

COMMENT ON "The Vocabulary of New Guinea English as used by Expatriates"

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I would like to comment on Edward P. Wolfers article in KIVUNG, II, 3, pp. 52-64 (November, 1969).

In his footnote 10, Mr. Wolfers states that "puripuri" and "lakatoi" are not listed in the Lister-Turner/Clark "Grammar of the Motu Language". In fact, "lakatoi" is to be found in the volume referred to, if looked for under its correct spelling - "lagatoi". It is described there as "a large trading canoe". The pronunciation "lakatoi" probably goes back to the trade language out of which "Police Motu" grew. Most Papuan speakers of Police Motu use it correctly, but many expatriates quite perversely use it to describe an outrigger canoe. I say "perversely" because the correct word for an outrigger canoe, "vanagi", occurs in Police Motu.

Strictly speaking, a "lagatoi" is a multi-hulled vessel with not fewer than three hulls. A double (two-hulled) canoe is a "puapua". The "Dictionary of Police Motu" to which Mr. Wolfers refers, a very reliable work prepared by the S.I.L., lists both "vanagi" and "puapua", though the latter is listed only in the English-Motu section. It would be correct, however, to say that "lakatoi" is the only word of the three to pass into expatriate New Guinea English.

The word "puripuri" is not found in the Lister-Turner/Clark volume because it is not a Motu word. The Motu have several words for different kinds of magic and sorcery, but "puripuri" is not one of them. I suspect it may have been introduced into Police Motu by MacGregor's original policemen - a group of (mainly) Fijians and Solomon Islanders out of which grew the Royal Papuan Constabulary. Anyway, it has long been in common use both in Police Motu and in expatriate New Guinea English, and is very properly listed in the above-mentioned "Dictionary of Police Motu".

Many elderly Papuans, and a dwindling number of elderly expatriates like myself, are able to recall that pre-war Port Moresby's Masonic Lodge was referred to by Papuans and expatriates alike as the "Puripuri House".