

UPPER SEPIK – CENTRAL NEW GUINEA PROJECT

PROGRESS REPORT June 2005

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After completion of the recording of collections in the Australian Museum in Sydney, Andrew entered into the database all the available field and registration data applicable to the relevant collections in the PNG National Museum. This was achieved using photocopies of the PNGNM registration books and Barry's field collection data, plus copies of field lists Barry had obtained from colleagues many years ago.

Barry arrived in Moresby 13 February to sort out a few problems with Andrew's research visa and to get things ready for the data recording; Andrew arrived on 17 February. After assisting Andrew to get started, Barry returned to Australia 26 February.

The documentation of the collections within the PNG National Museum therefore started on 18 February and lasted until 18 April. In that time Andrew verified that there should be 2936 objects in the Museum that have relevance to our study and he was able to photograph and record 2194; 742 objects are either missing or yet to be recorded. The breakdown of the collections at the NMAG is presented in **Table 1**.

There are two sources that may provide additional unexpected material and these are collections donated by Maria Friend and David Hyndman (both Mountain-Ok collections). Between them they could add another fifty to the total of objects yet to be recorded. At the museum, there was a descriptive list of David Hyndman's collection but I was able to locate only thirteen of his objects due to the fact that they had been registered improperly and some had had their field numbers removed. Some objects were identified by his field numbers, handwritten on field number tags, or by the string used to attach field tags to objects (even where the tag had become lost). Recently, we have discovered that David Hyndman donated another part of his collection to the Queensland University Museum (of which he was a staff member). A trip to that museum to record the material is planned before the return trip to PNG, as this will provide a better idea of what to expect in Port Moresby when looking for the remainder of the material there.

Bad storage practices at the PNG National Museum have resulted in loss and inexplicable absences of objects from shelves and storage areas. In many instances, it will now be impossible to identify objects that lack an appropriate accession number, have lost their original field number, or that can be associated convincingly with a particular collection.

The practice of using the NN ('No-Number') registration system also has contributed to the problem. This system, put into practice in the 1990s to quickly register unidentified objects, has become common practice for all objects when staff are unwilling to look for, and write into the registration forms, associated documentation when clearing a backlog. It takes significantly less time to register objects this way because the more detailed field entries are not required.

Unfortunately, air-conditioning in Stores 2 and 3 was malfunctioning and the working conditions that resulted were made worse by pesticide fumigation during the time Andrew was there. There was a reluctance of the staff to assist in the stores because of these conditions, coupled with the fact that two staff members who had their offices in them had recently died. This lack of assistance and fear of the storerooms slowed down the whole process, as did certain managerial and workplace issues that became evident. It was clear that it would be better to leave and return later when the aircon system has been replaced (apparently, Finance has approved replacement during the second half of 2005). Prior to our field trip into the study region, we plan to revisit the PNG National Museum to locate and record as many as possible of the apparently missing objects. Tentatively this is planned for October this year.

The failure of the zoom mechanism on the digital camera meant that a replacement had to be purchased immediately, as it would have taken several weeks to be sent for repairs. Even worse, there were consistent laptop motherboard failures, coupled with the unwillingness of the manufacturer (ACER) to assist by promptly sending parts, so again, a replacement laptop had to be purchased. In the meantime, two weeks of recording was lost. That meant that recording the 2194 objects was achieved, in reality, in six weeks. Even without the sporadic power failures and stifling conditions in the storerooms, this would have been well above expectations. (The cost of the original ACER laptop has since been reimbursed but the faulty camera is still in the process of being repaired.)

Since returning, Andrew has presented a seminar about the project to the Department of Geography at the University of Adelaide on 23 May, has been reading extensively to obtain further understanding of research methods and other material relevant to the Project, and has attended to various student requirements, including the preparation of his PhD Research Proposal. He has also been entering data on collections in museums and private hands in north America and arranging for his trip there.

He will be departing for USA on 9 July. His first stop will be in Los Angeles to photograph and record data on the Ward Williams collection in the LA County Museum and some material at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. Then he'll visit George Morren in New Jersey to work on his Mianmin material. Following that, Andrew will present a joint paper on the Project, prepared by Barry and himself, to the Eighth International Symposium of the Pacific Arts Association (all costs of attendance being met by the South Australian Museum). The Symposium is at the Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, 20-23 July. After that, Andrew will visit Arnold Perey in New York City and then visit Charles Penney who purchased a Central NG collection from Wilson Wheatcroft. Andrew expects to return to Australia 1 August.

The next stage of the recording will be in Europe and England. Because some museums are in the process of changing their storage conditions, we will have to work out with the relevant curators the best time to carry out this part of the project. It is not yet clear whether this could take place before or after the planned return to Papua New Guinea.

Table 1. Breakdown of Upper Sepik and Central New Guinea collections in the PNG National Museum

Collector (for ten or more items)	No. of objects confirmed to belong to	Objects rec	Collection area
Craig, B.	1059	863	CNG/Upper Sepik
Mann, A	11	11	Central New Guinea
Stokes, A	20	20	Central New Guinea
A.D.C. Imonda	19	19	Upper Sepik Basin
Perey, A.	200	140	Central New Guinea
Cranstone, B. A. L.	282	234	Central New Guinea
Juillerat B.	243	199	Upper Sepik Basin
Beaver, B.	30	24	Central New Guinea
Cook, D.	10	8	Central New Guinea
Hyndman, D.	13?	13	Central New Guinea
Poole, F. J.	82	72	Central New Guinea
Gerrits, G.	207	148	Upper Sepik Basin
Morren, G.	105	89	Central New Guinea
Kelm, H.	98	57	Upper Sepik Basin
Pasquarelli, J.	13	7	Central New
MacKenzie, M.	18	5	Central New Guinea
McCaw, O.	37	16	Central New Guinea
Hanns, P	110	90	Upper Sepik Basin
Huber, P.	95	45	Upper Sepik Basin
Smith	19	17	Central New Guinea
Friend, T.	15	14	Central New Guinea
Giles, W. B.	79	0	Central New Guinea
Dutton, W.	19	3	Central New Guinea
Heathcote, W.	22	11	Central New Guinea
Misc.	129	89	CNG/Upper Sepik
Total	2935	2194	

Contacts have been made with Central New Guinea researchers Roger Lohmann and Sveinn Eggertsson, both of whom had agreed to photograph and record the data we require for collections they hold. Although Roger Lohmann is located in Toronto not far from the other east coast USA people, he will be away in July and his collection is inaccessible in his absence. Eggertsson is in Iceland and it is not practical to visit there from north America without considerable cost.

Sai Perchard has commenced work on the website for the Project and is awaiting supply of text and graphic material from Barry.

The total number of objects now recorded for the Project is:

Institution	Objects
South Australian Museum	242
Australian Museum	1668
PNG National Museum	2194
Total	4104

This represents approximately 45% of the objects expected to be included in the database. Over 500 will be added by the North American trip bringing the total to just over 50% of the anticipated number of 9000 objects.