

# From Field to Museum Studies from Melanesia in Honour of Robin Torrence

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Jim Specht, Val Attenbrow, and Jim Allen

Specht, Jim, Val Attenbrow, and Jim Allen. 2021. Preface .....	1
Neall, Vincent, Lucy McGee, Michael Turner, Tanya O'Neill, Anke Zernack, and J. Stephen Athens. 2021. Geochemical fingerprinting of Holocene tephra in the Willaumez Isthmus District of West New Britain, Papua New Guinea .....	5
Pengilley, Alana. 2021. Geochemistry and sources of stone tools in south-west New Britain, Papua New Guinea .....	25
Shaw, Ben, and Simon Coxe. 2021. Cannibalism and developments to socio-political systems from 540 BP in the Massim Islands of south-east Papua New Guinea .....	47
Ford, Anne, Vincent Kewibu, and Kenneth Miamba. 2021. Avanata: a possible Late Lapita site on Fergusson Island, Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea .....	61
Hogg, Nicholas W. S., Glenn R. Summerhayes, and Yi-lin Elaine Chen. 2021. Moving on or settling down? Studying the nature of mobility through Lapita pottery from the Anir Islands, Papua New Guinea .....	71
Lentfer, Carol J., Alison Crowther, and Roger C. Green. 2021. The question of Early Lapita settlements in Remote Oceania and reliance on horticulture revisited: new evidence from plant microfossil studies at Reef/Santa Cruz, south-east Solomon Islands .....	87
Rath, Pip, and Nina Kononenko. 2021. Negotiating social identity through material practices with stone .....	107
Dickinson, Paul. 2021. Narrow margins: standardised manufacturing of obsidian stemmed tools as evidence for craft specialisation and social networks in mid-Holocene New Britain .....	119
Reepmeyer, Christian. 2021. Modelling prehistoric social interaction in the south-western Pacific: a view from the obsidian sources in northern Vanuatu .....	137
Barton, Huw. 2021. The cylindrical stone adzes of Borneo .....	149
Davies, Susan M., and Michael Quinnell. 2021. Up close and personal: James Edge- Partington in Australia in 1897 .....	169
Lilje, Erna, and Jude Philp. 2021. The dancing trees: objects, facts and ideas in museums .....	183
Rhoads, James W. 2021. Papuan Gulf spirit boards and detecting social boundaries: a preliminary investigation .....	195
Bonshek, Elizabeth. 2021. The Longgu community time capsule: contemporary collecting in Solomon Islands for the Australian Museum .....	219
Sheppard, Peter J. 2021. <i>Tomoko</i> : raiding canoes of the western Solomon Islands .....	231
Richards, Rhys, and Peter J. Matthews. 2021. Barkcloth from the Solomon Islands in the George Brown Collection .....	245

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# Geochemistry and Sources of Stone Tools in South-west New Britain, Papua New Guinea

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**ABSTRACT.** The capacity to trace the movement of region-specific materials across landscapes is a key archaeological theme in investigations of community interaction and exchange. In this study I investigate the scale of raw material and artefact procurement and exchange of a range of stone tools from southwest West New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea using a non-destructive geochemical technique—portable x-ray fluorescence (pXRF) spectrometry. The complex geochemistry of the Bismarck Archipelago and previous ethnographic and archaeological studies provide data that allow opportunities to explore the role of stone tools made from igneous rocks by flaking, hammer-dressing and grinding, particularly axe and adze blades, within intra- and inter-island exchange networks. The results indicate that groups residing on the southwest coast of New Britain obtained their stone tools from source regions on the north side of West New Britain, the Gazelle Pen. of East New Britain, and probably even from islands in the Vitiaz Strait and off the north coast of New Guinea. Inclusion of these south coast tools in models of past regional exchange networks, such as down-the-line exchange, greatly expands our knowledge of the role of stone tools in social interactions in the Bismarck Archipelago from the Lapita pottery period onwards.

## Introduction

Throughout the Pacific Islands the growth of compositional provenance studies of lithic artefacts continues to refine our understanding of patterns of inter-island and intra-archipelago exchange networks, social interaction, and potentially craft specialisation, especially for artefacts made of basalt, andesite and obsidian (e.g., Weisler and Kirch, 1996; Summerhayes *et al.*, 1998; Summerhayes, 2009; Mills *et al.*, 2011; Kirch *et al.*, 2012; Kahn *et al.*, 2013; Clark *et al.*, 2014; Weisler *et al.*, 2016). The relatively recent adoption of non-destructive portable XRF has enabled a new phase of sourcing studies for a wider range of samples within both the Pacific Islands and Australia (Sheppard *et al.*, 2010; Attenbrow *et al.*, 2017; Richards, 2019). Within Near Oceania, the region encompassing New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and Solomon Islands, pottery and volcanic glass (obsidian) have been the primary subjects of sourcing studies using various techniques. In the case of obsidian this has been particularly effective (Bird *et al.*, 1997; Torrence and Summerhayes, 1997; Summerhayes,

2009; Shaw *et al.*, 2020). For Near Oceania, pXRF has been used exclusively for obsidian sourcing (e.g., Torrence *et al.*, 2013; Specht *et al.*, 2018), though my analyses of archaeological and ethnographic assemblages of stone axes and adzes on the Willaumez Pen. on the north coast of West New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea has extended the range of applications of pXRF (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019). By taking advantage of legacy geochemical data from that region, many of these tools have been successfully grouped into potential source regions and integrated into existing models of regional trade.

The present paper builds on that work to expand our knowledge of the likely geological origins of stone tools in New Britain during the Lapita pottery and post-Lapita periods. It again takes advantage of the legacy data from geological fieldwork undertaken on New Britain by Dr. R. W. Johnson and others at the Bureau of Mineral Resources, Canberra (now Geoscience Australia) in the 1960s and 1970s. Similar to other regions, New Britain stone axes and adzes are comprised almost exclusively of igneous rocks. Whilst there is currently no field evidence of axe and adze

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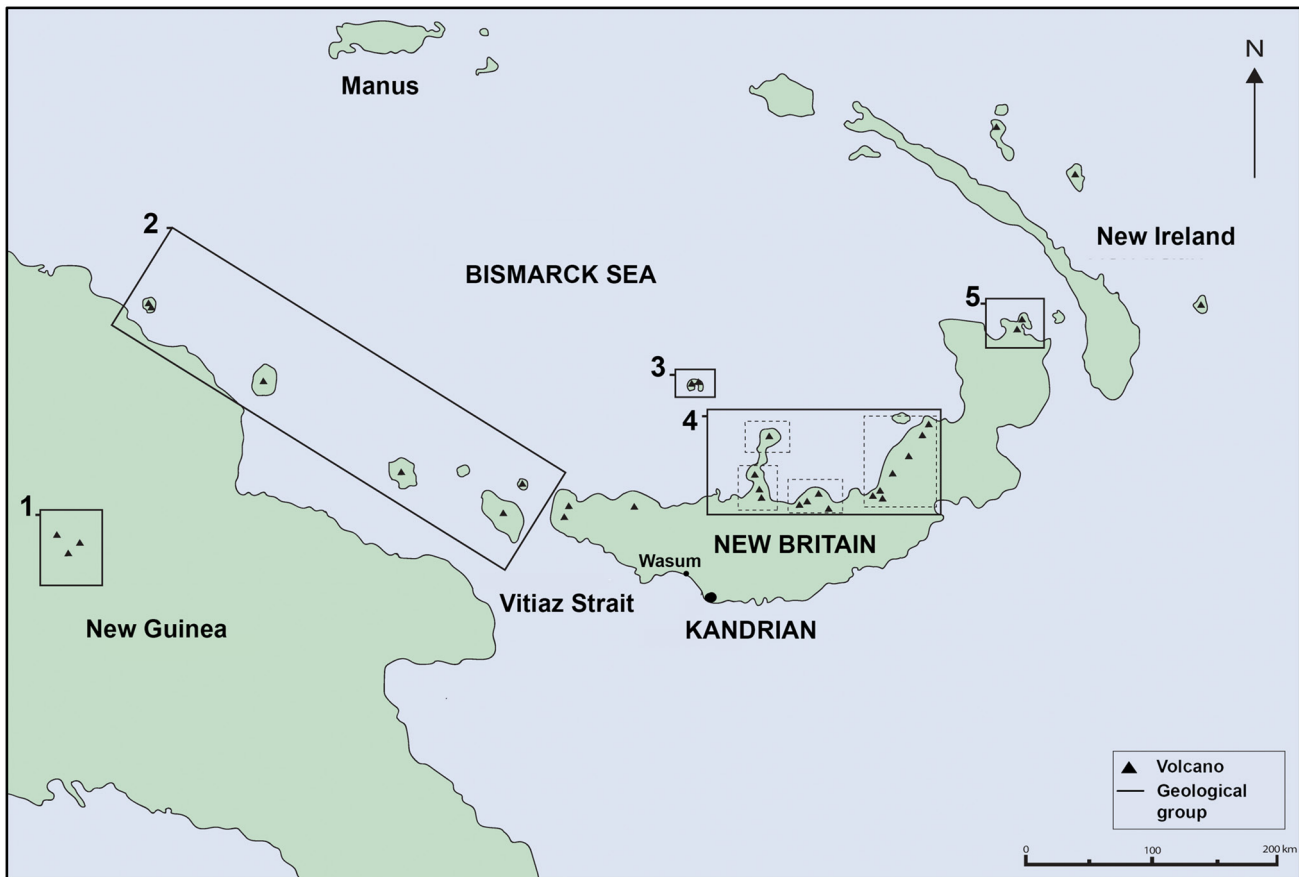
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**Figure 1.** Location of major geological source regions used in this study. 1—New Guinea, 2—Vitiaz Strait, 3—Bali-Witu, 4—West New Britain sources (WPN, WPS, Hoskins, Eastern), 5—Rabaul.

manufacture on New Britain, such as grinding grooves or quarry sites, it is highly likely that raw material was sourced from areas with both abundant outcrops of igneous rock and the requisite production expertise.

In contrast to the extensive volcanic outcrops on the north side of New Britain, the southern half of New Britain is primarily comprised of Miocene sedimentary limestones in the interior and raised Pleistocene coral reef limestone along the coast. To evaluate the scale and scope of Lapita and post-Lapita networks and interaction spheres in this region this paper tests a hypothesis that most igneous stone tools in southern New Britain were imported from the north, focussing on artefacts recovered in the Kandrian and Passismanua regions of southwest New Britain.

## Background

### Regional interaction

The island of New Britain is located east of mainland New Guinea and is the largest island in the Bismarck Archipelago, a region containing the island provinces of Papua New Guinea (Fig. 1). As elsewhere in the Archipelago, in recent times communities in New Britain were linked through a series of interaction spheres that enabled the movement of region-specific products. Todd (1934a,b) and Chowning (1978) produced detailed ethnographic accounts on exchange networks between New Britain communities within these interaction spheres.

There is only minimal mention of stone tools in these ethnographic accounts as stone tool use had long ceased in New Britain by the time they were written (Chowning,

1978: 300). However, where they are mentioned, stone axe and adze blades appear to have been traded into regions where suitable raw material was not available. Chowning (1978) discusses accounts of exchange between the Kove language groups on the coast to the west of Willaumez Pen., Lakalai speakers on the volcanic Hoskins Pen., and Sengseng speakers in the Passismanua area, inland from Kandrian on the Yalam Limestone. These trade routes are consistent with the stone tools found in archaeological contexts in this region, particularly movement between Hoskins Pen., the base of the Willaumez Pen. and the Passismanua region (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019). Exchange between the Sengseng and other groups was largely dominated by the Sengseng's desire for goods that were only available on or near the coast. These included a variety of shells, coconuts, lizard skins, salt and obsidian imported from the north side of the island, which the Sengseng received in exchange for shields, minerals, betelnut, bark-cloth and chert raw material and artefacts produced from sources in the Yalam limestone of the Passismanua region (Chowning, 1978: 297).

Todd's (1934a,b) accounts of exchange along the south coast of New Britain provide a discussion of the goods involved. These included food bowls, pottery, canoes and round cane baskets that were brought from the Siassi Islands (Vitiaz Strait) and the western end of New Britain along the south coast, as well as shell money from people of the Rabaul area at the eastern end of New Britain. Trans-Vitiaz Strait trade was a prominent network linking New Britain with communities on the New Guinea mainland and the adjacent islands. Harding (1967, 1994) and Lilley (1986, 2004) have detailed a wide range of raw materials, craft goods, valuables and consumables that were passed between trading societies in the region. The Mandok (Siassi) were

responsible for a large portion of this trade. Raw materials were a major component and included items such as blocks of obsidian from the north coast of New Britain, red earth pigment from Tarawe volcanic centre on Umboi and black earth pigment from Malalamai on the Rai coast of New Guinea (Harding, 1967: 29–60). There is some indication that stone blades were also involved in these trans-Vitiaz exchanges and likely entered the Siassi system from several different sources. Despite the lack of existing archaeological evidence, it also seems likely that stone blades entered New Britain trade networks from sources in the Vitiaz Strait.

In comparison to the expedient nature of obsidian and chert flakes that dominate the New Britain archaeological assemblages (with the exception of mid-Holocene stemmed tools), stone axe and adze blades and their hafts would have required a significant amount of energy and skills to produce finished objects (Torrence, 2011). Taking into account the lack of evidence for the exchange of unmodified raw material or blanks intended for working into axes and adzes, finished stone blades are likely to have played a specific role in exchange networks. For example, a cache of stone axe heads that were found near the provincial town of Kimbe on the north side of New Britain might indicate that these artefacts were of value and deliberately buried at the site (Specht, 2005). Much like stone blades in the highlands of New Guinea, it is likely that New Britain artefacts not only held utilitarian value but also held ceremonial and prestige value and were exchanged, for example, as bride price items. If, as suggested here, axe and adze blades held a significant position in trade networks between different communities they were also probably curated and passed down inter-generationally.

### Geological background

Many volcanic regions across the Bismarck Archipelago have produced raw material suitable for the production of stone tools, although due to the geological complexity of the raw material and a lack of field data, it is currently impossible to identify specific sources. However, the geological structure of the region enables geochemical distinctions between different volcanic regions.

New Britain is located in the eastern sector of the ‘Bismarck Volcanic Arc’, a volcanic chain that extends from the Schouten Islands off the north coast of New Guinea in the far west to Rabaul in the far northeast of East New Britain. This region formed as a result of the subduction of the Solomon Sea plate beneath the South Bismarck plate in the north (Johnson and Molnar, 1972; Neall *et al.*, 2008). New Britain is distinguished by two geologically different landscapes, the Wadati-Benioff zone of volcanic rocks in the north (Bali-Witu Islands, the Willaumez Pen. and the north coast) and the Miocene limestone karst of the central Whiteman mountain range southwards towards the south coast. On south coast, late Cainozoic uplift has produced raised terraces of coralline limestone and marine sediment platforms along the mainland coast and formed islands such as Apugi near Kandrian (Ryburn, 1976).

The volcanic ranges of the Willaumez Pen. and adjacent regions in northern New Britain consist of andesitic and basaltic outcrops suitable for the production of stone tools. Non-destructive pXRF geochemical characterisation of stone blades from the Willaumez Pen. points to the Hoskins region as a likely major source of stone artefacts (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, volcanic outcrops in the Bali-Witu Islands and the North region of the Willaumez Pen. appear to have been the origin area for some blades that reached sites on

Garua Island and the centre of the Pen.. These results gave rise to a model of exchange networks through which stone blades moved to communities distant from the source areas (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019: 9–10). This model will be applied to the south coast assemblage in order to examine whether these same source regions were exploited, or tools were brought into the region from elsewhere.

## Materials and methods

### Geochemical study

To identify potential geological sources, I accessed a legacy reference geochemical dataset (major and trace elements) for 314 geological samples representing the likely major geological source regions (Fig. 1, Appendix 1). This dataset comprises 203 samples from the Willaumez Pen. and adjacent volcanic ranges and 26 samples from the Bali-Witu Islands; these were analysed at the Department of Geology, Australian National University, Canberra using a Philips PW1220 wave length dispersive XRF spectrometer (Johnson and Chappell, 1979; Woodhead and Johnson, 1993). The sample also includes XRF results for 54 samples from the Rabaul area of New Britain drawn from the GEOROC online database (Heming, 1979; Wood *et al.*, 1995; McKee *et al.*, 2011; Patia *et al.*, 2017), 15 samples from islands located in Vitiaz Strait and along the north coast of New Guinea (Woodhead *et al.*, 2010), and 16 samples from Mounts Hagen, Giluwe, Murray and Bosavi on the New Guinea mainland (Mackenzie, 1976).

This paper compares the legacy compositional dataset to the results of non-destructive geochemical analyses of an archaeological sample from southern New Britain generated with a Bruker Tracer 5i pXRF spectrometer. To allow comparison between the two datasets, the new pXRF data was transformed into quantitative values using an empirical basalt calibration protocol designed for this instrument (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019, Supplementary Data 4 for the calibration routine). This step ensures that the data from different instruments is comparable and allows it to be amalgamated with legacy datasets. Measurements were made over 150 seconds using settings determined by the pre-loaded basalt calibration. Two standards, UHH.MK05.14E.57 and NIST688, were routinely analysed during analysis to estimate precision and accuracy of results (Appendix 2). Data provided from the pXRF analyses of the standards enabled assessment of the machine’s capabilities to ensure compatibility between the datasets. Measurements were taken from three different locations on the least weathered surfaces of each artefact to minimise potential contamination, and these were then averaged to reduce the potential effect of sample heterogeneity. Measured elements included nine majors (MgO, K<sub>2</sub>O, SiO<sub>2</sub>, Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, CaO, TiO<sub>2</sub>, MnO, Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>) and nine traces (V, Ni, Cu, Zn, Rb, Sr, Y, Zr, Nb). To facilitate comparison with the legacy dataset, major elements (Na to Fe) are reported as weight percent (wt.%) oxides and trace elements (Co to Nb) as parts per million (ppm) (Appendix 3). Under the pre-loaded basalt calibration, improvements in correlation ( $R^2$ ) were seen in a majority of elements. Because some variance occurred in the recovery data from these standards, MgO, K<sub>2</sub>O, SiO<sub>2</sub>, V, Ni, Cu and Nb were excluded from further analysis as these elements were either under or over recovered. (see Appendix 2).

The second stage of the geochemical study involved the combined analysis of legacy and pXRF data using Discriminate Function Analysis (DFA) with JMP 14.0

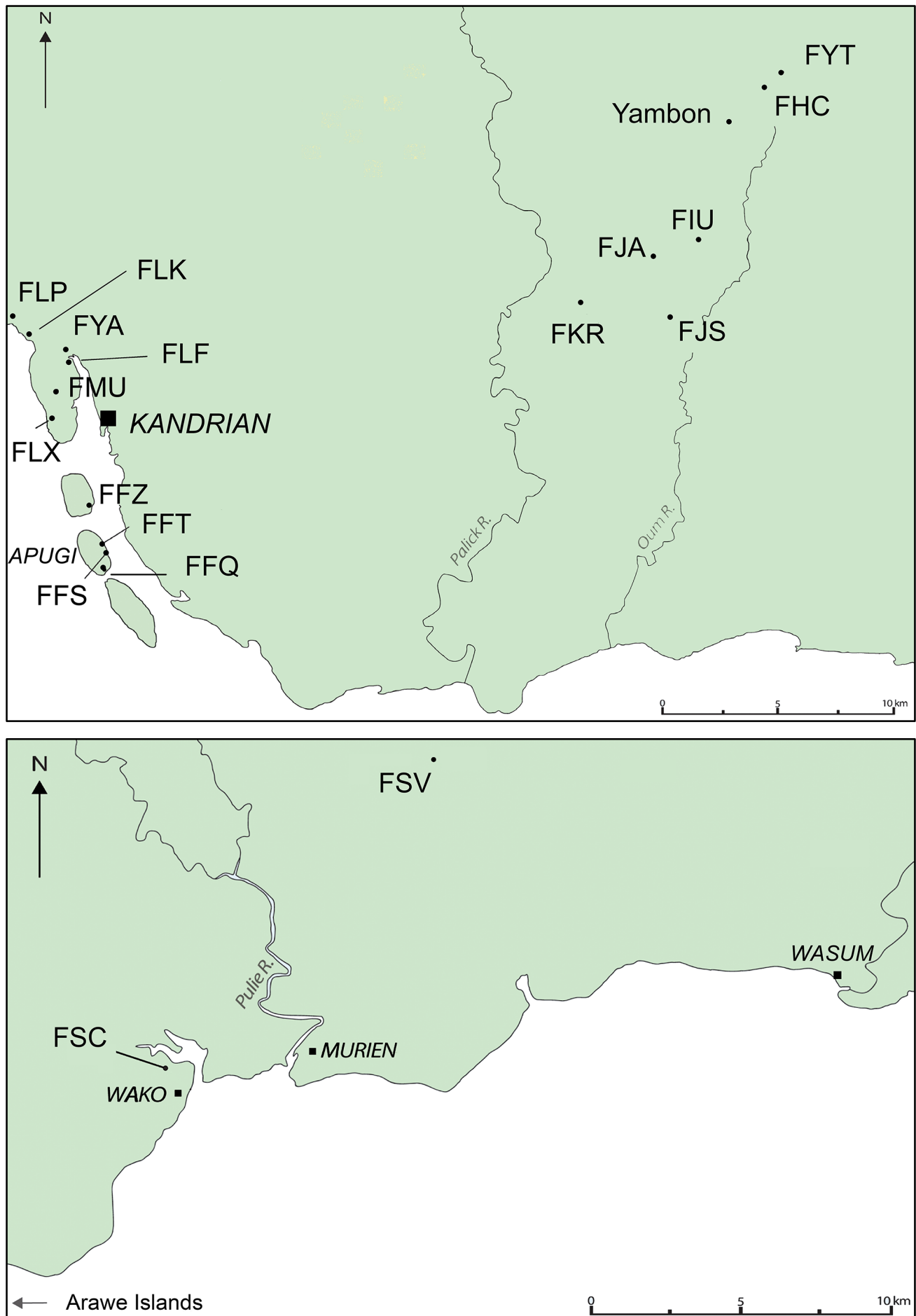


Figure 2. Location of sites where the stone tools were collected or excavated.

software (2018; © SAS Institute Inc.). By combining input variables into composite functions, DFA is able to classify the archaeological samples into source groups based on the training data provided by the geological source data. A degree of probability is provided to each outcome to show the likelihood of each match, and in this study only those items with a predicated posterior probability degree of 0.7 or higher were included. DFA can be used to assign ‘unknowns’ to a geological source region and has previously been used successfully for this purpose in the Marquesas Islands (McAlister and Allen, 2017), Papua New Guinea (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019) and Tonga and Samoa (Clark *et al.*, 2014). Geochemical regions and social regions were used during analysis to help classify artefacts into potential source groups, a method that was previously employed successfully to classify stone axes and adzes from the north coast of New Britain (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019).

### The archaeological sample

This study is based on 67 stone tools from 18 archaeological sites in southwest New Britain, most of which were from surface collections (51) or finds by local people (4), and the rest (12) were from five excavated sites (Fig. 2; Appendix 3). This sample provides an opportunity to analyse the spatial distribution of stone artefacts over a large region. The size of the sample may seem small but is large for New Britain, where stone artefacts are rarely recovered from archaeological excavations. The tools were made by various techniques: flaking, grinding and hammer-dressing, sometimes combining two techniques. The sample includes a pestle ( $n = 1$ ), possible bark cloth beaters ( $n = 2$ ), nut-cracking anvils ( $n = 2$ ), a discoid ( $n = 1$ ), unidentified flaked pieces ( $n = 3$ ), a split pebble ( $n = 1$ ), and axe and adze blades ( $n = 57$ ). The blades are largely comparable in form and size to those found elsewhere on New Britain, New Guinea and elsewhere in Near Oceania and include waisted and stemmed forms (e.g., Crosby, 1973; Specht, 2005; Pengilley *et al.*, 2019: fig. 2). A selection of these tools is presented in Fig. 3. Part of the sample ( $n = 26$ ) consists of artefacts from surface collections and excavated contexts associated with Lapita style pottery (approx. 3250–2750 BP), providing evidence for possible inclusion of some blades in Lapita exchange networks. The remaining items from surface collections are likely to belong to more recent periods (Torrence, 2011: 30). Only one tool is dated: adze blade FHC/I/95 from Misisil cave (site FHC) came from a dated context ca 1500–750 cal. BP (Lentfer *et al.*, 2010: fig. 3), and one blade fragment at site FFT was associated with Lapita pottery.

## Results

### Discriminating between sources

To establish how well the geological source regions differentiated, a total of nine geochemical groups were employed in this study, each representing a different potential source area for which raw material could be exploited. Four of these groups are situated on the Willaumez Pen. (GN, GS) or in the volcanic ranges located to the east (E, F). These groups are geochemically distinct from each other due to the north-south direction of the underlying Wadati-Benioff zone, and once DFA was applied, good discrimination between the groups was possible (Fig. 4). There was some overlap between groups E and F, discussed further below. The other geological groups include samples from Rabaul, Bali-Witu Islands, Vitiaz Strait and New Guinea highlands.

DFA of these samples shows clear separation between these geological regions (Fig. 4).

To address a potential lack of fit between the distribution of cultural groups across the New Britain landscape and the geochemical regions overlying the Wadati-Benioff zone, the concept of ‘social regions’ was employed in relation to exchange patterns. This potential lack of fit only relates to samples from the north coast of West New Britain. Samples from regions E and F were grouped with those in the Hoskins Pen. and the eastern group. GN and GS samples were mostly unaffected and are renamed as social groups WPN and WPS. When DFA was re-applied to test these new categories, good discrimination was achieved between regions (Fig. 5).

Once source groups were established, DFA was applied to the entire sample to assign artefacts into potential source groups. Artefacts were only grouped if they showed a predicated posterior probability degree of 0.7 or higher and their geological region classification aligned with their social region classification. This approach assigned 39 tools to two source groups (Fig. 6). Four of these tools were from Lapita-associated contexts with matches made to sources both within New Britain and beyond. In Fig. 6, artefacts grouped with a specific source are colour coded; unassigned artefacts are identified as black triangles.

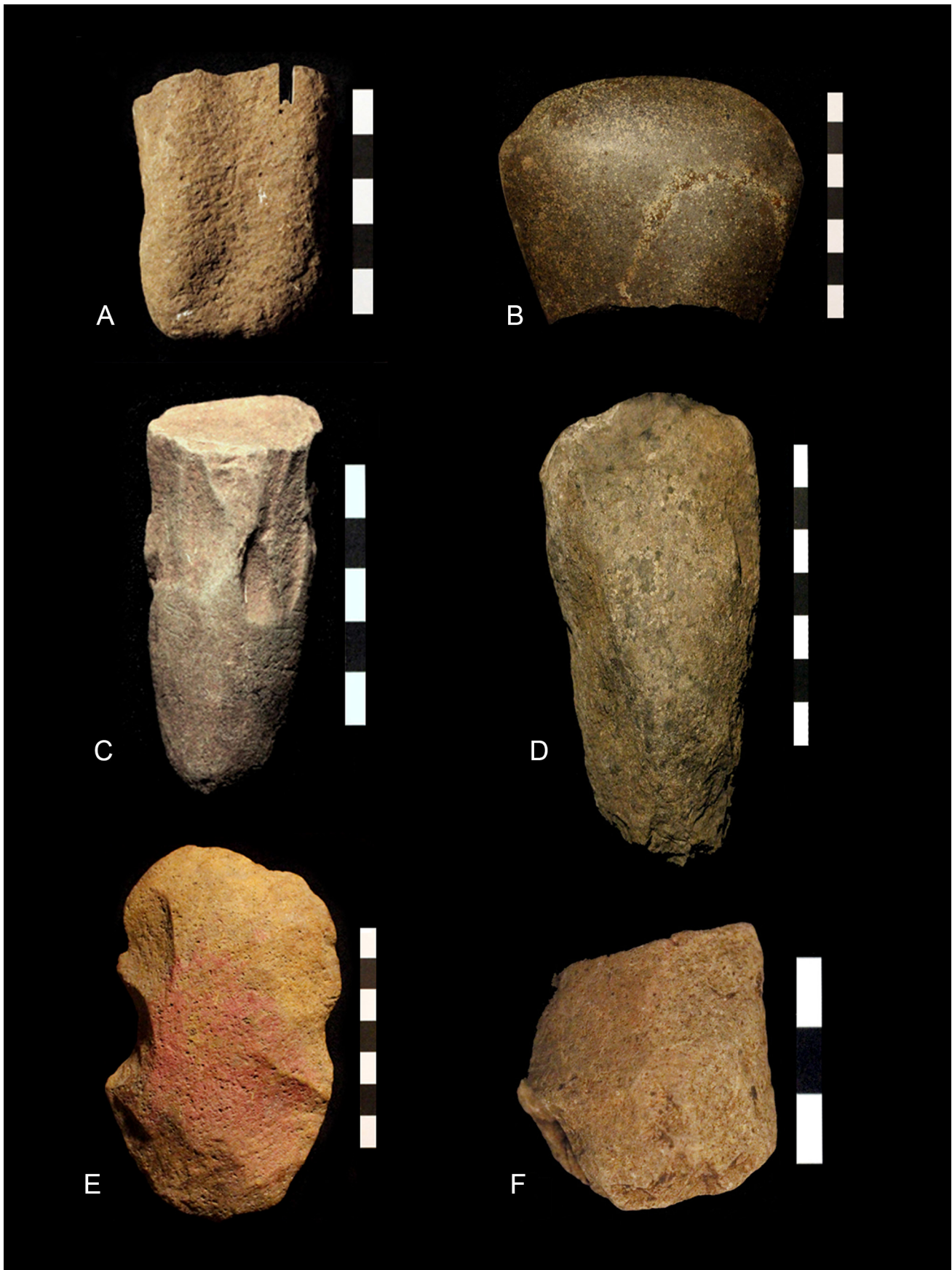
### Interpreting possible exchange patterns

Geochemical (Table 1) and social (Table 2) groups were employed to determine potential source regions. The relationship between artefact findspot and origin of raw material is represented in Fig. 6. While the remaining artefacts could not be securely classified, the data suggests these artefacts were of raw materials likely derived from even more distant locations. The wide range of stone sources present on sites south of the central Whiteman Range provides support for the hypothesis that stone artefacts, particularly axe and adze blades, were frequently moved around and were probably well-integrated into exchange relationships.

It is clear that the volcanic region east of the Willaumez Pen. was a major producer of axe and adze blades, a result consistent with the findings of Pengilley *et al.* (2019). Of the total sourced artefacts, 15 (33.3%) were assigned to either E or F geochemical region, and all of these artefacts were assigned to the Hoskins social region, thus excluding the eastern social region (Tables 1, 2). Within the Willaumez Pen., 9 tools (23.1%) could be assigned to the northern part of the Pen. (WPN/GN).

The absence of tools originating from the source region at the base and lower parts of Willaumez Pen. (GS, WPS) is notable as this supports the lack of field evidence for stone tool manufacture in this region. Previous geochemical sourcing of stone blades from sites in this region also produced no matches to volcanic outcrops in the WPS and GS regions (Pengilley *et al.*, 2019: 9). These results suggest that groups which controlled access to the obsidian sources most likely obtained valuables such as stone tools through exchange from nearby regions. Additionally, whereas sites located on the Willaumez Pen. which had artefacts from the Bali-Witu source region, none of the artefacts from the southern sites of New Britain were assigned to the Bali-Witu source region. Thus, the Bali-Witu networks were apparently only linked to communities on the north side of the island and lacked connections to networks to the south of the Whiteman Range.

Thirty eight percent of the matched tools were assigned to source regions beyond the central area of New Britain.



**Figure 3.** Selection of stone items analysed in this study with their Geochemical/social region. (A) File or nut-cracking anvil, surface find at site FLP, Analo village, Kandrian (E/Hoskins). (B) Cutting-edge of axe, surface find from site FSV, Giring (Gegering) village, Lamogai, central New Britain (Vitiáz/Vitiáz). Reproduced by courtesy of C. Gosden and R. Fullagar. (C) Possible bark-cloth beater, surface find from site FSC, Monkereme near Wako village, south coast New Britain (GN/WPN). Reproduced by courtesy of C. Gosden and R. Fullagar. (D) Adze blade, surface find from square 20N/35E at Lapita pottery site FFS, Auraruo, Apugi Island, Kandrian (F/Hoskins). (E) Flaked waisted axe or adze made on a pebble, surface find at site FYT, Hauwayang cave, near site FHC, Misisil cave, Passismanua (GN/WPN). (F) Adze or axe butt, excavated from trench III, spit 3 at Lapita pottery site FFT, Rapie area, Iangpun village, Apugi Island, Kandrian (Vitiáz/Vitiáz).

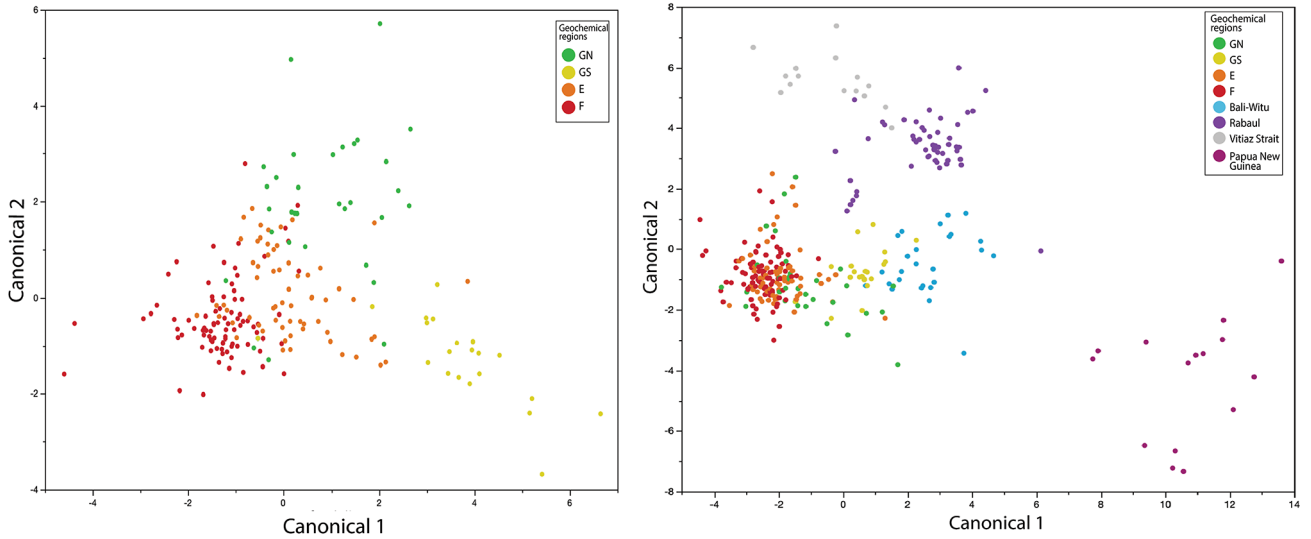


Figure 4. Discriminant Function Analysis of Willaumez Pen. geological regions (left) and all geological regions included in this study (right).

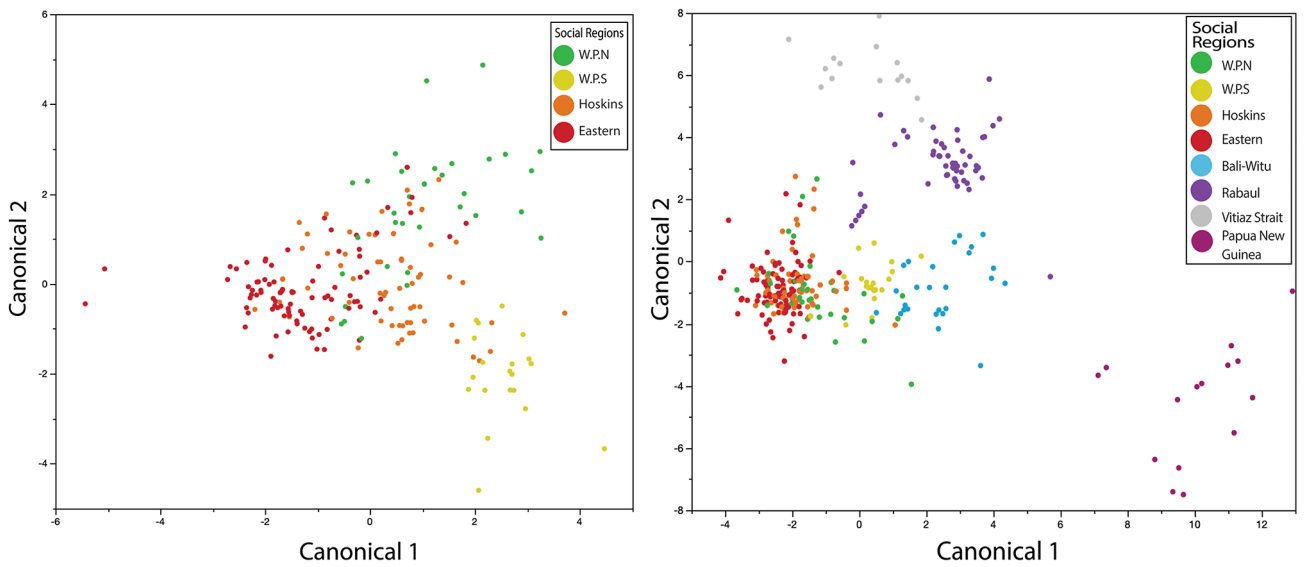


Figure 5. Discriminant Function Analysis of Willaumez Pen. social regions (left) and all social regions included in this study (right).

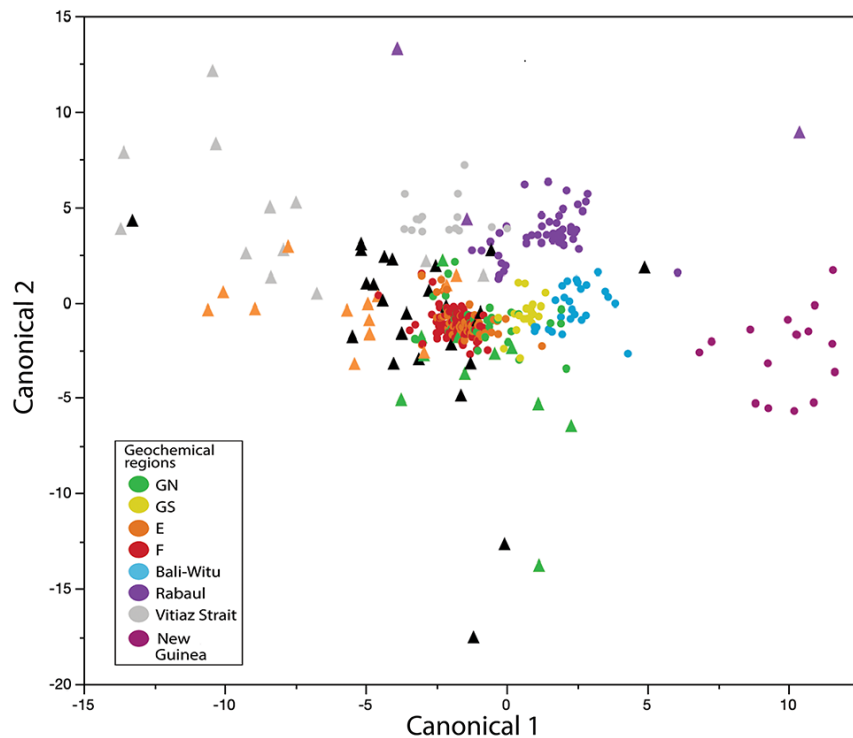


Figure 6. Results of geochemical characterisation. Artefacts classified to a source region are coloured the same as the source to which they have been assigned, and unassigned tools are depicted by black triangles.



**Table 1.** Items successfully assigned to each geochemical source region. \*Kandrian coast group includes one Lamogai/Wasum item in each of the GN and Vitiaz regions.

archaeological area	geochemical source region								
	E	F	GN	GS	H	Rabaul	Vitiaz	New Guinea	totals
Passismanua	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	5
Kandrian coast*	4	0	2*	0	0	3	5*	0	14
Apugi Island	4	5	6	0	0	0	4	0	19
Ganglo Island	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
totals	9	6	9	0	0	3	12	0	39
totals as %	23.1	15.4	23.1	0	0	7.7	30.8	0	100%

No samples matched sources on the New Guinea mainland. Roughly 8% of the sample were assigned to the Rabaul geochemical region at the most easterly part of New Britain. To the west, 30.8% of the tools were assigned to sources located in the Vitiaz Strait and islands along the New Guinea north coast confirming the inclusion of stone tools in long distance trade networks across water along with pigments, pots and other artefacts (Harding, 1994). While the involvement of these stone tools in the networks was suspected, this new data securely links them to the inter-island trade, though specific material sources are not identified.

### Change over time

The geochemical analysis of stone tools from sites on the southern side of New Britain also provides an opportunity to study possible change of sources over time. Intensification of exchange networks enabling the movement of larger volumes of region-specific products would be one expected effect of increasing settlement across the region. The results of this study allow us to understand the role stone blades had in these changing interaction spheres. Surface and excavated artefacts from four Lapita sites have successfully been matched to a social region, with 61.5% assigned to Hoskins or WPN (Table 3). Notably, however, 27% were assigned to the Vitiaz Strait social region and 11% to Rabaul.

While only 26 out of 45 artefacts at the Lapita pottery sites could be successfully assigned to a source and the exact date of each artefact is not known, the results provide some indication of the movement of a diverse range of stone tools through the region in early times. While most items in the sample were the product of surface collections and can be assumed to belong to the most recent millennium, our small sample of excavated artefacts includes an axe or adze butt at site FFT on Apugi Island that was clearly associated with Lapita pottery assigned to the Vitiaz social region (Fig. 3F; WNB/S/25 in Appendix 3). This indicates

that the connection between the Kandrian and Vitiaz Strait communities was in existence during Lapita times, though the connection might have begun prior to that time, and continued for the next three millennia. At the mainland Lapita site of FLX three of the nine items assigned to a geochemical source are assigned to the Rabaul region, but none of the 36 items analysed from Apugi Island (FFQ, FFS, FFT) can be confidently attributed to the Rabaul region. This marked contrast might be explained in several ways, including the development of links with the Rabaul region after the Lapita pottery period. Testing this possibility will require larger and better contextualised samples.

### Discussion and conclusions

The majority of stone tools in this study were made from stone sources in the Hoskins Pen., with smaller numbers coming from northern Willaumez Pen., the Rabaul region, and various islands in the Vitiaz Strait region. These results indicate that while most exchange activity occurred across New Britain from north to south, a substantial number of items also came to the Kandrian-Passismanua areas along the south coast from both the east and the west. These results support the social networks proposed between communities in New Britain and the wider Bismarck Archipelago (Torrence *et al.*, 2013).

In recent time exchanges between the north coast and the south coast of New Britain involved the well-known trade of obsidian and pigments moving south in exchange for other products (Chowning, 1978: 297–298). We can now confidently add to these accounts that stone axe and adze blades and other tools also moved from these areas into the south (Fig. 7). Two main source regions have become apparent: the areas inhabited today by the Bulu (North Willaumez Pen.) and Lakalai (Hoskins) communities. It is not possible to trace the exact route or routes by which these

**Table 2.** Items successfully assigned to each social region. \*Kandrian coast group includes one Lamogai/Wasum item in each of the WPN and Vitiaz regions.

Archaeological area	Social region								
	Eastern	Hoskins	WPS	WPN	Bali/Witu	Rabaul	Vitiaz	New Guinea	totals
Passismanua	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	5
Kandrian coast*	0	4	0	2*	0	3	5*	0	14
Apugi Island	0	9	0	6	0	0	4	0	19
Ganglo Island	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
totals	0	15	0	9	0	3	12	0	39
totals as %	0	38.5	0	23.1	0	7.7	30.8	0	100.1%

**Table 3.** All surface and excavated finds from Kandrian area Lapita pottery sites assigned to social regions.

site	number analysed	WPN	Hoskins	Vitiaz	Rabaul	total assigned (%)
FFS	24	3	9	1	0	13 (54%)
FFT	11	2	0	3	0	5 (45%)
FLX	9	0	1	3	3	7 (78%)
FYA	1	0	1	0	0	1 (n/a)
totals	45	5	11	7	3	26 (57.8%)
totals %		19.2%	42.3%	26.9%	11.5%	99.9%

artefacts reached the southern communities, although based on ethnographic data, it is likely that they travelled through the centre of the island via one of several paths. According to local informants on the south coast, one route led from the Kove area on the north coast via the Lamogai plateau to the south coast, and another ran from the Hoskins region across the island to Gasmata and then westwards along the coast to Kandrian (J. Specht, unpublished 1979 field notes).

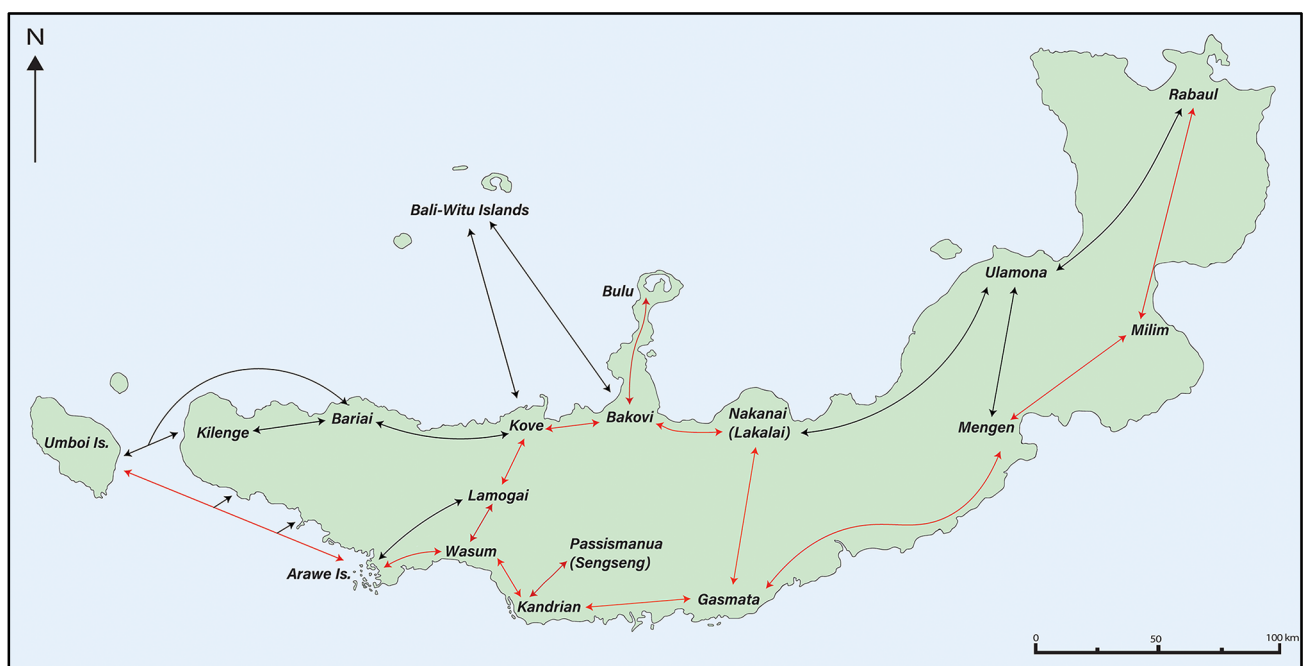
In comparison to the ethnographic literature, exchange routes utilised in earlier periods appear to have been similar to those used in recent times. It remains to be seen, however, whether there were any changes in the networks of exchange links over time with a shift to movements of artefacts between communities in the same geographic region.

The characterisation of stone tools to sources outside West New Britain indicates that they were part of trade networks that spanned a much larger area. We can see the movement of tools along a network that linked Rabaul with the Kandrian coast. Stone tools produced in the east were probably traded for specific material such as obsidian that was unique to the Willaumez Pen. or chert from Yalam limestone geological formations in the Passismanua region.

While there is no mention of the involvement of stone tools in ethnographic accounts of trade between New Britain and the islands to the west, the geochemical results indicate there was such trade in pre-contact times. Numerous trading points along the coast would have facilitated movement of goods between communities and it is likely that stone tools

produced on the islands of Vitiaz Strait were involved in down-the-line exchanges similar to those described in the ethnographies until they reached communities in Arawe Islands and Kandrian areas, and eventually the inland Passismanua area. When this movement of stone tools into southern New Britain began is unclear at present. The identification of tools of likely origin in the Vitiaz geochemical region at Lapita pottery sites on Apugi Island and the adjacent mainland of New Britain most likely indicate that these west to east connections began during Lapita pottery times. It is noteworthy that Lapita pottery occurs on Tuam Island in Vitiaz Strait (Lilley, 2002), raising the possibility that the Tuam site was a link in a network through which the stone tools passed.

Geochemical characterisation using a combination of pXRF and conventional legacy data has thus significantly increased our understanding of the role stone tools in exchange networks through New Britain and more widely in the Bismarck Archipelago. Further fieldwork focused on the primary source regions that have been isolated in this study might lead to the identification of specific areas of raw material procurement or signs of tool manufacture, such as grinding grooves. Irrespective of whether the transported stone tools were needed for ritual or utilitarian purposes, the pXRF studies allow us to trace their movement to the Kandrian and Passismanua regions from other regions, whereas previously we could previously only speculate about their origins.



**Figure 7.** Summary of exchange networks throughout New Britain. Black lines indicate previously established routes of trade and the red lines indicate the possible paths that the stone tools on the south coast could have followed from their original source region.

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Appendix 1. Geochemical data for geological reference collections used in this study. Abbreviations: Geo. Geochemical Region; N.G. New Guinea; Pen. Peninsula; Social Social Region.

Table with columns: name, location, Geo., Social, material, MgO, Al2O3, SiO2, P2O5, K2O, CaO, TiO2, V, MnO, Fe2O3 Ni, Cu, Zn, Rb, Sr, Y, Zr, Nb. Rows list various geological samples like E1:68490025, E1:68490031, etc., with their respective chemical compositions.

Table with columns: name, location, Geo., Social, material, MgO, Al2O3, SiO2, P2O5, K2O, CaO, TiO2, V, MnO, Fe2O3, Ni, Cu, Zn, Rb, Sr, Y, Zr, Nb. Rows include various samples like E551NG0059, E551NG0077, etc., with their corresponding geochemical data.









## Appendix 2

Precision and accuracy of the pXRF instrument as determined by comparison with basalt standards UHH MK.05.14E.57 and NIST688. Figure A2.1 courtesy of P. Grave, University of New England.

Analysis of the PXRF data from the two basalt standards UHH MK.05.14E.57 and NIST688 show that there is variation among the elemental concentrations. Overall, majority of elements were recovered well and remain close to 100% recovery, however some elements were not sufficiently recovered and were excluded from analysis (Mgo, K<sub>2</sub>O, SiO<sub>2</sub>, V, Ni, Cu, and Nb). Recovery % for elements taken from both standards is shown in Fig. A2.1 and the mean differences for elements analysed is shown in Fig. A2.2.

**Table A2.1.** Comparison of PXRF calibration and EDXRF Calibration. *Upper part of table:* UHH MK.05.14E.57 Basalt standard; *lower part of table:* NIST688 Basalt standard.

element	UHH MK.05.14E.57 Basalt on Bruker Instrument 900F4708			UHH MK.05.14E.57 Basalt on QuanX EDXRF (Mills and Lundblad, 2006)	
	mean	sd	rsd %	mean	sd
MgO (%)	6.693	0.341	5.1	3.497	0.099
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> (%)	13.451	0.574	4.3	13.365	0.031
SiO <sub>2</sub> (%)	47.667	2.016	4.2	52.360	0.035
K <sub>2</sub> O (%)	1.181	0.075	6.4	0.8570	0.0078
CaO (%)	9.720	0.423	4.4	7.719	0.036
TiO <sub>2</sub> (%)	4.223	0.192	4.5	3.564	0.016
V (ppm)	386.6	20.403	5.3	444	17
MnO (ppm)	1949	0.005	2.5	1510	24
Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> T (%)	12.963	0.387	3.0	11.350	0.010
Ni (ppm)	57.8	9.121	15.8	30.7	1.6
Cu (ppm)	53	5.244	9.9	79.8	7.7
Zn (ppm)	126.8	12.357	9.7	148.4	4.5
Rb (ppm)	22	5.612	25.5	31.6	1.1
Sr (ppm)	502.6	17.111	3.4	568.1	2.5
Y (ppm)	33	1.871	5.7	41.4	1.2
Zr (ppm)	267.4	9.503	3.6	351.5	2.4
Nb (ppm)	25.6	1.517	5.9	34.3	1.5

element	NIST688 Basalt on Bruker Instrument 900F4708			NIST688 Basalt <sup>a</sup>	
	mean	sd	rsd %	mean	sd
MgO (%)	5.654	0.270	4.8	8.46	0.14
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> (%)	14.912	0.212	1.4	17.35	0.13
SiO <sub>2</sub> (%)	41.980	0.994	2.4	48.35	0.997
K <sub>2</sub> O (%)	0.280	0.012	4.2	0.187	0.009
CaO (%)	11.553	0.093	0.8	12.17	0.115
TiO <sub>2</sub> (%)	1.157	0.011	0.9	1.168	0.030
V (ppm)	119.25	15.650	13.1	250	13.890
MnO (%)	0.166	0.003	1.8	0.167	0.008
Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> T (%)	11.403	0.201	1.8	10.34	0.007
Ni (ppm)	114	11.045	9.7	150	17.739
Cu (ppm)	74.25	6.4	8.6	96	4.439
Zn (ppm)	82.75	5.058	6.1	58	8.571
Rb (ppm)	1.75	0.5	28.6	1.19	1.253
Sr (ppm)	141.25	1.708	1.2	169.2	27.574
Y (ppm)	22.75	0.957	4.2	19	5.065
Zr (ppm)	48	1.414	2.9	59	60.243
Nb (ppm)	8.25	0.957	11.6	5.7	1.276

<sup>a</sup> Major elements: National Bureau of Standards, Standard Reference Material 688. Trace elements: GeoReM, 2019.

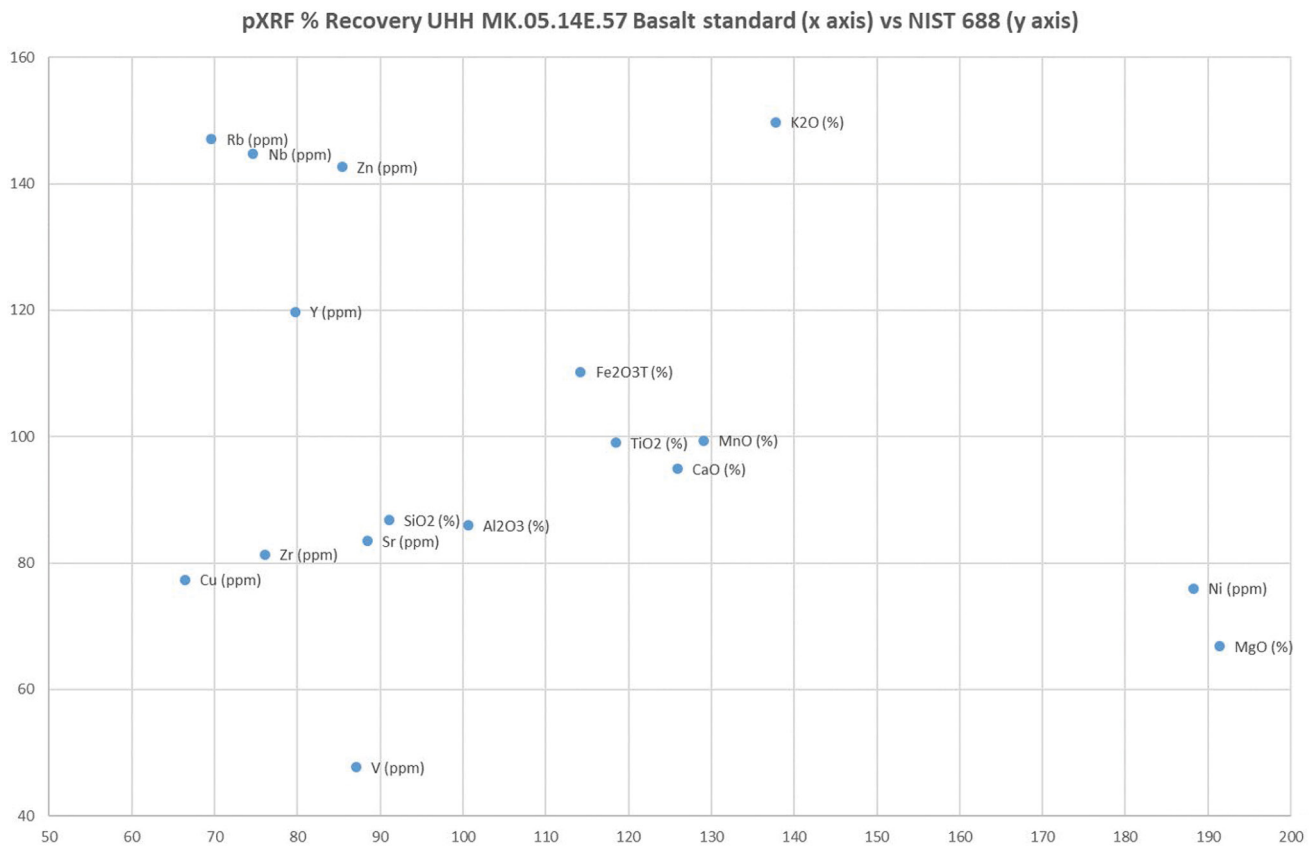


Figure A2.1. Recovery % for PXRf results against UHH MK.05.14E.57 Basalt standard and NIST688 Basalt standard (courtesy of Peter Grave).

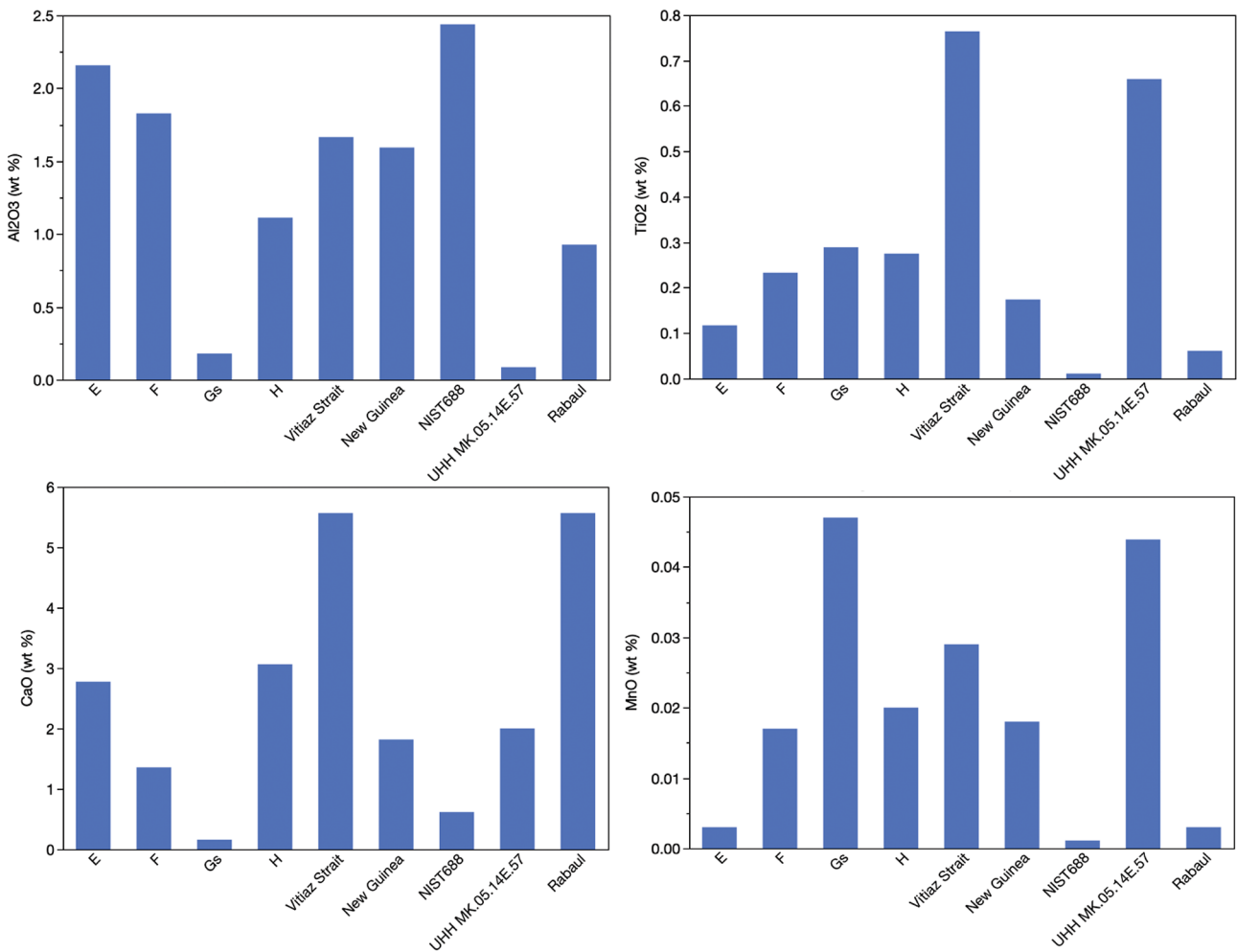
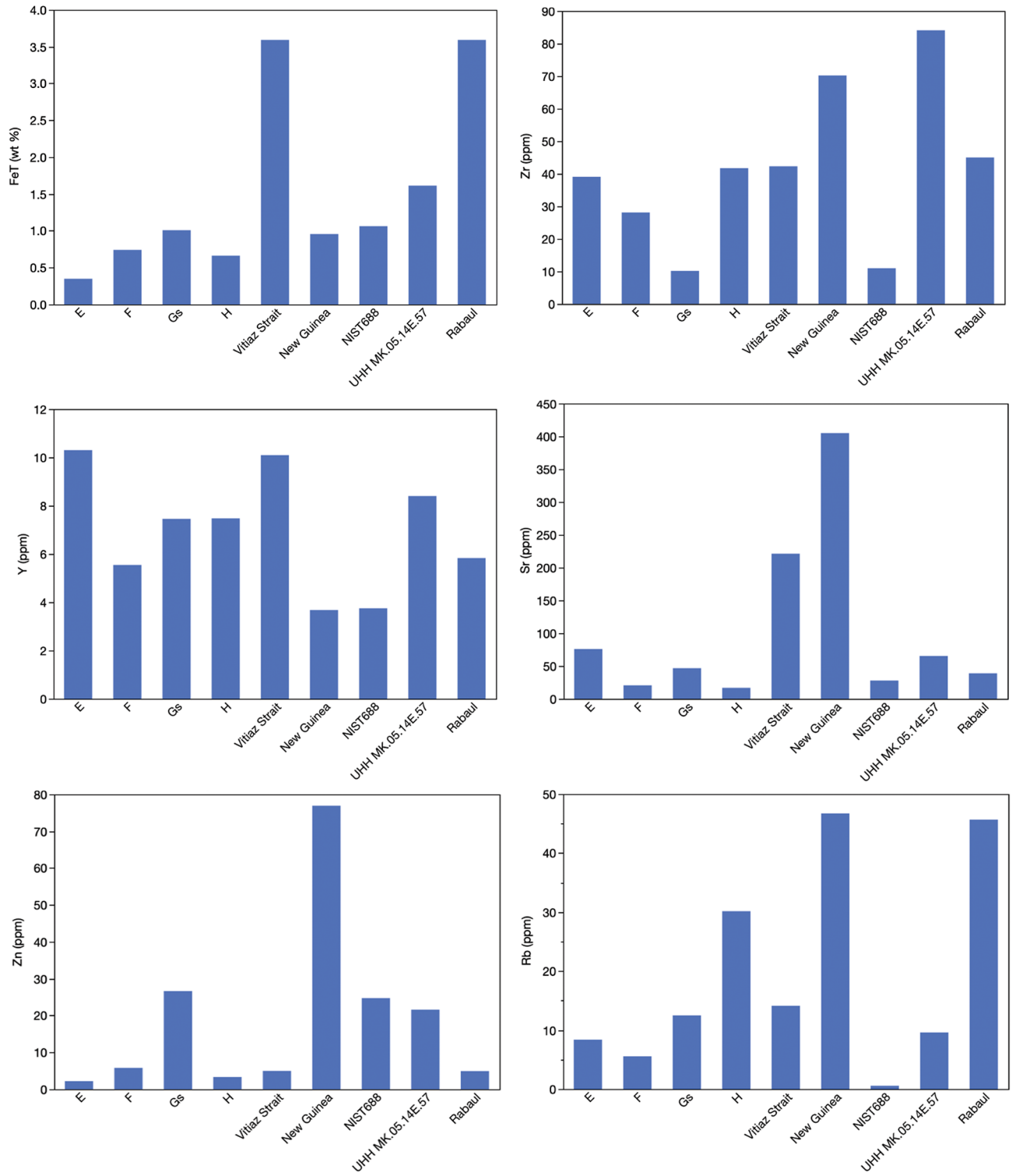


Figure A2.2. Mean differences for elements included in analysis between the Northern Willaumez Pen. geological region and all other geological regions used in this study, and the mean difference between the certified and experimental data for both standards. [Fig. A2.2 continued on next page].



**Figure A2.2** [Continued from previous page]. Mean differences for elements included in analysis between the Northern Willaumez Pen. geological region and all other geological regions used in this study, and the mean difference between the certified and experimental data for both standards.



pXRF	site	location	context	item	Geo.	Social	MgO	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	SiO <sub>2</sub>	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	K <sub>2</sub> O	CaO	TiO <sub>2</sub>	V	MnO	FeO <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> <sup>3</sup>	Ni	Cu	Zn	Rb	Sr	Y	Zr	Nb	
FLP/2	FLP	Analo	Surface	axe fragment	Vitiaz (1.0000)	Vitiaz (1.0000)	2.98	17.75	40.4	0.42	0.38	5.98	1.31	155.67	0.38	15.43	46	29.67	256.67	34.67	279.33	29.33	102.33	5.67	
FLP/3	FLP	Analo	Surface	?nut-cracking anvil	Hoskins (0.8487)	Hoskins (0.8487)	2.12	15.41	36.3	0.3	0.45	5.44	1.08	88.33	0.21	11.64	17.67	39.33	101.67	36.33	182.33	35	59.33	7.33	
FFZ/23	FFZ	Ganglio Island	Surface	?nut-cracking anvil	Hoskins (0.9330)	Hoskins (0.9330)	3.82	15.6	39.72	0.32	0.19	7.75	1.13	128.33	0.22	14.22	40.33	29	157.33	4	177.33	19.67	32.33	6.33	
FFQ/1	FFQ	Apugi Island	Surface	adze fragment	GN (0.8178)	WPN (0.9240)	4.03	14.66	51.4	0.21	0.22	9.32	1.58	290.33	0.29	11.39	25	13.67	153.33	1.67	248.33	39	124.33	14.33	
FMU/147 (P/T/S/3)	FMU	lumielo	Surface	adze fragment	E (0.7932)	WPN (0.4961)	6.35	12.53	42.33	0.26	0.18	9.77	1.11	181	0.26	13.87	51.33	18	132.67	3	179.67	15.33	23.33	4.67	
FFS/AURARUO/1	FFS	Apugi Island	Surface	axe CE fragment	GN (0.8348)	WPN (0.8926)	3.15	15.88	55.3	0.33	0.38	9.89	1.35	134.67	0.21	8.96	20.33	16.33	47	4	143.33	33.33	100.33	12	
FFS/AURARUO/2	FFS	Apugi Island	Surface	waisted tool—?net-sinker	E (0.8572)	Hoskins (0.9864)	3.22	15.01	35.28	0.53	0.23	5.46	1.46	109.67	0.16	14	31.67	21.33	287.67	4.33	220	30.33	81	6	
FFS/AURARUO/3	FFS	Apugi Island	Surface	axe/adze fragment	F (0.8922)	Hoskins (0.9891)	1.02	18.13	47.46	0.73	2.92	2.68	0.5	13.33	0.18	6.73	2.33	23.67	128.33	69	230.33	50	154.33	9	
FFS/1	FFS	Apugi Island	30N/25E surface	?axe/adze stem or butt fragment	E (0.8573)	Hoskins (0.9352)	4.14	16.01	41.04	0.59	0.23	9.23	1.15	160.33	0.25	13.7	48.33	27.33	167.67	8.33	188.33	21.67	39.67	5.67	
FFS/2	FFS	Apugi Island	45N/30E surface	?adze butt fragment	E (0.8260)	WPN (0.6617)	2.91	14.45	49.97	0.51	0.45	6.93	1.48	180.33	0.25	11.17	19.33	16.33	178.67	24.33	287.33	23.67	65.67	6.67	
FFS/3	FFS	Apugi Island	20N/35E surface	adze, complete	E (0.8485)	Hoskins (0.7384)	4.04	12.9	43.74	0.43	0.36	5.91	1.26	190.67	0.25	13.7	32.33	27.33	154.33	12.33	136	105	21	46.33	6.67
FFS/4	FFS	Apugi Island	20N/35E surface	flaked piece	F (0.8882)	Hoskins (0.8886)	3.46	10.17	42.93	0.62	0.13	6.5	0.44	44.33	0.18	13.22	80.33	31.33	127	5.33	105	21	46.33	6.67	
FFS/6	FFS	Apugi Island	25N/35E surface	?adze fragment	F (0.6977)	Hoskins (0.8319)	3.24	15.91	47.02	0.82	0.37	6.99	1.56	158	0.29	13.81	19.33	31	210.33	6.33	247	40.33	70.67	12.67	
FFS/7	FFS	Apugi Island	15N/45E surface	adze fragment	E (0.9560)	Hoskins (0.9917)	5.29	15.13	48.79	0.53	0.52	3	1.84	188.33	0.18	15.39	16.33	40.33	27.5	5	187	43	71.33	14.67	
FFS/8	FFS	Apugi Island	30N/65E surface	?axe/adze butt	GN (0.5501)	WPN (0.8635)	3.15	13.71	56.03	0.27	0.2	7.15	1.77	148.33	0.23	10.25	15.33	15.67	124.67	14.33	177.67	26.33	63.67	9.67	

**Notes**

The pXRF sample code column = West New Britain/South coast/sample number.  
 The WNB/S/- samples were run in 2020; the remaining samples were run in 2018 (Pengilley et al. 2019).  
 Yambon/1, -/2, -/3, AKIULL/1 were handed in by local people, findspots unknown.  
 In the item column, CE = cutting-edge.  
 In the columns for geochemical and social regions, matching allocations are highlighted; 'n/a' = not assigned.

