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Papua New Guinean collaborators visit the University of Toulouse (France)

Following the early 2023 Papuan Past Project (PPP) fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, focusing on biological anthropology and archaeology research along the [Purari river](#), and at the [University of Papua New Guinea](#) (UPNG), two Papua New Guinean collaborators visited the University of Toulouse (France) between May and July 2023. These visiting collaborators, Ms Avis Babalu and Mr Christopher Kinipi, stayed for 2 weeks and 2 months respectively, to receive training in the field of archaeology and biological anthropology, and to work closely on collaborative projects with the PPP team located in France.

Progress on the study on stress in PNG

Within the Papuan Past Project (PPP) a cross-sectional study has been designed to investigate stress among young adults in rural and urban Papua New Guinea amidst modernization. [Christopher Kinipi](#) works on this project and he visited the PPP team located at the University of Toulouse (France) between the 4th of May and 30th of June 2023. His visit was dedicated to three main research activities :

-Firstly, to interact with the PPP collaborators and the scientific community from the University of Toulouse, and to improve his scientific knowledge on biological anthropology and statistical data analyses. This was successfully achieved by following theory and practical workshops on statistics and computer statistical programming for research, by daily meetings discussing specific scientific and methodological points, by attending lectures and seminars, and by numerous exchanges with the Toulouse international research community.



Christopher Kinipi working at the molecular biological facilities at EDB laboratory (University of Toulouse)

– Secondly, to analyse the data he collected during the February fieldwork at the University of PNG (National Capital District) and the April fieldwork in the Mont Giluwe region (Southern Highlands). These two sets of data are from a rural and an urban group and include cortisol values, questionnaires on self-perception of stress, well-being and diet, and health-related phenotypes (blood glucose, BMI, etc). The aim of the data analysis is to calculate different indices of cortisol activity and to run statistical tests to identify differential patterns between urban and rural locations in PNG.



Christopher Kinipi presenting the project at the Glopula community

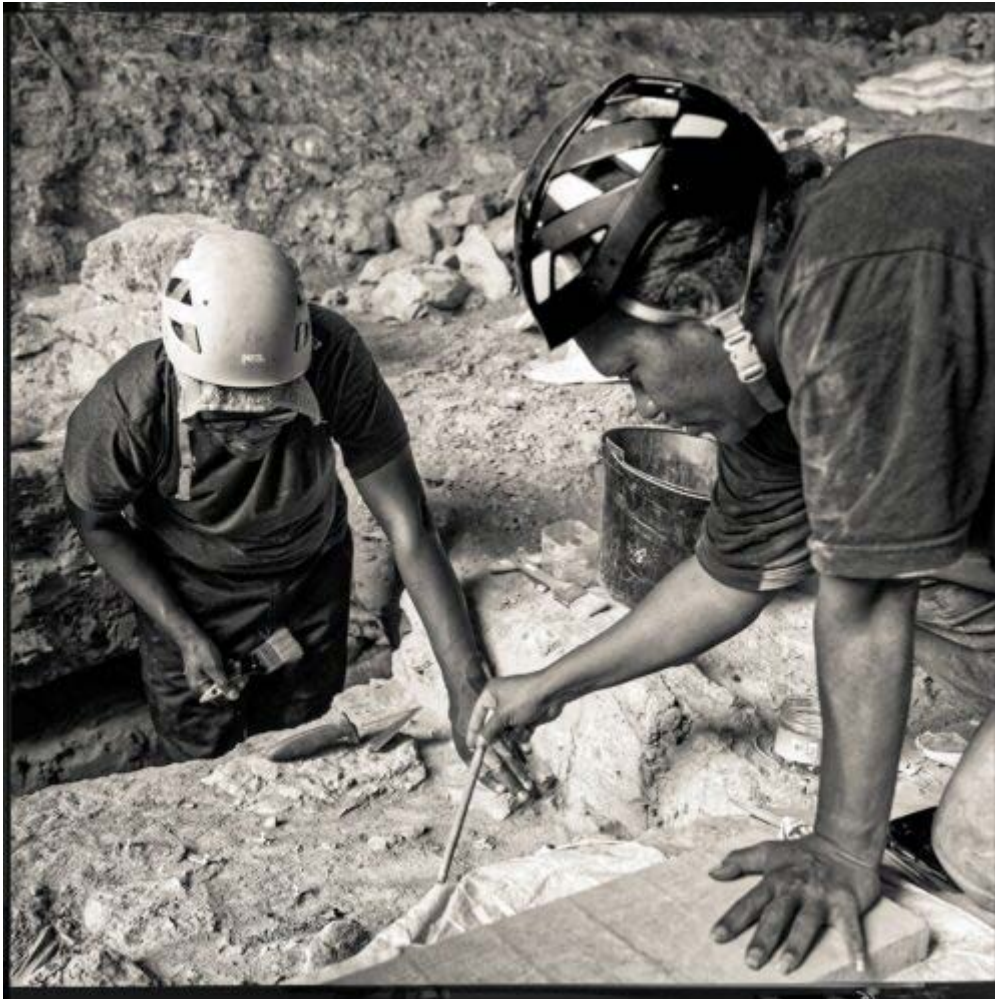


Material used to collect biological data in the Mount Giluwe community (Southern Highlands)

-Thirdly, to prepare a paper to be given at the 57th Annual Medical Symposium of the Medical Society of Papua New Guinea ([MSPNG](#)), 10-15 September, 2023, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. This paper will be presented by Christopher Kinipi and will detail the preliminary results on the impact of stress on health in PNG populations.

Training in archaeological excavation in France

In 2023, Ms [Avis Babalu](#) started her master's degree in Archaeology at the University of Papua New Guinea, in the scientific framework of the PPP. Following an archaeological survey in the upper Purari region (Kikori district, Gulf province) which took place in February 2023, Avis was invited to participate in the archaeological excavation at the Mas d'Azil cave (Ariège, France). This is part of her master's degree training and has been made possible thanks to Marc Jarry, director of Mas d'Azil excavation, and Avis' master's supervisors (M. Leavelsey and H. Forestier).



Avis Babalu excavating at the Ariège archaeological site of the Mas d'Azil cave

During the 2 first weeks of July 2023, Avis traveled to France (3th to 18th of July), and after visiting members of the PPP team working in biological anthropology at the scientific department of Evolution and Biological Diversity (EDB) (University of Toulouse) she participated in the archaeological excavation at the Ariège archaeological site of the Mas d'Azil cave. The site is a very large cave that was identified for its archaeological potential in

the mid-19th century, as it contains a rich archaeological record (rock art, megafauna and human remains, engraved object, etc.) dating back to the Late Pleistocene.



Sorting of archaeological artefacts at Mas d'Azil



PPP team members, Mas d'Azil excavation leaders and Avis Babalu

Avis' archaeological excavation training at Mas d'Azil cave will strength her archaeological skills and knowledge, which will help her future archaeological work in Papua New Guinea.

Perspectives

Christopher Kinipi will attend the Annual Medical Symposium of the MSPNG in early September 2023 to present his preliminary results. This will be an occasion to exchange with the PNG medical and research community.

Avis Babalu will organise the next season (2024) of archaeological excavation in the upper Purari river in collaboration wit the PPP team.

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