

UPPER SEPIK-CENTRAL NEW GUINEA PROJECT

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The second European trip to document Upper Sepik-Central New Guinea collections in Basel, Berlin, Göttingen and Bergen was undertaken from 9th April to 13th May 2006. This trip was a supplementary one that was a result of the Museum der Kulturen in Basel and Museum Ethnologisches Museum in Dahlem, Berlin being unable to devote the necessary time and resources to coincide with our original schedule. These museums informed us of the possibility of my being able to visit them during April-May and so I decided to visit the PNG National Museum in Port Moresby before the European trip, to follow up several loose ends there. This would mean that we could have the data collection process completed by the end of May 2006. The schedule was extremely tight and this was made even more so by the fact that I was only given two weeks each in Basel and Berlin (total of four weeks) for an amount of work that would normally take at least six weeks.

As noted in my previous report for the first European trip, I had been informed while in Vienna of an additional collection of Yuri material at Göttingen University. Provisions were made to include a visit to this institution; Dr Gundolf Krüger, Head of Collections, agreed to a visit in May. Also, the recent discovery of the existence of a small quantity of Baktaman (south-eastern Mountain-Ok) objects at the University of Bergen meant that I had to incorporate a visit to that institution. I was able to make a flexible arrangement to visit Bergen sometime in late May, either during or after my work in Berlin. Prior to my departure for Europe we were informed by Dr Knut Rio, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Bergen, that there were approximately 97 objects in the collection; this meant that I would have to spend one or two days there.

Basel

I commenced working at the Museum der Kulturen on 10th April and finished on the 21st. The target collection was one made by Gisela and Meinhard Schuster in the mid 1960s and we had estimated from early records obtained by Barry Craig that this collection consisted of approximately 450 objects from the Eliptaman Telefolmin who speak Telefol, one of the Mountain-Ok sub-family of languages.

On the first day, after looking through the storage area, I established that the Schuster collection also included material from a lowland northern Mountain-Ok people who speak the Mianmin language, and a substantial collection from Yellow River, where the people speak Namie, an Upper Sepik language. While this was a significant discovery, providing valuable additions to our sample, it put further pressure on the available time, a situation further aggravated by the loss of assistance from a staff member due to illness, the lack of a full-time curator for the collections and the loss of two working days due to Easter. After some initial recording of material, the first day was spent gauging the scope of material, the quality of the museum's records and database, the level of collector information and the amount of time museum staff were going to be able to

dedicate to the process. I also made some pragmatic decisions concerning the time to be spent finding individual objects, proceeding first with those easily found before searching for the remaining material. I also decided to remove from the sample all but a few examples of unprocessed natural resources such as raw ochre, bark fibre, etc. I was fortunate to have the full support of the collection staff including the head of collections, Adrian Wisler, and store manager Kurt Keck. Adrian Wisler not only gave me full access and support during working hours, he also increased the time I was able to work in the storerooms to six in the evening.

The collections were housed in two stores dedicated to Pacific material and placed according to region, collector and object class. The arrows, bows and hafted stone tools were kept in one small store and the other objects were kept in the large storage area. I identified the material required according to collector and then Adrian or Kurt located the specimens and brought them to me for measuring and photographing. They then returned the specimens to their storage locations. The database suggested that collection points were available for the majority of the pieces.

I postponed the scanning and collation of the notes until I had acquired an understanding of the scope of the material in the storerooms. This was fortunate because while sorting through the Schuster material I recognized some extraneous material from Yellow River. This material had been collected by Alfred Bühler, an anthropologist who was commissioned for the task by the Museum in the late 1950s. Most of his material came from the Yellow River region and from the Iwam speakers of May River further down the Sepik. Being part of our study area, I included the Yellow River material, but most of the items were noted only as from 'Yellow River'. However, the word 'Sibat' was entered next to a few of the accession numbers. I contacted Antonia Köhler, a researcher who had acted as a temporary curator while the permanent position had yet to be filled after the retirement of Christian Kaufmann. She in turn contacted Christian who then requested the Bühler documents from the archives; these were delivered later in the week.

In the meantime I kept working in the stores and found shields collected by Barry Craig, which I recorded, and by Bühler, one of which had a label with the word 'Kobararoo'. This shield's type was undoubtedly Abau, and 'Kobararoo' was obviously a reference to the village Kobraru (or Kobabaru) which lies on the north bank of the Sepik upstream from where the Idam meets the Sepik. Of the other Bühler shields, in the museum's records the Abau and Namie shields were attributed only to 'Green River' and 'Yellow River' respectively. On consulting Bühler's fieldnotes, Christian Kaufmann realised that Bühler had gone no further up the Sepik than the mouth of the Yellow River and, after a failed attempt to go up the Yellow River, he went downstream to the May River area and never returned upstream to Green River or Kobraru.¹ Therefore, the Green River shields must have been obtained further down the Sepik River, perhaps at Ambunti. It was also clear from Bühler's fieldnotes that he collected at only one Namie (Yellow River) village before returning downstream. On his map he shows Sibat on the northern bank of the Sepik an hour downstream from the mouth of the Yellow River. He noted that this was the new location for the village, from which he walked inland, north or northeast, to where he claimed the 'old' Sibat was located. It was there that he collected the objects. Sibat must be the Namie village Sipas in Laycock's *Sepik Languages Checklist*. Laycock notes that Sipas =

¹ Bühler, A. 1959 *Notizen von der Sammlung der Sepik River Expedition*. Unpublished. Pp 47-48.

Ameni, and Ameni on the 1:100,000 map is six kilometers north-east of present-day Tipas and noted as abandoned. Thus we have a point location for the Bühler objects from 'old Sibat'. However, Bühler mentions that he found it impossible to buy shields at Sibat.² This suggests that the 'Yellow River' shields, like the 'Green River' shields, also were obtained at a place downstream, perhaps Ambunti. I therefore gave the shields low priority, instead focusing on the collection of 186 pieces from (old) Sibat (= Ameni). Material from (new) Tipas, on the Sepik, is included in Barry Craig's 1969 and 1972 Upper Sepik collections.

During the recording of the Schusters' Namie and Mianmin material, it became evident that there was some confusion in the data sheets, with some villages assigned to the wrong language groups. On close inspection it became clear that the village origins were correct and the language associations were inconsistent. This was easily corrected using Laycock's *Sepik Languages Checklist*. In all, the Schusters' collection numbered 8 Abau, 197 Namie, 90 Mianmin and 360 Eliptaman Telefolmin pieces, a total of 655 objects. Along with the Namie collections recorded in other museums, there are now several villages that are well represented in the Yellow River region.

I had been warned by Gabriele Weiss while in Vienna that there may be a Hanns Peter collection at Basel. I was very interested in this collection because not only had Hanns Peter's PNG National Museum collection notes been lost, rendering that collection geographically obscure, but also because the Vienna component of the Peter collection had been purposely compiled to be representative of the village in which he had done most of his fieldwork, Kamberap. The Kamberap component of the Vienna collection included 646 out of the 719 Yuri objects and is by far the best represented village in the project. Overall, prior to the commencement of work in Basel, we had 973 Yuri objects with 685 deriving from Kamberap and only 288 for the other eight villages represented. While Kamberap, according to the 1980 census used in Bourke et al. (1993), is the largest village in the group, it accounts for only 18.5 percent of the population.³ Kamberap also accounts for the largest single group of class categories in the study and I was eager to increase the representativeness of the other Yuri villages. My time was short and I had enough time to do only part of the Peter collection. I found that all of the categories of Kamberap objects at Basel were already well represented by the Kamberap material recorded elsewhere. I therefore selected the non-Kamberap Peter material at Basel and recorded them. The only Peter non-Kamberap material not recorded was a group of arrows, mainly from the village of Troli, that could not be located after a reasonable search.

In total 923 objects were recorded in Basel, all with collection points. This was more than double the expected total and the time spent there was very rewarding and enjoyable, if rather frenetic. While I was in Basel, Christian Kaufmann informed me that the German collection made by the German team of the Dutch-German border surveying expedition of 1910 was housed in Berlin.

² *Ibid.*

³ Bourke, R. M., B. J. Allen, et al. (1993). West Sepik Province: Text Summaries, Maps, Code Lists and Village Identification. Canberra, Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.

We looked at the published report and unlike its Dutch counterpart it gave notes on all of the bivouacs established the length of the Sepik within the study area upstream as far as 4° 51' 0" South, 141° 22' 0" East, as well as information on some of the objects collected at those camps.⁴

Berlin

I arrived in Berlin on 22nd April and commenced work at the Ethnologisches Museum on the 24th. The process was completed on 5th May as had been agreed prior to my departure. On my arrival I met with the Curator, Dr Markus Schindlbeck. As the total number of objects we would ideally have wanted to record was around 1000, two weeks would not be sufficient time and therefore some form of sampling would be necessary. This was somewhat difficult as there was no museum electronic database for the collection; all of the objects were catalogued by handwritten index cards. I predicted that the most I could achieve in two weeks would be 800 objects and the fact that the May Day holiday would take place during the period meant that even this figure was optimistic. Prior to my departure, we had asked to be given access to the Kelm material as a first priority, as at that stage we had a poor sample for the Yellow River region, being unaware of the Basel material collected by Bühler and Schuster. This request had created the belief that we had only wanted access to the Kelm collection and that the Craig Upper Sepik material would be left unrecorded.⁵ After some discussion it was agreed that when and if I finished the Kelm collection I would be given access to a sample of the Craig collection. As in Basel, I decided to omit all but a small sample of the collection consisting of examples of unprocessed natural resources.

After completing the Kelm collection, I sampled the Craig material in the following ways: First, I established the objects relevant to the study, as a significant number of the estimated 680 objects were from the May River and Sepik River Iwam, extraneous to the study area. This left 470 pieces to be recorded. I then sorted these remaining objects into subclasses and these according to the degree of formal variation usually found within such categories. Arrows, which demonstrate the greatest range of variation in both their subclass range and formal traits, were given the highest priority, along with bamboo smoking tubes, gourd objects, string bags and certain body ornamentation. Where a certain number of classes had already been recorded for a village, other classes were prioritized. Understandably, objects from villages such as Kamberap, Bapi, Tipas, Yegorapi were discarded by this process.

In all 823 objects were recorded in Berlin out of a possible 923 with all objects having collection point data and good documentation, which included vernacular terms and information on function. 414 objects were recorded out of the possible 437 in the Kelm collection and 409 objects were recorded out of a possible 470 in the Craig collection. An additional 16 Craig Mountain-Ok pieces, collected in the late 1960s, also were found and recorded.

⁴ Schultze Jena, L., (1914). *Forschungen im Innern der Insel Neuguinea (Bericht des Führers über die wissenschaftlichen Ergebnisse der deutschen Grenzexpedition in das westliche Kaiser-Wilhelmsland 1910)*. *Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten*; Erg. 11. Berlin

⁵ We had decided to omit this collection if necessary as it was a representative quarter sample of Craig's 1968 and 1969 collections and the other three parts of his collections in Sydney, Port Moresby and Leiden had already been recorded.

While I was in Berlin I located the Schultze-Jena collection in the store and it appeared that there were numerous objects from Namie and Abau villages. Some of the catalogue cards did note what appeared to be bivouac and village details that corresponded with those in the report. Unfortunately, it was impossible to include this collection due to the time constraints.

Göttingen

On 8th May, the Monday following the completion of the collections in Berlin, I visited the Ethnology Department at Göttingen University. I had arranged the visit with Gundolf Krüger the week earlier and I had decided on completing the work in one day due to the need to fly to Bergen the following day. I sampled Hans Peter's Yuri material according to the process outlined above and I arrived at a figure of 150 out of 226 objects belonging to the collection. I was fortunate enough to locate and record all of these objects with the help of Stephan Sauerland who had been contracted to me by the University. Stephan had had considerable experience with the University's ethnographic collections and was well prepared for my visit. We were able to work steadily throughout the day and I did not have to do any preliminary searches for objects or documentation. I was pleased to find excellent entries on the catalogue cards, along with the geographical attributions, and these entries will provide supplementary material for the other Peter collections which, to varying degrees, lack such a high level of explicit information.

Bergen

On 9th May I flew to Bergen to start work on 10th May. As Dr Knut Rio was away, Dr Frode Storaas provided me with access to the collection along with a space in which to record the material. The larger part of the collection was on display in the Museum's gallery, positioned on, and alongside, two mannequins representing a Baktaman man and woman. This exhibition was a downsized version of the exhibit in the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Apparently, in the 1980s the collection was sent to Bergen where much of the display remained intact. I was given permission to photograph and measure the material in situ and I was able to remove the objects from the glass cases and mannequins if necessary. The other objects were small and housed in two wooden boxes, which I recorded in the museum's laboratory and photographic studio.

I had set aside two days in Bergen just in case I would need that amount of time. I found that of the advised total of 97 objects, 44 were neither in the store nor the gallery. Frode Storaas assured me that the whole collection had been accounted for according to store records and that if any more of the collection was in Bergen, it was in an unknown location. Frode assured me that he would immediately contact me if the location of the missing part of the collection became apparent. Judging by the list of accession numbers I found accompanying the collection notes, it appears that 96 objects were registered at Bergen in 1994, which suggests that the whole collection did indeed arrive in Bergen. Curiously, some of the exhibit had been changed: the Bakataman woman now wears a bark cloth over her head and shoulders rather than the large string bag for carrying taro tubers evident in the Oslo exhibit photographs, and for which her hands have been modeled. The whereabouts of this string bag is unknown, again suggesting that part of the collection has been mislaid. Unfortunately, none of the staff who had worked at the museum during the period when the collection was acquired were still employed there. I

contacted Farideh Faramarzi, Collection Manager at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, to see if they have any additional information on this matter. Farideh assured me that the records show that the whole collection was sent to Bergen.

The Bergen visit contributed 53 objects from the extreme south-east of the Mountain-Ok region, which up till then had been almost unrepresented. I returned to Berlin on 11th May where I sorted through my notes and photographed documents in preparation for my return to Australia on the 15th.

SUMMARY OF COLLECTIONS RECORDED ON SECOND TRIP TO EUROPE

Central New Guinea

Collector	Nr of objects recorded	Year	Museum repository
Barry Craig	16	1968	Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin
M. and G. Schuster	450	1965	Museum der Kulturen, Basel
Fredrik Barth	53	1968	Bergen University Museum, Bergen
SUB-TOTAL	519		

Upper Sepik Basin

Collector	Nr of objects recorded	Year	Museum repository
L. Bragge	3	1960s	Museum der Kulturen, Basel
A. Bühler	187	1959	Museum der Kulturen, Basel
B. Craig	6	1969	Museum der Kulturen, Basel
B. Craig	409	1968, 1969	Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin
H. Kelm	414	1970	Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin
H. Peter	72	1969-1973	Museum der Kulturen, Basel
H. Peter	150	1969-1973	Göttingen University Museum
M. and G. Schuster	205	1965	Museum der Kulturen, Basel
SUB-TOTAL	1446		

TOTAL	1965
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