

UPPER SEPIK-CENTRAL NEW GUINEA PROJECT

PROGRESS REPORT June 2011

Barry Craig

Funding for the project (\$170,000 over two years) came to an end in November 2010. To preserve as much funding as possible for the salary of the Research Associate, Dr Andrew Fyfe, the Partner Investigator, Dr Barry Craig, paid for Website development and hosting from his South Australian Museum fees-for-service line, commencing April 2010. Up until January 2011, this expenditure amounted to \$6685. Website development included the creation of the Google-Earth-based structure for the Dataset and loading of around 2500 objects.

During the period January to November 2010, Andrew Fyfe concentrated on statistical analyses of attributes of string bags and arrows from the project's study region. These analyses were written up in collaboration with Jill Bolton, a crafts specialist who has been involved with identification of the attributes of the technology of string bag and arrow construction for the objects in the dataset. The paper describing these attributes was published on the USCNGP website in September 2009 as 'Knots Loops and Braids' (Bolton & Fyfe). In June 2010, a second paper was added to the website: 'String Bag Patterns and Colour Dyes...' (Bolton & Fyfe) and in February 2011, a third paper was added: 'An Analysis of the Association between String Bag Variability, Language and Geographical Distance...' (Fyfe & Bolton).

Meantime, in November, Fyfe and Bolton presented a second paper to *Oceania* ('Technology, mobility and gender: interpreting variability in arrow and string bag characteristics in the Upper Sepik and Central New Guinea') which was accepted pending attention to referee comments. This will be resubmitted in June 2011.

During 2010, a series of other papers were added to the website. In February 2010, the 2005 Project Report by Martin Steer (ANU), 'Languages of the Upper Sepik and Central New Guinea', was added. In March, 'Telefol Folk Stories', in Telefol and an English translation, recorded and edited by Dr Robert Brumbaugh, were added with his permission. These stories had been published in the now-defunct journal *Oral History* XII, 3 and 4 (1984) with limited distribution. Also in March, a translation from German of the 1914 report by Richard Thurnwald of his explorations in the upper Sepik basin, annotated by Barry Craig, was added, followed in April by an annotated and illustrated translation of Thurnwald's 1916 report. In June, Craig authored a survey of the Tally Systems of central New Guinea and the upper Sepik. Following the presentation of a paper on 'Digitisation of Pacific Collections and the Upper Sepik-Central New Guinea Project' at the 10th International Symposium of the Pacific Arts Association at Rarotonga in August, and at a one-day Symposium at the Australian Museum organised by Smart Services CRC of RMIT in September, Craig uploaded it to the USCNGP website in November. During November and December, Craig was preparing an illustrated survey of housing and settlement patterns in the project region and Fyfe and Bolton were preparing another paper on the analysis of attributes of string bags, both of which were uploaded in 2011.

Also during 2010, work began on preparing the structure for an accessible dataset based on Google Earth terrain maps, and some 2280 objects from the dataset were added by the end of November. Work continues during 2011 on preparation of the dataset for uploading, to a maximum of around 9000 objects with accurate, detailed provenance. This will enable visitors to the website to view data and images of all objects in the dataset collected from specific settlements. The data provided includes the name of the category of object, its measurements, the vernacular name of the object and the language spoken, the collection location (settlement name and long-lat), name of the collector, its current museum location and registration number, and an image with a magnification tool.

This dataset will be an invaluable research resource, a reference point for identification of poorly-provenanced material, and most importantly, a cultural heritage resource for the gradually increasing number of Papua New Guineans who have access to the Web. It also provides a model for how museum collections can be digitised and access provided through museum websites.

As the Project funding ended in November, Dr Andrew Fyfe has had to find employment elsewhere and is able to continue only in his spare time with work on the project, including the preparation of the dataset for uploading to the website. The coding of arrow designs has been completed but data entry and statistical analysis cannot proceed without Fyfe's availability. Craig will carry on preparing surveys of various items of material culture and other material for the website which he is maintaining from his Museum fees-for-service line.