

Archaeological Studies of the Middle and Late Holocene, Papua New Guinea

Edited by Jim Specht and Val Attenbrow

- Preface *Jim Specht*
1–2
- Part I Ceramic sites on the Duke of York Islands
J. Peter White
3–50
- Part II The Boduna Island (FEA) Lapita site
Jim Specht & Glenn Summerhayes
51–103
- Part III The Lagenda Lapita site (FCR/FCS), Talasea area
Jim Specht
105–129
- Part IV Pottery of the Talasea Area, West New Britain Province
Jim Specht & Robin Torrence
131–196
- Part V Pre-Lapita horizons in the Admiralty Islands:
flaked stone technology from GAC and GFJ
Christina Pavlides & Jean Kennedy
197–215
- Part VI Revised dating of Type X pottery, Morobe Province
Ian Lilley & Jim Specht
217–226
- Part VII The evolution of Sio pottery: evidence from three sites in
northeastern Papua New Guinea
Ian Lilley
227–244
- Part VIII A preliminary study into the Lavongai rectilinear earth mounds:
an XRD and phytolith analysis
Matthew G. Leavesley & Ulrike Troitzsch
245–254
- Part IX A stone tablet from Buka Island,
Bougainville Autonomous Region
Barry Craig
255–261



Archaeological Studies of the Middle and Late Holocene, Papua New Guinea

Preface

In the 50 years since “modern” archaeology began in Papua New Guinea, several major themes have been pursued, such as colonization and origins, food production, and trade and exchange. While significant advances have been made in each of these, much of the basic evidence for many areas remains unpublished or reported only in summary form. This volume is a step towards redressing this situation through the publication of data from several areas of the Papua New Guinea island provinces and the north coast of the mainland. The nine papers cover a diverse range of topics and periods and do not follow a single theme.

Pavlidis and Kennedy present a technological analysis of flaked obsidian assemblages from two Mid- to Late-Holocene sites in Manus Province that contrast with obsidian assemblages of comparable age in West New Britain Province, which are characterized by distinctive stemmed tools that were widely transported within and beyond New Britain (Araho *et al.*, 2002; Specht, 2005). The contrast is further reinforced by the lack of changes in technological organization of the Manus industries that have been interpreted in New Britain as reflecting shifts in settlement patterns and subsistence, though more and larger samples are needed from Manus to test this possibility.

The bulk of the volume comprises four papers on pottery sites of the Talasea area of West New Britain (Specht, Specht & Summerhayes, Specht & Torrence) and the Duke of York Islands of East New Britain Province (White). Most of this pottery belongs to the Lapita ceramic series dated c. 3350 to about 2000 BP (before present). Collectively these papers add to the growing body of data on Lapita sites of the Bismarck Archipelago, which is generally viewed as the “homeland” of Lapita prior to its subsequent dispersal into Remote Oceania. These papers focus on the local situation,

and suggest degrees of similarity and difference between sites within both their local and wider contexts that need to be explored independently of what occurred after Lapita pottery was transferred to more southerly regions.

In contrast to the highlands of the New Guinea mainland (e.g., Hope & Golson, 1995; Denham *et al.*, 2003), little work has yet been carried out on the early history of cultivated plant food production in the Papua New Guinea island provinces. Studies of vegetation history in central New Britain suggest patterns of landscape use after about 3450–3200 BP that generally support previous lithic analyses (Torrence, 1992; Boyd *et al.*, 2005; Pavlidis, 2006). Leavesley and Troitzsch present the first attempt to interpret directly evidence for cultivation through a study of a linear earthwork at Lavongai on New Hanover Island, New Ireland Province that could be older than about 2000 BP. Whether or not this date can be validated, and perhaps a link made with users of Lapita pottery, remains to be tested. The Lavongai earthworks clearly warrant further examination.

Two papers deal with aspects of the pottery sequence on Huon Peninsula in Morobe Province. Lapita dentate-stamped pottery is present in the Siassi Islands, but has not yet been recorded on the adjacent Peninsula mainland, where pottery production might have begun one millennium after Lapita pottery (Lilley, 2002). Lilley and Specht propose a new chronology (1000–500 BP) for the unusual ware known as Type X. This pottery was contemporary, in part at least, with parallel developments that led to the emergence of the historically known pottery of Sio and Gitua that are discussed by Lilley in a separate paper. Whether these wares ultimately had their origins in late and post Lapita wares remains to be determined, though other possibilities cannot be ruled out at this stage.

The final paper by Craig concerns an engraved stone object recorded by Graeme Pretty at Tohatsi on Buka Island. This undated item displays stylistic affinities with both the Lapita design system, as illustrated in the papers on Lapita in this volume, and the recent art of the Buka region. Such similarity with past and recent art styles is not surprising, as Mead (1971), Green (1979) and Craig (1995) have suggested long-term persistence in aspects of various decorative systems.

These papers are dedicated to Baiva Ivuyo, who died at the prime of his career in January 2004. Baiva was Senior Technical Officer in the Prehistory Department of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Papua New Guinea, where he managed the Museum's archaeological collections and the National Register of Ancestral and Archaeological Sites. Baiva worked in the field with many foreign researchers, including most of the authors in this volume, and was a member of the field team that carried out the field project in the Duke of York Islands reported here. All of us who knew Baiva held him in high regard as an archaeologist and friend who displayed enthusiasm, commonsense and exceptional skills as a fieldworker. The profession as a whole, and not just Papua New Guinea, is lesser for his passing.

References

- Anson, D., 2000. Reber-Rakival dentate-stamped motifs: documentation and comparative implications. *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology* 20 (1998): 119–35.
- Araho, N., R. Torrence & J.P. White, 2002. Valuable and useful: Mid-Holocene stemmed obsidian artefacts from West New Britain, Papua New Guinea. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 68: 61–81.
- Boyd, W.E., C.J. Lentfer & J. Parr, 2005. Interactions between human activity, volcanic eruptions and vegetation during the Holocene at Garua and Numundo, West New Britain. *Quaternary Research* 64: 384–398.
- Craig, B., 1995. Arrow designs in Northern and Central New Guinea and the Lapita connection. In *Pacific Material Culture*, ed. D.A.M. Smidt, P. ter Keurs & A. Trouwborst, pp. 219–259. Leiden: Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde.
- Denham, T.P., S.G. Haberle, C. Lentfer, R. Fullagar, J. Field, M. Therin, N. Porch & B. Winsborough, 2003. Origins of agriculture at Kuk swamp in the Highlands of New Guinea. *Science* 301: 189–193.
- Green, R.C., & D. Anson, 2000. Excavations at Kainapirina (SAC), Watom Island, Papua New Guinea. *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology* 20 (1998): 29–94.
- Hope, G., & J. Golson, 1995. Late Quaternary change in the mountains of New Guinea. In *Transitions: Pleistocene to Holocene in Australia and Papua New Guinea*, ed. J. Allen & J.F. O'Connell, pp. 818–830. *Antiquity* 69, special number 265.
- Kirch, P.V., 1997. *The Lapita Peoples: Ancestors of the Oceanic world*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lilley, I., 2002. Lapita and Type Y pottery in the KLK site, Siassi, Papua New Guinea. In *Fifty Years in the Field. Essays in honour of Richard Shutler Jr's archaeological career*, ed. S. Bedford, C. Sand & D. Burley, pp. 79–90. Auckland: New Zealand Archaeological Association. Monograph 25.
- Mead, S.M., 1971. An analysis of form and decoration in Polynesian adze handles. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 80(4): 485–496.
- Pavlides, C., 2006. Life before Lapita: new developments in Melanesia's long-term history. In *Archaeology of Oceania: Australia and the Pacific Islands*, ed. I. Lilley, pp. 205–227. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Specht, J.R., 2005. Obsidian stemmed tools in New Britain: aspects of their role and value in mid-Holocene Papua New Guinea. In *Many Exchanges: Archaeology, history, community and the work of Isabel McBryde*, ed. I. Macfarlane, M.-J. Mountain & R. Paton, pp. 373–392. Canberra: Aboriginal History. Aboriginal History Monograph 11.
- Summerhayes, G.R., 2000. *Lapita Interaction*. Department of Archaeology and Natural History, and Centre for Archaeology, Australian National University, Canberra. *Terra Australis* 15.
- Torrence, R., 1992. What is Lapita about obsidian? A view from the Talasea sources. In *Poterie Lapita et Peuplement*, ed. J.-C. Galipaud, pp. 111–126. Noumea: ORSTOM.

Jim Specht
October 2007