

UPPER SEPIK - CENTRAL NEW GUINEA PROJECT

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Barry Craig

Data collection

Collection of data for the USCNG Project has occupied Andrew Fyfe, assisted in Sydney and for a short time in Port Moresby by Barry Craig, for almost two years. During 2006, Andrew Fyfe visited Europe for a second time to record data in museums not available for access during the European trip in late 2005. He also revisited the PNG National Museum in Port Moresby to complete recording of data there.

The total number of objects recorded for the project is approximately 12,000, thus exceeding the target set in the project proposal by around 3000 objects. Of this total, around 58% are from the Upper Sepik and 42% from Central New Guinea. However, not all the material was found to be provenanced in sufficient detail to locate a particular spot on the map for the purpose of GIS-based analysis. It is estimated that around 9000 objects will be eligible for such analysis.

It should be noted that several hundred designs carved on arrows were recorded in the 1960s in the field by Barry Craig but the arrows themselves were not collected. These designs nevertheless can be included with the designs on arrows that were collected, thus expanding considerably the sample size for that particular analysis. In preparation for such analysis, some three thousand designs have been photocopied by Dandong Zhen, a research assistant hired for six months to assist with coding and analysis of data. Supplemented with photographs of arrow designs taken by Andrew Fyfe when he was recording collections around the world, it is anticipated that perhaps as many as 4000 arrow designs will be available for analysis. Similarly, designs carved on houseboards and shields have been recorded by Barry Craig in the field and far exceed the number of boards and shields recorded in museum and private collections

Data preparation

Barry Craig has been working with Research Assistant Dandong Zhen to determine **Longitude-Latitude values for all points of collection.** An initial list of 482 recorded places of collection has been reduced to 255 places, by eliminating a few locations outside the study area and dealing with the many alternative names or spellings of locations by selecting a single 'formal' name for each location. A significant number of locations were not to be found on official maps, so an extensive search of anthropological reports, publications, field notes, old maps and gazetteers, and contact with collectors, was necessary to identify these locations. Dandong has now entered the Long-Lat values into the artefact database and we are currently checking for errors by comparing the map generated by Arc-Info with the project's notated official maps.

Dandong also has received **the data for subsistence systems and environment** for the study region from Dr Bryant Allen at ANU and has added that to the database. Where collection locations fall outside the areas covered by the ANU database (notably those points in the Indonesian province of [West] Papua), Barry Craig will use other sources to determine the appropriate coding. To complete the environment data, altitudes have yet to be determined

and coded for the collection locations. This can be done using the project's notated official maps, which show elevation contours.

Andrew Fyfe has developed **artefact codes** for the whole range of material culture and is currently focussing on the more detailed coding of the physical attributes of arrows and looped string bags. These two categories of objects account for almost half the objects recorded from the region and represent objects (arrows) made by men and objects (string bags) made by women. Barry Craig will soon commence coding the designs carved onto arrows following an amended form of coding used in his previous publications on the subject.

Reading and writing

Periods between interstate and overseas trips to collect data have been occupied by reading relevant ethnographic literature, and books and journal articles dealing with method and theory. At present, Andrew Fyfe has written drafts of two papers for publication. One deals with the method and theoretical basis of the project; the second deals with the practicalities and problems of recording data on ethnographic collections in museums and includes an extensive discussion of the content, history and geographic significance of the main collections recorded by this project. Both papers will be submitted to a refereed journal (*reCollections*), published on-line by the National Museum of Australia. He has also made significant progress in writing drafts of early chapters of his thesis.

Project website

The project website <http://uscngp.sai.net.au> has been designed, and is being hosted, by SaiTech Web Solutions. Early in 2007, data and images of a selection of objects will be placed on the website as a precursor to making the entire dataset available after completion of Andrew Fyfe's thesis. Work will commence also on making pertinent information and photographs of all the objects in the dataset available on disc for distribution to high schools in the PNG study region, for use by those schools in cultural heritage education.

Budget

The funds remaining are sufficient to extend Andrew Fyfe's stipend to the end of December 2007. The extra time will compensate for delays in accessing certain museum collections.