit the interior a somewhat longer stay is necessary to engage guides and carriers and provide sleeping accommodation and food supplies, as with few exceptions the mountainous regions of the interior can be traversed only on foot."

And what to take? Again according to the 1912 Handbook:

> "Woollen tweeds, and other clothing, such as is worn in southern Australia and other temperate climates, are quite useless in this country, except at a considerable elevation, and are generally required only on the journey to and fro. The most suitable articles for the outfit are a number of khaki and white duck suits with military collars, and a good supply of light flannel underclothing. Khaki trousers

One of the newer ...

and a Crimean or khaki shirt, with pockets, are largely worn for outdoor duties.

"The most suitable head-gear is a wide-brimmed pith or helmet hat. Two or three pairs of strong but not heavy boots, several pairs of canvas shoes, and a plentiful supply of woollen socks, will complete the most important items of wearing apparel.

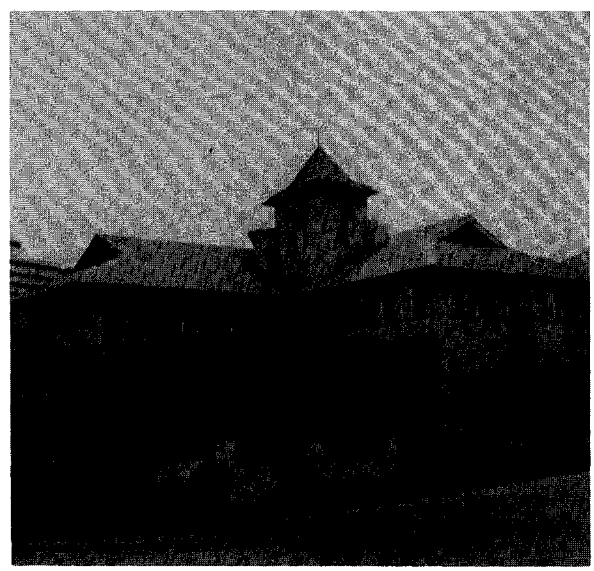
"Knickerbockers and puttees are useful in rough country and where land-leeches are numerous.

"Every tourist must bring, or purchase locally, a mosquito-net of somewhat fine mesh, a canvas stretcher, pillows, and sheets, and a couple of light blankets or rugs.

"Steel or compressed cane trunks are preferable to leather port-manteaux or Gladstone bags, as leather goods soon deteriorate, and are not as proof against damp or rain."

An official entry-permit was, of course, necessary too.

For the traveller who preferred the towns, there were also the hotels to consider — from the legendary Wau hotel where the goldminers if not the more gentile government officers drank, with a patch of ground called the "Stadium" outside for use when drinking palled, or stimulated too much debate; to the pre-war Ryan's Hotel in Port Moresby, where — so Dr. Lambert wrote — the customers "drank excessively ... to drown the taste of Ryan's food," and the gap between the top of the bedroom walls and the ceiling was so large that "[i]f elephants could fly they would have made it, too" from one room to another.



... and one of the older Port Moresby hotels

After the war, when conditions became even worse for a time, there was an hotel in Rabaul with paper walls that started one foot from the floor and finished three feet from the ceiling. And this hotel, a well-known

writer said, was quite magnificent when compared with that in Lae.

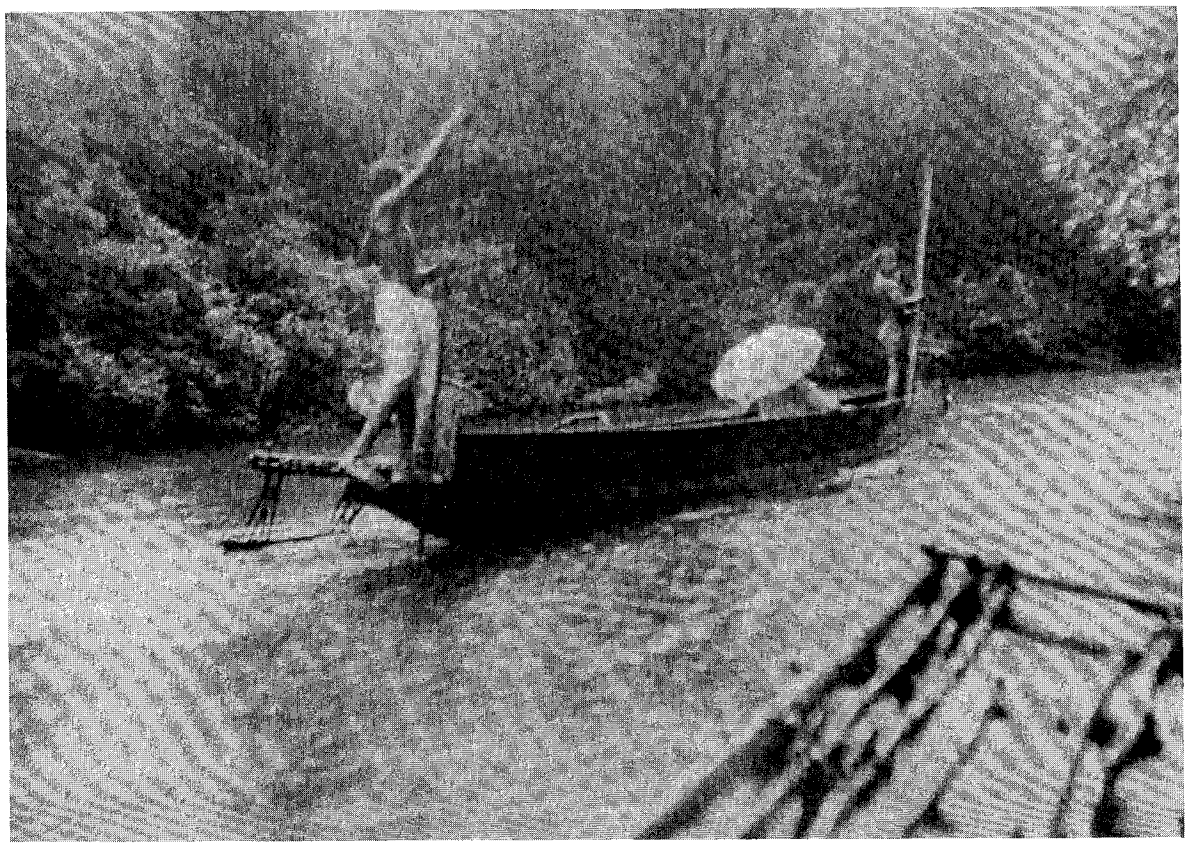
Since then, the picture has, of course, changed vastly. The old hotels are no longer even memories, but legends — although it is not so long ago that travellers were still expected to sleep three or even four to a room in some centres. The new philosophy is more widely acceptable, and more in line with international standards, if a little less exciting. As the Executive Director of the Papua and New Guinea Tourist Board has recently observed, nowadays, "tourists will put up with inconveniences to see something different ... but they demand comfort by night."

The Growth of Tourism

Until 1959, Papua and New Guinea was something of a travellers' dead-end for the non-sailor: its sole scheduled air-services with the outside world were to and from Australia. Early in 1959, however, a regular, weekly service linking Sydney and Port Moresby with Hong Kong was inaugurated, and this was continued until Qantas withdrew from the Territory in 1962. Papua and New Guinea then had no air-links with the outside world beyond Australia, except to and from two further travelling blind-alleys, Honiara and West Irian, until 1967, when the Hong Kong service was reinstituted, and later supplemented by a weekly flight to Manila, and services that link Honiara with other Pacific countries. Papua and New Guinea has only recently begun to catch up with its more aggressive and more centrally located rivals for the custom of the South Pacific's wouldbe foreign visitors. And much of the stimulus for this development has come from the government's economic advisers, at least in the early stages.

Development economists generally have become increasingly enamoured of tourism in recent years, as an earner of income through "invisible" exports, especially as it seems to require comparatively little direct financial assistance or indirect administrative support from the government to succeed. There is, indeed, a tendency among government-employed economists, and investigating experts and consultants from the large international agencies, to forego their usual statistical analyses, painstakingly charted graphs, and carefully compiled tables, when investigating the tourist potential of the South Pacific, for ecstatic poetry and projected whimsy. E.J.E. Lefort, for example, who was retained by the South Pacific Commission some fifteen years ago to investigate the economic potential for a tourist industry in Tahiti opened his report rather self-consciously with the following prefatory remarks:

> "Some will undoubtedly be surprised to discover in the present economic survey tendencies that are somewhat *poetic and psychological*. It is true that in our time figures are predominant and statistics sovereign. However, there exist riches which mathematical science is incapable of calculating; among these, we consider, are the nature and atmosphere of Tahiti."



On a tour along a stream in the Trobriand Islands

Even the hard-nosed economists from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development who visited Papua and New Guinea in 1963 tried their hands at lyric prose before settling down to suggest that immigration formalities be simplified, tour plans be worked out, cost/benefit studies be undertaken, and money be spent on promotion. Curiously, very few poets have waxed as elegantly on the profitable inevitability of tourism as have students of "the dismal science".

However, following upon the I.B.R.D. Report, the old official reserve was dropped, and a national tourist board was set up in 1966, with modest government assistance (to the tune of $60,000 per annum in recent years). And, as the following figures show, the number of short-term visitors who come to Papua and New Guinea to holiday has risen rapidly in recent years:

Short-term Visitors on Holiday in Papua and New Guinea

Year Ending June 30	Number of Tourists	Year Ending June 30	Number of Tourists
1960	3537	1966	8622
1961	4616	1967	9359
1962	5005	1968	8474(a)
1963	5326	1969	11268
1964	6707	1970	14366
1965	7495		

(a) Prior to 1968, the totals included residents returning to the Territory for short-term visits.

Internal tourism in the usual sense is confined to the expatriate population of the Territory, except at show-time (especially in Goroka and Mount Hagen), when many Papuans and New Guineans, dressed in long socks and shorts, go sightseeing in the past.

More than half of Papua and New Guinea's short-term visitors now come on holidays, and of these an overwhelming majority (81.4% in 1970) are still Australians, although a rapidly increasing number are Americans and Japanese (8.8% and 2.9% respectively of the total number of short-term visitors for all purposes in 1969-70), who came mainly on "package tours". There are hotels, hostels, motels, hometels, guest houses, clubs and homes with accommodation for rental by them in fully thirty-seven Territory centres (see the map in the appendix to this "Newsletter" for details), and many more hotels, motels, and guest houses are planned — in the Sepik, the Western Highlands, the New Guinea islands, and elsewhere.

Problems of Growth

From the beginning, there have been considerable differences of opinion as to the worth and likely impact of tourism. In his study of Tahiti, Monsieur Lefort felt confident about the longterm value of a tourist industry:

> "Tourism is not only the most elegant of industries, it is also a precious industry by reason of the potential prosperity which it establishes in the country engaged in tourist activity. Its immediate effects are always manifested by a rise in local living standards; its long-term effects take the form of improvements in town-planning and housing, the extension of vocational training, the development of new talents, the renaissance of folklore and craftsmanship, the

> decrease of unemployment, the development of communications by sea, air and on land, the establishment of new industries and the renewal or conversion of agriculture. None of these social and economic aspects would have been likely to show any change if tourism had not provided the necessary stimulus."

However, the Papua and New Guinea authorities have generally been rather less sanguine than Monsieur Lefort was as to the likely benefits to be derived from tourism, and the Tourist Board has begun to turn its energies from promotion of the Territory abroad (among travel agents rather than the public to date) to expressing an increasing concern with "the internal image" of the industry. Indeed, during the very debate in parliament on the board's formation, Dr. John Guise pressed for an indigenous majority among its members lest tourism increase the country's earnings "at the expense of the dignity and respect of the Papuan and New Guinean people." Dr. Guise's move was lost, although the eleven-member board presently has an indigenous vice-chairman, and two other indigenous members to represent the local people's interests vis-à-vis the industry's representatives. The board as a whole has also pledged itself to try "to preserve native cultural and social life as much as possible." However, the industry's real problems are not, as has commonly been thought since Sir Hubert Murray's day, to avoid "spoiling the natives" or to minimise its disruptive effects on a putatively passive society; its problems are far more complex and subtle than that, involving a wide range of accommodations which must be worked out with the people of Papua and New Guinea.

Some Experiences and Reflections

Despite, or perhaps because of, the tourist industry's recent rapid expansion in Papua and New Guinea, an outside observer of its practices and working assumptions, and part-time tourist, like myself, cannot help feeling somewhat uneasy about its future.

For how long will the anxious young modernisers who are emerging now be reconciled to advertising campaigns that tempt the visitor to "travel 10,000 years through time" or to see "primitive man ... primitive beauty ...", with a lack of taste that runs the full gamut from an emphasis and advocacy of the un-modern to the interferingly personal? As if bare breasts and feathers were not enough, various leaflets and even an official manual (in the case of the first four quotations) promise, suggest, and state:

> "... a long hard drive but the people in these areas [Obura and Okapa in the Eastern Highlands] are still very primitive and therefore of considerable interest to tourists."

> "Civilization has brought economic development to these people [the Chimbus] but has changed very few of their colourful customs such as "carryun leg" (a tradition which has its equivalent in the modern

> hippie cult's 'love-in'). ...Visitors should contact District Office, Kundiawa, to find out where these festivals and ceremonies are taking place."
>
> "The Southern Highlands is an interesting region for artifact collectors .... 'Pineapple' stone axes mortar and pestle from a 'lost' civilization ... [all, incidentally, illegal to export]."
>
> "Talk to the magnificent Raggiara Bird of Paradise who can swear beautifully in any language."
>
> "All that can be hoped for is that civilisation does not change the ever-fascinating ways and customs of the Eastern Highlanders ...."
>
> "Sing-sings arranged on application."

On the other hand, what short-term security is there for an industry in which only last year a large company was unable to raise the loan-capital to build a multimillion dollar hotel in Port Moresby, and in which one of the few ocean-liners that cruise intermittently through the islands did not stop at Rabaul as scheduled, both because of recent civil disturbances on the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain? And what, too, of the bother of obtaining guaranteed accommodation, a return-ticket, and then awaiting the result of a security-check, before a permit to enter is issued by the government?

At a slightly more complex level, there are the problems that result from the interaction of the tourist industry and the host society: prostitution, begging, dishonesty and "spivvery", and the lowering of craftwork standards — the familiar accompaniments of tourism elsewhere in the Pacific. These problems tend, however, to be posed superficially, in moralistic terms that differ only verbally, but not spiritually, from Sir Hubert Murray's fear of the indigenes' "spoiling". Indeed, at one level, they all have their compensations: money. If nothing else, the girls who are available are better-paid and better-dressed than their predecessors; tipping and begging can provide income; and some artefacts at least are more artistically designed nowadays, if nonetheless "corrupted" by outside influences and the desire for ready cash. While the steel-bladed "traditional" axes sold in some places are, to put it mildly, unattractive, it seems nevertheless quite pointless to hope that stone-carved bowls and masks will be made and sold for ever at "rock-bottom prices".

The real disruptions caused by tourism are deeper and more terrible than those outlined above, and are only rarely recognised, much less discussed. They find their roots in some of the truly unpleasant impulses in the modern spirit, and only secondarily in the avarice and temptations of the money-less aspiring. They are the product, above all, of the truly peripheral nature of the local people's real involvement in the tourist industry.

Haggling over artefact prices in the Trobriand Islands

The five year plan, for example, is rather less optimistic than Monsieur Lefort:

> "The growth of the tourist industry should stimulate local manufacture of curios and artifacts of various kinds, but cannot be expected to have any appreciable effect on the general development of manufacturing industry. Sales of these products are already expanding. The tourist industry will, however, promote considerable indigenous participation through organised sing sings, canoe chartering, village tours and the provision of personal services and cottage industry products to tourists. In addition, the need for booking clerks, clerical and hotel staff, guides, drivers and many other related positions will foster additional indigenous wage employment. To encourage this expansion, training schemes will be formulated and the industry will bring to the Territory persons experienced in the specialised aspects of tourism."

The country and cultures of the Papuan and New Guinean people may be the raison d'être of tourism, yet their involvement is confined to the

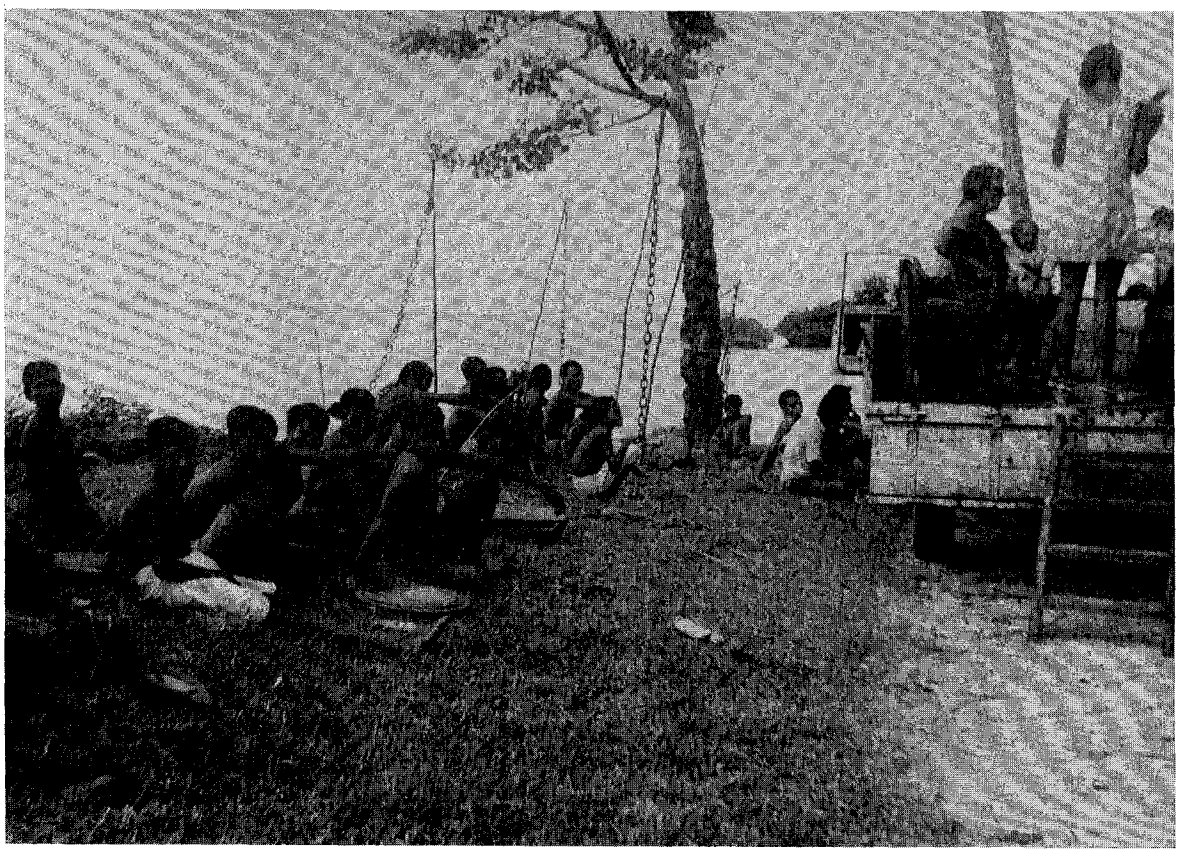
menial interstices and the entrepreneurial periphery of an expatriate-run industry. In the language of contemporary economic discussion in the Territory, they get the "spin-offs".

According to the Tourist Board, 34.4% of the tourist dollar is spent on accommodation, 29.3% on travel, and 36.2% on other services and goods. In practice, Papuans and New Guineans receive only wages from within the first two components, and sell artefacts (often through expatriate dealers) under the third head. In the accommodation field, there is a small, modestly-priced, council-owned hostel (meant "for use of local people") in Mount Hagen; a hotel with several large Tolai shareholders in Rabaul; and the possibility of a roughly fifty-percent local government council holding in a proposed hotel at Wapenamanda in the Western Highlands. In the transport field, a few Papuans and New Guineans own launches or small vans and are allowed to play a small part in some "package tours", but the airlines (apart from a twenty-percent Administration holding in Patair) are Australian- or expatriate-owned, and (except for "cargo-boys", some clerks, and two hostesses) similarly staffed. "English-speaking guide" or "driver" almost invariably means "white". In a few areas, however, artefacts are sold through a local council (as at Angoram and Maprik, in the Sepik) or directly by the makers, rather than through the more usual missionary and straight commercial intermediaries.

Socially, the tourist industry not infrequently relegates Papuans and New Guineans to being even less than spectators of development. Quite simply, the industry that pays some villagers not to wear western clothes by day, or flies Highlanders to Port Moresby to perform "authentic" dances for American millionaires who are short of time, does not — and, seemingly, cannot afford to — encourage direct contact between the tourist and the indigenous public. If, as G.K. Chesterton once said, "travel narrows the mind," it is because so many people journey abroad bearing their homegrown baggage of fears and prejudices with them — and insist, through the purse, that they be pandered to, and thereby proven.

With varying degrees of verbal caution, therefore, different leaflets warn female tourists against wearing shorts, with an implicit "in case ...". In Goroka, the tourist is welcomed to the area with a pamphlet that contains helpful Pidgin phrases: "forget about it", "don't do it", "I don!t want it", "no!"", and "food". In the Trobriand Islands, one is asked: "For security reasons please do not encourage the children and local people to come inside the wire fence that surrounds the hotel"; and, everywhere, one is "requested not to pay the people for posing for photographs," though they are encouraged, goaded, and sometimes just told, to wear their traditional finery for the tourists. In short, be careful: don't stick your fingers through the spiritual cage, and please don't feed them.

Of course, patient advice and carefully worded notices are not always enough. A number of hotels have special "guests only" bars, though the local expatriate community seems able to get in quite often. Others have indigenous bar-waiters who whisper — quite unauthorised,



Waiting by the roadside to sell, again in the Trobriand Islands

of course — "dispela ples bilong ol masta" ("this place is for Europeans") to the occasional Papuan or New Guinean who dresses up, and has the drinking money, to get in. The latest tactic — which some tourists as much as the management seem to think necessary — is a proposed three-bar hotel: one for "resident guests", one — of roughly equal standard — for the indigenous elite, and one, of cruder design (with fire-sprinklers set for various kinds of emergencies), for the less-sophisticated drinkers.

In Mount Hagen, young children ask for work, sell artefacts, and even offer their sisters. Some youngsters, anxious for the tourist-dollar spent so freely in their presence, ask car-drivers for a lift, then try to charge for guiding the latter to their destination. Another child once offered me a visit to his father's zoo: a dog, a cat, some chickens, cows, and pigs — all for twenty cents.

In the Trobriand Islands, the tourists are driven rapidly through the villages to barter for artefacts — and a companion of mine was punched in frustration at his unwillingness to buy.

In the Sepik, I have seen a drunken artefact-seller who wandered too close to a "restricted licence" bar wield, then have wielded

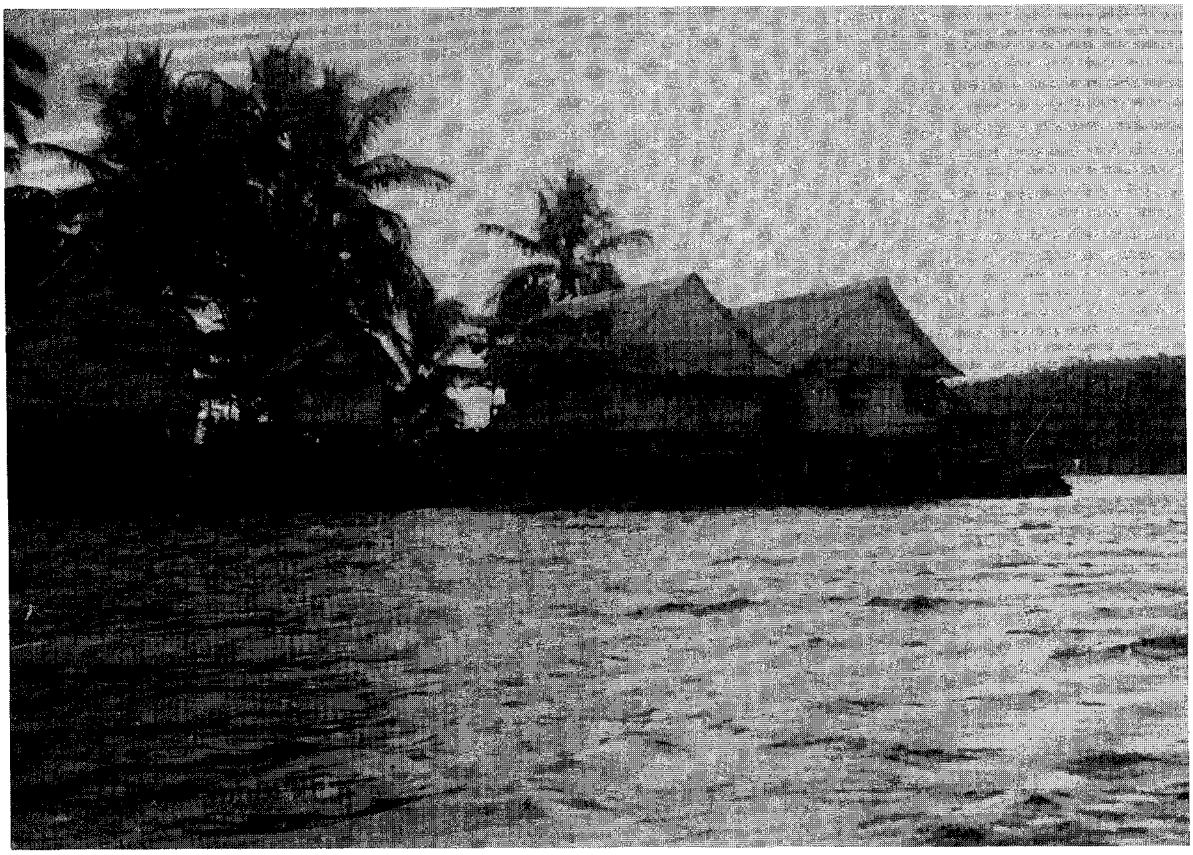
at himself, a fine carved fish.

What is lacking almost everywhere is somewhere for an orderly confrontation between buyer and seller. There are "Keep Out" notices in multiple languages, and unspoken limits to encroachment, but in only a very few areas is there an organised place for all. Indeed, even in the villages, the guides are white, or there is no explanation at all — just looking, photographing, and fingering.

By way of contrast, in the British Solomon Islands, where many people seem unduly apprehensive at the likely impact of a tourist industry that may not develop, there are expatriate investors who provide a place for the local money-earner. On Guadalcanal, you may meet the famous war-hero, Sergeant-Major Vouza, for a fee. At Laulasi, an artificial island in Malaita's Langalanga Lagoon, the people are discreetly paid for every tourist party in compensation for its invasion: and, in return, they demonstrate the intricacy of their traditional occupation of manufacturing shell-money, and display the integrity of their culture in their "custom house". At Tambea Village, west of Honiara, the absence of investment-capital among the villagers (which is so often the "explanation" for their non-participation in development in Papua and New Guinea) is not an insuperable obstacle to participation: the hotel's builders, cooks, waiters and other servants and suppliers are paid partly in cash and partly in kind (in shares). When the expatriate initiator of the project and his wife die, the Melanesian majority among the directors will be in complete control of the company.

However, in Papua and New Guinea, the people are there to be seen by the tourist — with no place for their pride or information about their culture, except the not infrequent assurance, from an expatriate, that they are "primitive" and lack a significant material culture, even in the case of some of the most famous woodcarving villages of eastern Papua. The country's tourists — who are now given "Visitor's Badges", so that they can immediately be identified as such — seemingly insist on seeing the primitive from behind glass, and preferably in air-conditioned comfort, where possible. Some hotels have even begun to move on from employing shirtless, shoeless waiters (for open — if resented — perspiring "atmosphere"), to expatriate waiters and waitresses, to avert the experience of unaccustomed surroundings for the foreign tourist. In addition, the third-hand tropicality of Hawaian songs and leis is beginning to be used to beckon those visitors for whom the excitement and colour of Melanesia are too crude, too frightening, or just strange.

If the foregoing experiences and reflections seem bleakly and critically drawn, then they are deliberately so, for Papua and New Guinea's burgeoning tourist industry is in many ways a grotesque parody of the economic structure and folkways of the Territory's entire expatriate society. There are, of course, other aspects too, some of which (council involvement in the provision of accommodation and artefact marketing facilities, for example) have been pointed to above. There are also the government-run catering school; the specially devised plays some Chimbu people put on for tourists to tell of their past; an indigenous director of a large, expatriate-owned hotel chain; and those of the

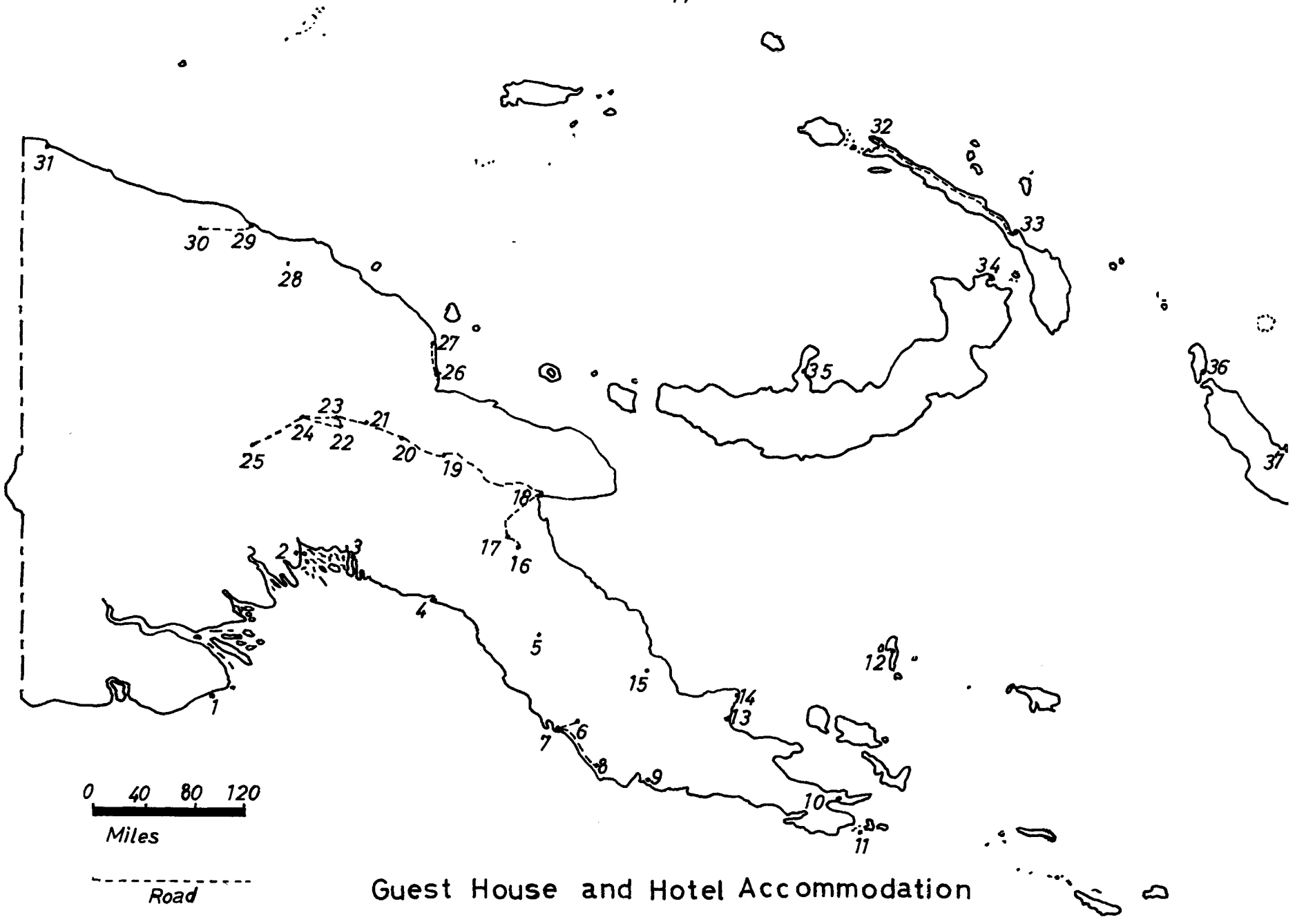


An artificial island in the Langalanga Lagoon, Malaita, B.S.I.P.

tourists who, out of kindness or curiosity, seek a form of contact with the indigenous people that commerce cannot supply. Still, all in all, the prospect remains grim: for the investor, who must find novel means to insinuate himself into a society with which many of his customers seek no more than intermittent, visual contact; and for those indigenous people who seek an economic stake in their country's future, and more than the condescending, somewhat bemused and cautious interest of the foreigner in their proud past.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Wolfers.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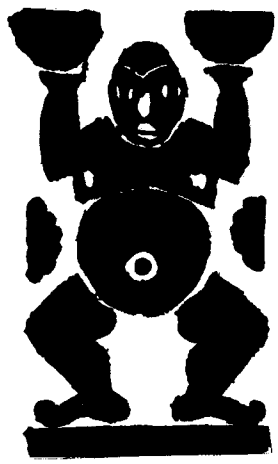
Guest House and Hotel Accommodation

Appendix: Guest House and Hotel Accommodation in Papua and New Guinea

Key to Map on Page 14

Number on Map	Name of Township	Type of Accommodation Available Guest House	Hotel	Hostel	Other
1	Daru		1		
2	Kikori	1			
3	Baimuru	1			
4	Kerema		1		
5	Tapini		1		
6	Rouna		1		1 Motel
7	Port Moresby	3	5	2	4 Motels 1 Home-tel
8	Kwikila		1		
9	Kupiano	1			
10	Alotau	1			
11	Samarai	1			
12	Losuia		1		
13	Wanigela	1			
14	Tufi	1			
15	Popondetta		1		
16	Wau		1		2 Flats
17	Bulolo		1		
18	Lae		2		1 Motel 1 Lodge
19	Kainantu		1		
20	Goroka		2		
21	Kundiawa		1		1 Lodge
22	Minj		1		
23	Banz		1		
24	Mount Hagen		2	1	1 Motel
25	Mendi	1			
26	Madang	1	1		2 Motels
27	Kaile Plantation		1		
28	Angoram		1		
29	Wewak		1		1 Motel
30	Maprik		1		
31	Vanimo		1		
32	Kavieng		1		
33	Namatanai				2 Private Accommodation
34	Rabaul	2	3		1 Women's Club 1 Lodge Flats
35	Talasea				1 Club
36	Buka				1 Private Accommodation
37	Kieta		1		

Note: All travel between centres must be made by air (or, with irregular schedules, by sea), except where roads are actually shown on the map.



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