

**True story!** In many villages in PNG, boys grow up living in the "family house" with their mother, brothers and sisters, rather than in the "men's house". They are treated the same as females and not allowed to know the secrets of the men's house. As they get close to their teenage years, they pass through four stages of initiation ceremonies that prepare them to enter manhood. There is ceremonial dancing with painted faces and elaborate costumes, feasting, and different tasks that must be performed to purify them from "female pollution". Some are frightening such as being repeatedly tricked and not allowed to sleep; others are painful such as being burned with hot coals or made to lie down on top of a hot banana-leaf oven!



To us these ceremonies sound weird and brutal, but to the men of PNG they are thought necessary to produce strong men! Fortunately as outside ideas, especially Christian beliefs are accepted in the tribes, many of these practices have started to change. Learning more about such animistic beliefs is very important if we truly want to share the Gospel with every tribe and nation around the world. We cannot expect to just preach sermons, hand out bibles and build churches, and see genuine change happen quickly. Even as individuals are transformed by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, they still have to learn to apply God's Word to their own life and situation. There are many difficult decisions to be made as the old ways and traditions are rejected in order to truly follow Jesus.



Did you solve the scripture puzzle?  
The answer is found in Philippians 2:12,13 NIV

Let's pray that the people of PNG will be strong and willing to lay aside those traditions that are not pleasing to God.

'Til next time,

Your friend, Shirley

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**World Kids**  
Fun facts for kids! True stories!  
**PAL Page**  
Issue no. 28 May/June 2006

Can you guess which country sometimes goes by the abbreviation PNG?



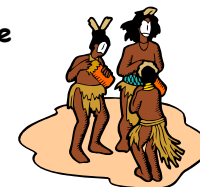
It is one of two countries that make up the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest island in the world and its full name is PAPUA NEW GUINEA!

You can find this big island on a map, just north of Australia - the western half of the island is called Iryan Jaya and the eastern half is PNG. Just a generation ago, this wild country was known as being one of the last places on earth where native peoples lived who had never seen a white man or had contact with the outside world. The towering, mist-covered mountains, dense tropical jungle and fast-flowing rivers made it a land of mystery where few people dared to go - especially when they heard strange tales of painted warriors and weird traditions!



PNG has an area of over 178,000 sq miles, making it a little larger than the state of California.

PNG is considered as being in the Pacific region called Melanesia (the word *melas* means black). It has a population of about 4.8 million inhabitants, but the majority of the people still live in small villages hidden in the mountainous jungle, and in fact only about 200,000 live in the capital, Port Moresby.



It is said that over 800 languages are spoken in PNG, and on average each language is only spoken by about 6,000 people! It's like each village has its own language - even tribes or villages living in neighboring valleys often speak a totally different language! Can you think of a bible story that this reminds us of? (Maybe look in the book of Genesis!)

For centuries the different tribes lived with their various strange customs, fighting neighboring tribes to settle disputes, thinking the world ended beyond the mountains. They had no contact with the outside world until the development of planes and helicopters enabled explorers to penetrate further inland. Britain and Australia had built settlements in coastal areas at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, building schools and introducing some Western ideas. As a result, a new language developed that people from many different areas soon learned, called "Tok Pisin" See if you can understand these words in Tok Pisin:



1. plis
2. MOH-nin-nau
3. TANK-yoo

"Plis" means "please"; "MOH-nin-nau" means "Good morning"; and "TANK-yoo" means "Thank you". Tok Pisin is a form of pidgin English! If we are around people who speak another language, as we try to communicate with them, we learn various words in their language. But often the way we pronounce and spell the words is a little different. That's how pidgin English develops. In 1975 when PNG became independent from British and Australian rule,



English remained the official language although Tok Pisin is widely used as well. But still today, over half the population of PNG is illiterate and cannot read or write. Trying to understand Tok Pisin is a puzzle. Here's another puzzle for you:

#### SCRIPTURE CODE PUZZLE

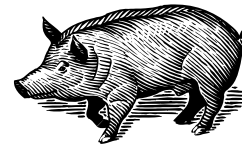
See if you can figure out the following bible verse:  
 CANTONAI TA WIRK EAT YEAR SILVETOUN WUTH  
 FOUR END TRUMBLONG, FAR AT US GAD WHA  
 WARKS UN YEA TA WALL END TE OCT ICCARDUNG  
 TI HAS GAID PORPISA (Clue: Change each vowel)

As we said, most people still live in villages in the steep mountains, which reach up to 15,000ft above sea-level. Villagers work together to clear areas of jungle to grow vegetables - many of which are rather different! In some villages the fertile land and heavy nightly rainfall (more than 130 inches each year!) produce all the following: 35 varieties of sweet potato; 25 varieties of bananas; 20 varieties of sugar cane and 25 varieties of edible greens!! In addition over 225 varieties of birds, lizards, frogs, beetles and other small animals are regularly eaten!!

But many children still have diseases due to protein deficiency. Some foods are considered "taboo" for children and women and so are reserved for the men only, who do most of the hunting. As a result, women and children often must eat snacks like steamed tadpoles, and roasted spiders and lizards for protein!



Pigs are a very important part of life in PNG, though not as food (eaten only on special occasions) but as a sign of wealth, often being traded in business dealings. Pigs are considered as being the most important living creature besides humans! In recent years there has been a big change throughout PNG - the introduction of using money instead of trading goods.



In the 1970s the Australian administration and the Australian Baptist Mission had a big impact before leaving and transferring power to the independent nation of PNG. Now in many tribes and villages the people grow coffee for cash as well as food to eat. Also there are now big gold and copper mines in PNG, bringing in more people from "outside". Christianity has also been brought to PNG - the New Testament has now been translated into Tok Pisin and often whole tribes have accepted Jesus. Yet many of these Christians still believe the ancient superstitions that are part of the original animist religion. They believe in ghosts,



magic and "sinik" - spiritual powers existing in trees, plants, and animals. This makes even touching some things "taboo" causing a curse of sickness and even death. Some men grow tobacco and roll cigars - they now use newspaper for this, but won't use ones with pictures of people in case they breathe their "sinik!"