



BEHIND NEW GUINEA'S MASKS

By GILBERT THOMAS

ALTHOUGH crisscrossed by airlines and studded with some 150 airfields, New Guinea is still deep in the stone age. The native of this Far Pacific island steps aboard the DC-3 with a string of fish, and a pig, and leaves the driving to the white man. He leaves too much to the white man, including the future of his native art.

The museums of the world are beginning to realize this art is priceless. There will not be any more. None with the vitality of that which has escaped the termites and damp-rot of the first fifty years of this century. The carved totems of the Kanaka, his fierce shields, bark paintings, and looming masks—they are all part of the past. Born in magic, here is the spiritual heritage of New Guinea. When the last old man with a coconut paint-pot dies, that's it.

Many of them won't paint. Or perhaps it was one old man's common sense that dictated his relaxing in the shade. He could not be moved with pounds, pesos, sous, or dollars. The village Tambaran house—spirit house—threw a fine shade, and besides, inside the Tambaran were rows of masks and bark paintings; so why paint more? The weather was warm, there was plenty of sago palm for bread, his yams—fertility symbols—were the largest along the Sepik River; what was the point? Why earn money for flashlights and bangles he didn't need?

Leave that to the younger men. They couldn't paint, but he noticed the white man bought all they produced. He smiled and fingered his snail money.

His village would not sell the major totems of the Tambaran. Minor ones, yes. And masks from private huts, and the curious carved hooks the white man seemed to crave. (The Kanaka hung his food from these, to keep it from the rats.) But the elders of this village had gathered in the Tambaran, among the restless spirits of their ancestors, and decided not to sell the old folks.

For this is what the totems represent. One legend of New Guinea has it that in the beginning there was a Great Magician who roamed the mountains and valleys of this lush land, but he was terribly alone. The loneliness was so overpowering that at last he felled the largest tree on the island and carved from it statues in his own image. He gathered them together and laid them in a grove shaded by the life-giving sago palm. It was then he began to beat softly and rhythmically on a slit-drum. His incantation was the language of the Kanaka, and as he drummed and sang, the statues came to life as the people of New Guinea, born in magic.

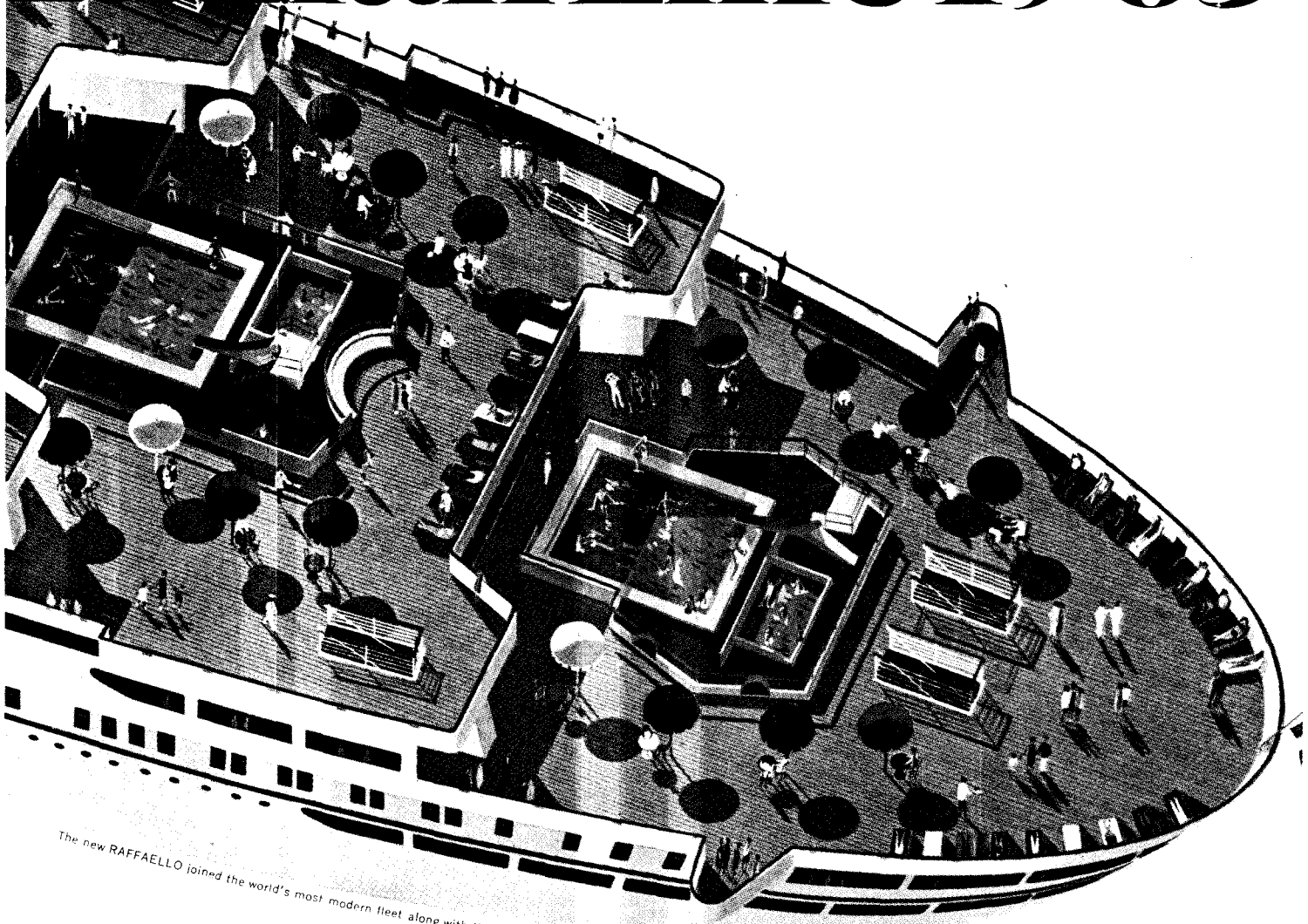
Today a slit-drum will bring \$2,250 in Los Angeles. It goes for \$700 in the jungle, a fortune for the village. I saw an example, simply carved and ancient, on sale at a major department store on Wilshire Boulevard. The store was hold-

ing a combination exhibit-sale of the art of New Guinea. Total value of the cull: \$200,000. Admirable as this new method is for bringing art directly to the American people, there will be very few slit-drums in the future. The young men will turn out heads like toothpicks and spread them with aniline-based dyes you can rub off with your thumb—but the old men will rest in the cool. Soon they will join their ancestors; and who will then carve *them* for the Tambaran?

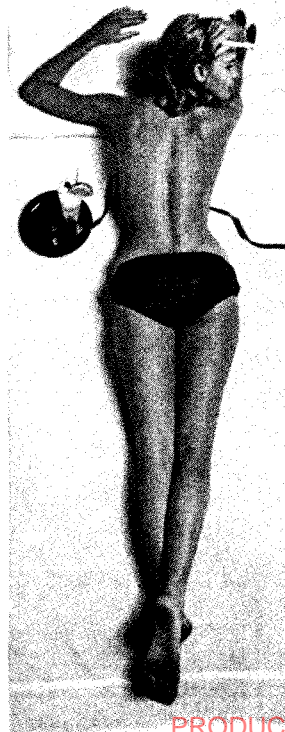
In a culture shaken by the Second World War, and today confused by a multiplicity of religions, the old men identify with the remaining carvings. And if he is a wise old man, one of the great men of the tribe, he will be buried in a slit-drum to ensure the journey to his forefathers. An expensive casket. But you can see why the old men won't sell everything. They have their reasons.

The Kanaka calls his totems "Diwai belong before." It means wood-from-the-past. To the Westerner, the past of New Guinea began in comparatively recent times; the longest river in this immense island of more than 300,000 square miles, the Sepik, wasn't discovered until 1885. Villages along the Sepik—a highway in the jungle—have been gutted of much of their art. Some adventurers have conscripted "police boys" to help them put pressure on the Kanaka to deliver up the treasures of their spirit
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Italian Line 1965

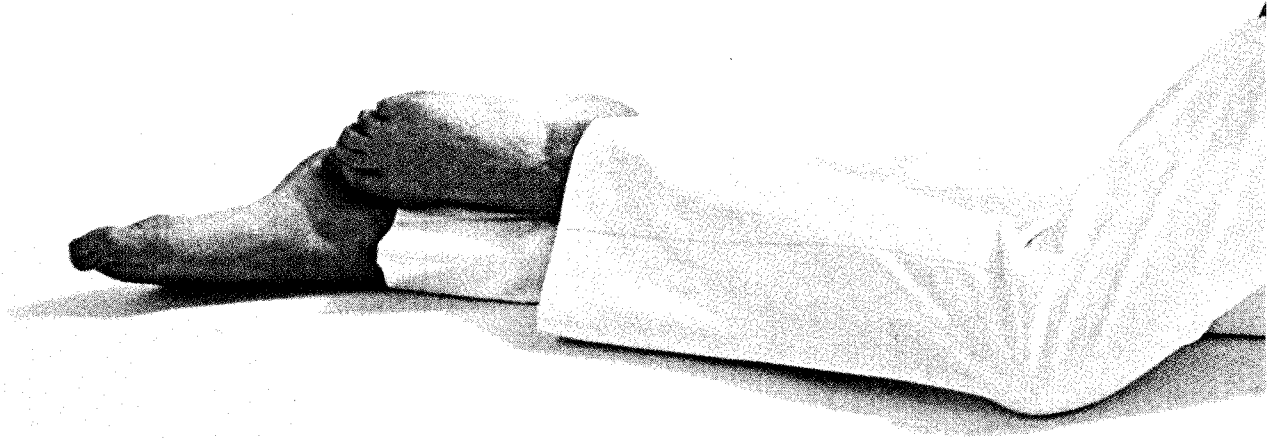


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Not that Paris isn't lovely. But why settle for the most beautiful city in the world when you can see the most beautiful country in the world?



Just outside Paris you'll find the Barbizon forest where the leaves are as delicate as lace and you move through a painting by Fragonard. You'll want to stop, unpack a picnic, drink chilled wine under soft-filtered sun—but don't. You may never leave.

Turn west and keep going, into Normandy. Luxuriate in the snug comfort of a timbered Norman inn. It will cost you roughly \$6 to spend a night in the 14th century.

Check into the elegant coastal resorts: Le Touquet, Deauville, La Baule, Biarritz.

These quietly chic beach towns are where the French go to bake in the sun, watch the bikini models, and beat the odds at baccarat.

Move into the Pyrénées. Watch a Basque vendor weighing plump vegetables in the village square on market day and the supermarket back home will never seem the same again. And catch a pelota match; everyone plays this devilishly tricky game, even the priests. (It's a great spectator sport, but don't challenge the locals. They'll whip you silly.)





to Par-ee after they've seen France?

then point out your mistakes over an apéritif.)

And suddenly you're making the beach scene again. Hit the towns tucked into the arc of the Riviera (St. Tropez, Juan les Pins, Cannes, Antibes, Nice) and you're in a world of green palms, azure sea, golden sun and a plentitude of bronze-baked natural wonders (see above).

Head up into Provence. Circuit the 3 A's: Avignon, Aix and Arles. This was van Gogh country; it still is.

Work your way up into the Loire Valley. And don't just see the châteaux; live in them. The French will happily put you up in the rooms where kings slept, and for less than you would pay in a motel in the States.

Continue northeast and discover Alsace. When you see these tiny toy villages where the cuckoo clocks and chimney sweeps are real, you'll think you've stumbled on a never-never land the tourists haven't found yet. (You have.)



And still you haven't lost yourself in such medieval stone-towns as Les Baux, Cordes, Cahors, Carcassonne.

And still you haven't explored the Burgundy wine country or the resort towns of the French Alps.

And still you haven't gone back to Paris.

Remember Paris? Paris is in France. But Paris is not all of France.

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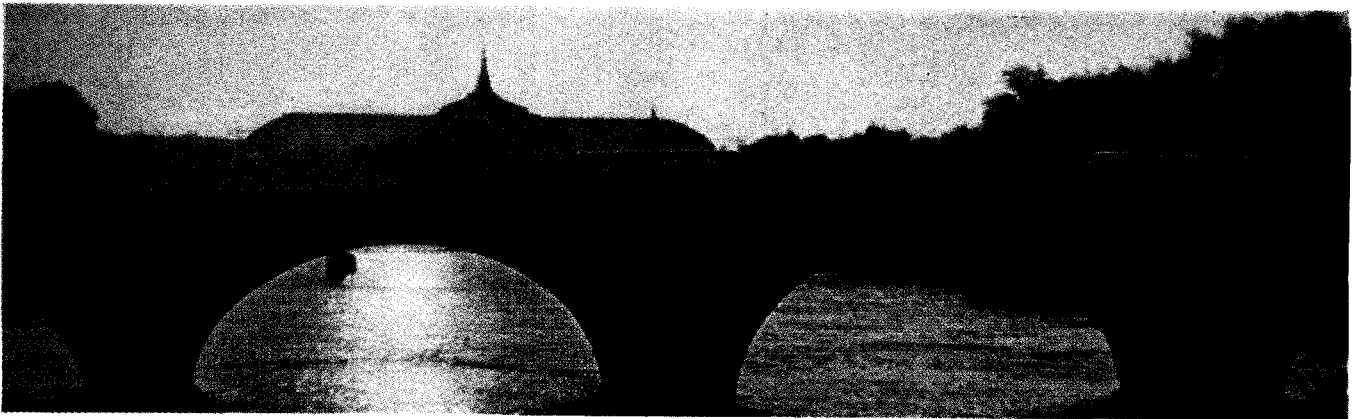
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houses. But such practice is hopefully in the past; today many of the missionaries are attempting to persuade the islanders to continue in their great tradition of carving and painting. It's a losing battle. Repetition is the mother of study—not art. Once in a while a younger man will attempt something new, a fresh frieze of carving on a drum, a shorter nose, thicker legs, anything, and it is accepted. And promptly repeated for the fast trade in “Diwai belong before.”

Art springs from the spirit, and the Kanaka didn't know it was art until the white man put a price on it. It led its own line of growth and development until that moment. Now the artist isn't sure of his values: what does the white man want? A new statue is as good as an old one. Why is the carving of one hornbill standing on top of a man's head more to be desired than another hornbill standing on top a man's head? (This is a common carved combination in New Guinea; it means a comingling of man-and-nature in a people very close to earth.) They don't comprehend the complexity of thought that lies behind our desiring—very much—art that springs from the hand of a savage, but from the hand of a savage who informs his work with his soul. And nothing less. It is simple to recognize; it merely takes a lifetime of work on the part of the artist and of the appreciator. It is what we buy when we buy art. A man's soul.

Savage? We must be careful when we use such terms. Headhunting is forbidden in New Guinea; this seems a step in the right direction. And if we should stroll too long in his jungle, alone—without his guidance—we would die. The black saltwater crocodile would be one of the reasons. In the jungle he is the sophisticate, we are the primitive. We might step on his yam vines; only a dolt would do that. For they are entwined with magic; the magic of life.

He has a sense of humor, this “savage.” The artist, stepping barefoot from the jungle, often has to take on a “day job” to make ends meet, as has many an artist before him. The Number One pidgin-English story of New Guinea concerns such a boy. “Laplap” means cloth—usually a loincloth. “Liklik laplap” means small cloth, a handkerchief or towel. “Susu” means milk or the mother's breast. One elegant settler's lady was having a lawn party for a visiting group from the Colonial Office when she noticed the necessary cloth covering for the creamer was missing. She called her smiling barefoot boy and, speaking more sharply than necessary, said: “Bring liklik laplap belong susu.” He did: her brassiere.

But they are laying down the brush. The true brush of their ancestors. It

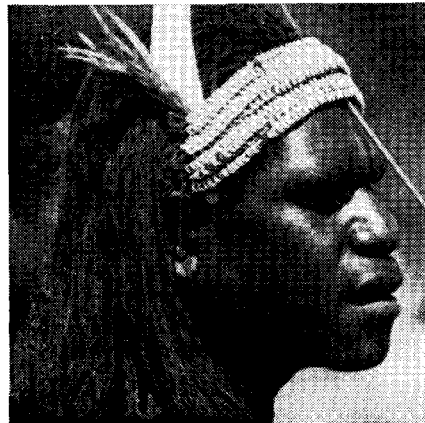


—Stockpile.

“Savage? We must be careful when we use such terms.”

might be a small bundle of twigs, chewed plant stems, or trimmed feathers. His paint pots are coconut bowls lined with banana leaves. His colors come from the earth. A lump of blue clay does very well for the ground color; white and yellow ochre are discovered in the ground he walks on. Red is found in the seed pods of the bush *bixa orellana*. Black is specially prepared. A boy chews lumps of charcoal mixed with green leaves to bring the black to a proper consistency. When in his judgment it will flow, he spits it into a coconut bowl. These colors will not fade easily, or wash out. They are always the same—no fancy aniline dyes; not if it's the real thing. And the colors are always harmonious. The artist can make no mistake. But there can also be no fresh line of development. The venerable Japanese woodblock print—ukiyo-e—was helped to die of the same disease.

Witness his thrones. Lavishly carved ceremonial stools. They are not for kings. An ethnological collector from Basle—which possesses a superb collection of New Guinea art in its museum—reports,



—Stockpile.

“The ritual stool was never meant to be sat upon. It has a religious significance. It was made to be beaten. Let me put it this way. It serves the same purpose as the orang-utan's breast beating, or the Westerner's ceremonial cup before battle—it summons up a form of Dutch courage.”

Indeed. Before going headhunting, or taking off to dispatch an individual enemy—and this was only yesterday—a man would take dracuna branches or palm leaves and beat the seat of the chair to warm his spirit to the task. The thrones are no longer made; there are only a few left in the Tambaran houses. In the old days each clan possessed its own and their disappearance into damp-rot is a visible symptom of a dying culture. But there is one hope. Away from the rivers, away from the airfields, away from the “controlled areas” of Indonesian and Australian New Guinea, the men of the tribe go about their business as in the past. If that business is barbaric, it nonetheless may yet produce a rich harvest of carvings for the sophisticated museums and collectors.

Look at these heads. They are as surrealistic as anything attempted by Dali. Masks are studded with nassa shells and set with boar's tusks, eyes are painted in a swirl and human hair is plaited to add significance. A nightmare of design. The imagination of the artist has cut loose and entered the spirit world to report back what it has seen there. And what it has seen is very modern. Curiously, they prefer a nose elongated to join the chin or points below the chin. Just as in much sculpture from Africa and from the aborigine of Taiwan. Prime specimens among the masks are without price, not only in the Western world but among the Kanaka. As with the carved thrones, they will not sell them. *Diwai belong before*. They are a heritage that brings hope that lies beyond the future. They are magic.

Spend a night in a Tambaran house. These cathedrals in palm frond and lashed wood rise jutting at each end to heights of sixty feet. To enter you must crawl through a small opening. Women are not allowed inside. Not so long ago any woman found peering in was killed, often mummified by smoke and carried inside to take her place among the totems. As your eyes grow accustomed to the gloom, you see the faces of the past looming fluorescent, row upon row. The softly rotting wood gives forth a luminous glow. Civilization is gone, intellect is left behind, and you gradually dissolve into that mystery that lies beyond the powers of comprehension. Reason knows the masks are carved in paint and wood, but something seems to be saying: “Look into my eyes, look into my eyes and know that I am not dead—nor you.”



Queenstown Lake and the Remarkables—"1,020 feet above worry level."

OPENING UP THE UNDERNEATH

By GEORGE CHAPLIN

SAILING the South Pacific 323 years ago, the explorer Abel Janszoon Tasman sighted the alpine peaks of "a large land, uplifted high," which he promptly called Staten Land.

But his sponsor, the Netherlands East Indies Company, felt the title lacked something. And so it was that a country with 223 mountains thrusting 7,500 feet or higher was renamed Nieuw Zeeland after a Dutch province that is flatter than a fried herring.

Tasman was sure he'd outdone Drake in discovering the legendary Southern Continent, but he was dissuaded from gathering any firsthand affidavits to that effect by the Maoris, club-swinging Polynesians who'd staked out their own land-claim centuries before.

What the frustrated Tasman had really come upon was the southernmost of two islands which, although smaller than California, present what is probably the world's most magnificent capsule of scenic grandeur. He died in ignorance of that fact—and even today the word of New Zealand's vivid and

varied beauty hasn't fully made the rounds—at least not with enough impact to set off the travel stampede that it merits.

Of the 122,288 visitors this past year, 40,368 were Australians who hopped the 1,200 miles across the Tasman Sea. There were only 15,958 Americans.

There has been, of course, the matter of distance: nineteen hours from our West Coast, twelve from Hawaii, five from Fiji. But this will happily shrink come November, when jets of five international carriers (with Pan Am carrying the U.S. flag) begin landing at the new airport at Mangere, and Air New Zealand inaugurates direct service to Los Angeles.

The airport is just outside Auckland, the largest city (its population is more than 500,000), which pleasantly sprawls on a harbor-front site bought from the Maori chiefs in the last century for ten iron pots, twenty tomahawks, 100 yards of "gown cloth," and other sundries.

A second handicap being overcome is that of austere accommodations. Most of the major hotels are owned by breweries, apparently more dedicated to the

vending of beer—which the locals consume in such cheerful quantities as to require tanker trucks for delivery—than to the amenities. Until recently, the provision of a private bathroom was viewed as a wasteful concession to the effete stranger who was too lazy to walk down the hall.

But this is changing under competitive pressure. Ten new hotels and motels, ranging from 50 to 150 beds, have opened in the last twelve months and under construction in Auckland are the 345-bed South Pacific and the 666-bed Intercontinental, an enterprise of Pan Am's hotel subsidiary.

Until now the day has been saved by the government-established Tourist Hotel Corporation, which operates a 1,055-bed chain of well-appointed establishments in the scenic and sports areas. The rooms are comfortable and the food and service good, although the place names are tongue-twisters. On the North Island, THC has hotels at Wai-karemoana, Tongariro, Waitomo, Wai-rakei, Tokaanu, and Waitangi; on the South Island at Mount Cook (the famed Hermitage), Queenstown, Te Anau,