

Networks and Monumentality in the Pacific

Proceedings of the XVIII UISPP World Congress
(4-9 June 2018, Paris, France)

Volume 7

Session XXXVIII

edited by

Aymeric Hermann, Frédérique Valentin,
Christophe Sand and Emilie Nolet



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-715-5
ISBN 978-1-78969-716-2 (e-Pdf)

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Cover: Stone money (Rai or Fai) at the village of Gachpar on Yap, Carolines Islands. (Copyright: C. Sand)

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UISPP PROCEEDINGS SERIES VOLUME 7 – Networks and Monumentality in the Pacific

UISPP XVIII World Congress 2018

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VOLUME EDITORS:

Aymeric Hermann, Frédérique Valentin, Christophe Sand, and Emilie Nolet

SERIES EDITOR: The Board of UISPP

SERIES PROPERTY: UISPP – International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences

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KEY-WORDS IN THIS VOLUME:

Pacific islands, Exchange Networks, Monumentality, Materials, Social organizations

UISPP PROCEEDINGS SERIES is a printed on demand and an open access publication,
edited by UISPP through Archaeopress

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Foreword to the XVIII UISPP Congress Proceedings

UISPP has a long history, originating in 1865 in the International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology (CIAAP). This organisation ran until 1931 when UISPP was founded in Bern. In 1955, UISPP became a member of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences, a non-governmental organisation within UNESCO.

UISPP has a structure of more than thirty scientific commissions which form a very representative network of worldwide specialists in prehistory and protohistory. The commissions cover all archaeological specialisms: historiography; archaeological methods and theory; material culture by period (Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age) and by continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, Pacific, America); palaeoenvironment and palaeoclimatology; archaeology in specific environments (mountain, desert, steppe, tropical); archaeometry; art and culture; technology and economy; biological anthropology; funerary archaeology; archaeology and society.

The UISPP XVIII World Congress of 2018 was hosted in Paris by the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne with the strong support of all French institutions related to archaeology. It featured 122 sessions, and over 1800 papers were delivered by scientists from almost 60 countries and from all continents.

The proceedings published in this series, but also in issues of specialised scientific journals, will remain as the most important legacy of the congress.

L'UISPP a une longue histoire, à partir de 1865, avec le Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistorique (C.I.A.A.P.), jusqu'en 1931, date de la Fondation à Berne de l'UISPP. En 1955, l'UISPP est devenu membre du Conseil International de philosophie et de Sciences humaines, associée à l'UNESCO. L'UISPP repose sur plus de trente commissions scientifiques qui représentent un réseau représentatif des spécialistes mondiaux de la préhistoire et de la protohistoire, couvrant toutes les spécialités de l'archéologie : historiographie, théorie et méthodes de l'archéologie ; Culture matérielle par période (Paléolithique, néolithique, âge du bronze, âge du fer) et par continents (Europe, Asie, Afrique, Pacifique, Amérique), paléoenvironnement et paléoclimatologie ; Archéologie dans des environnements spécifiques (montagne, désert, steppes, zone tropicale), archéométrie ; Art et culture ; Technologie et économie ; anthropologie biologique ; archéologie funéraire ; archéologie et sociétés.

Le XVIII^e Congrès mondial de l'UISPP en 2018, accueilli à Paris en France par l'université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne et avec le soutien de toutes les institutions françaises liées à l'archéologie, comportait 122 sessions, plus de 1800 communications de scientifiques venus de près de 60 pays et de tous les continents.

Les actes du congrès, édités par l'UISPP comme dans des numéros spéciaux de revues scientifiques spécialisées, constitueront un des résultats les plus importants du Congrès.

Marta Azarello
Secretary-General /
Secrétaire général UISPP

Contents

List of Figures and Tables	ii
Author's list	iv
Introduction	1
Aymeric Hermann, Christophe Sand	
Vegetation cover of the megalithic site of Nan Madol (Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia): an assessment of its history	5
Christophe Sand	
Stone architecture of the ancient Tongan state on Tongatapu Island, Kingdom of Tonga	21
Geoffrey Clark, Phillip Parton	
Lithic drill points: an ethno-historic case study from Motupore Island (Papua New Guinea)	35
Hubert Forestier, Teppsy Beni, Henry Bails, Francois-Xavier Ricaut, Matthew G. Leavesley	
Development of Exchange Networks in the Western Solomon Islands	49
Peter Sheppard	
How to explain Polynesian Outliers' heterogeneity?	62
Wanda Zinger, Frédérique Valentin, James Flexner, Stuart Bedford, Florent Détroit, Dominique Grimaud-Hervé	
Receiving and integrating: the other side of insular mobilities. A comparative approach of integration ceremonies for Melanesia and Polynesia	78
Sophie Chave-Dartoen, Denis Monnerie	

List of Figures and Tables

C. Sand: **Vegetation cover of the megalithic site of Nan Madol**

Figure 1. Location of Nan Madol on the east coast of Pohnpei Island.....	6
Figure 2. Map of Nan Madol and extent of the present vegetation cover.....	7
Figure 3. Idealized illustration of a burial vault at Nandowas published in 1840.....	10
Figure 4. Central burial chamber of Nandowas, showing a massive vegetation overgrowth around the tomb.....	12
Figure 5. View of the north-east corner of Nandowas taken in 1896, showing the large banyan trees topping the walls.....	13
Figure 6. Entrance gate of Nandowas, with recent vegetation cleaning to allow access.....	14
Figure 7. View of the southern wall of Nandowas and of Pahndowas, with a massive accumulation of logs deposited by the tides after the typhoons that hit Pohnpei in 1908.....	14
Figure 8. Complete cleaning of the vegetation of Pankedira platform in 1963.....	16
Figure 9. Tall hibiscus branches leaning on one of the walls of Pankedira platform (n°33).....	18
Table 1. Platforms of Nan Madol cleared of vegetation during the Smithsonian Expedition of 1963.....	16
Table 2. Platforms cleared from vegetation and mapped between the late 1970s and early 1980s.....	17
Table 3. Platforms mapped in the early 1980s by the team from the University of Oregon.....	17

G. Clark, Ph. Parton: **Stone architecture of the ancient Tongan state on Tongatapu Island**

Figure 1. Location of stone structures on Tongatapu.....	23
Figure 2. Tongatapu stone structure typology.....	25
Figure 3. Plot of stone structure area against structure type and four potential size classes.....	29
Figure 4. Stone structure groups. 4A. Heketa, 4B. 'Āfa. 4C Lapaha and Talasiu.....	31
Table 1. Tongatapu stone structures.....	23

H. Forestier *et al.*: **Lithic drill points: an ethno-historic case study from Motupore Island**

Figure 1. Physical geography of Papua. Inset, the area south of the Gulf of Papua and the island of Motupore.....	36
Figure 2. Motupore island. One distinguishes the present buildings and the area of the excavations.....	37
Figure 3. Diagram of the decontextualization/recontextualisation approach applied to the drill points.....	39
Figure 4. The main morphotypes of the drill points.....	41
Figure 5. The 32 slot-morphotypes of the drill points.....	42
Figure 6. Length, width and thickness standard deviation of the drill points with a normal distribution.....	43
Figure 7. Top: preform drill point; down: unipolar or bipolar nucleus.....	44
Figure 8. Location of areas with micro removals on the drill points.....	45
Figure 9. Pumice stone and ceramic shard drilled.....	46
Figure 10. Forest to pump.....	46
Figure 11. Left: the sea route of the Hiri trade along the coast of the Gulf of Papua; right: The lagatoi: a traditional boat used for Hiri trade.....	47
Table 1. Numbers of the sub-morphotypes of the drill points.....	38

P. Sheppard: **Development of Exchange Networks in the Western Solomon Islands**

Figure 1. Major Exchange interaction spheres in the Solomon Islands.....	51
Figure 2. The Western Solomons Islands and Roviana lagoon.....	52
Figure 3. Chief I(H)ngava and his wife at Sisieta, Munda, Roviana <i>circa</i> 1902.....	53
Figure 4. Cache of fossil shell at Maravari, Vella Lavella.....	54

Figure 5. Shell ring production in Roviana (a) sawing of shell; (b) ring workshop in Roviana; (c) 'Old Man of Choiseul. Money maker in Rubiana [Roviana]'	55
Table 1. Western Solomon Islands exchange media.....	54
Table 2. Commodity purchase price in shell valuables in Simbo 1908	55

W. Zinger *et al.*: How to explain Polynesian Outliers' heterogeneity?

Figure 1. Geographical distribution of 18 Polynesian Outliers	64
Figure 2. Schematisation of the three hypothesised levels of interactions.....	70
Table 1. Summary of archaeological data for 18 Polynesian Outliers	65

**S. Chave-Dartoen, D. Monnerie: Receiving and integrating:
the other side of insular mobilities**

Figure 1. Receiving ceremony in Arama.....	82
Figure 2. Receiving ceremony in Wallis.....	82

Introduction

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Compared to other regions, the Pacific islands have seen a late development of archaeological research, with the first half of the twentieth century dominated by ethnographic work led by various academics from anthropology departments and museums. The prevailing view at the time was that most of the Pacific islands had been settled only a few centuries before the arrival of European explorers, which was supported by the ethnocentric belief in the technical superiority of Western civilizations. The first radiocarbon dates in the Pacific obtained in 1952 from the Kuli'ou'ou rockshelter on O'ahu (Hawai'i), the Lapita site on the Foué Peninsula of Grande Terre (New Caledonia), and Chalan Piao on Saipan (Mariana Islands), provoked a paradigm shift. The unsuspected depth of the history of island societies located in the three corners of the Pacific revealed for the first time the antiquity of the sailing technology used by the first settlers of Oceania, during what must have been amongst the earliest open sea voyages worldwide. This discovery led to a perspective shift toward understanding the deep history of the diversity of ethnic groups, cultural practices, and languages found in the Pacific islands.

Many islands of the Pacific remain to be explored archaeologically. Nevertheless, the tremendous progress in archaeological sciences made in the last 60 years has considerably advanced our knowledge of early Pacific island societies, the rise of traditional cultural systems, and their later historical developments while in contact with European explorers, beachcombers, and missionaries. The wealth of oral traditions, seminal ethnographic descriptions, and foundational anthropological theories presented in the work of scholars such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Raymond Firth, Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa), Margaret Mead, Alfred Métraux, Edmund Leach, and Marshall Sahlins can now be put in perspective with the reconstructed archaeological sequences that highlight the complexity of cultural systems in constant evolution.

This volume shows that archaeological studies provide a unique perspective grounded in materiality and diachrony. However, archaeological research in the Pacific cannot ignore the wealth of ethnographic and ethnohistorical descriptions, oral traditions (chants, mythological narratives, genealogies, toponyms, etc.), and the linguistic descriptions and reconstructions of Oceanic languages. These multiple lines of evidence make it possible to open a wider holistic window onto the past of Pacific island societies, as this unique situation represents a formidable opportunity to develop interdisciplinary perspectives, through the French tradition of 'ethnoarchéologie' and the American tradition of historical anthropology. The papers presented in this volume confirm that these integrated approaches mark a strength and trademark of archaeology in the Pacific region.

Monumental constructions and complex exchange networks are two aspects of Pacific island societies that were extensively described and commented by scholars over the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet, these are not necessarily what comes to the mind of the general public when hearing about Pacific islands, which are more commonly associated with picturesque golden beaches and blue lagoons. Thinking further, the reader might remember that the impressive *moai* of Easter Island (Rapa Nui), the massive stone and wooden *tiki* statues, and the recently named UNESCO World Heritage Site *marae* Taputapuātea are all located in Polynesia. Next to these iconic and famous landmarks, a number of monumental burials, ceremonial constructions,

extensive stone-built fortifications and irrigation systems, and massive anthropomorphic sculptures were built in nearly every archipelago of the Pacific. A number of cultural and agricultural landscapes were often created as well, which also signals the massive efforts put into the intensification of staple production systems, the differentiation of social and political elites, and the rise of powerful religious and political institutions in the societies of Oceania. Unlike the synchronic studies provided by cultural anthropologists, which were often used as 'ethnographic examples' to interpret past non-literate societies across the world, the archaeological analysis of the megalithic and monumental traditions in the Pacific has received little attention by the global scientific community – aside from iconic cases like the 'collapse' or 'ecocide' hypothesis popularized by Jared Diamond about Easter Island (Rapa Nui), which is not supported by the archaeological evidence.

The UISPP session dedicated to Pacific monumentality brought together experts of these monuments, who highlighted the wealth and diversity of the phenomenon. A number of case studies illustrate the latest outcomes of archaeological research on this pan-Oceanic topic : ritual architectures on Malekula Island (Vanuatu), monumental stonework associated with food production and land management in West Futuna (Vanuatu), funerary monuments on Pohnpei and monumental earthwork landscape of Palau (West Micronesia), chiefly mound building on 'Upolu, Savai'i and Manono (Samoa), monumental landscapes including pigeon snaring mounds and royal tombs on Ha'apai and Tongatapu (Tonga), sacred trees associated within ritual architectures on Nuku Hiva (Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia), a fertility sanctuary and a main stone quarry reinterpreted as a ceremonial site on Easter Island / Rapa Nui (Chile).

Exchange systems in Oceania have been extensively described and studied based on ethnographic data. A number of case-studies have famously contributed to theoretical advances regarding the embeddedness of social, political and religious dimensions in exchange practices. More generally, the study of exchange systems in Oceania has also enhanced our understanding of socially valued goods and 'proto-money' in non-market economies, and the role they played in social and political spheres. Most interaction networks described by ethnographers involve the transfer of goods from one island to the other, as well as long-distance mobility and seafaring that is well known from the ethnographic period onwards. Despite this wealth of ethnographic and ethnohistorical descriptions, an archaeological approach is necessary to assess the antiquity and the evolution of such patterns of interaction on the long run. Pacific archaeologists have been inferring patterns of mobility and interactions based on typological similarities in material culture, but have better succeeded when using hard evidence, and particularly when emphasizing exotic provenances in the archaeological record. Archaeological evidence for ancient wide-scale interactions has further emerged with the development of provenance analyses of specific material culture items – namely pottery sherds and stone artefacts – and the increasing use of biological data – namely morphometry, and more recently aDNA sequencing and stable isotope studies. The multiple reconstructions of past interactions using archaeological data show that interisland voyaging has been a major component of history in the Pacific, and that different patterns of mobility have developed over the past 40,000 years. As a consequence, Pacific island societies can no longer be considered as closed systems evolving in complete isolation. To the contrary, understanding interisland exchange patterns and intercommunity linkages is actually central to the description of most aspects of cultural systems in the Pacific.

The papers presented during the Paris UISPP Congress in the interdisciplinary session dedicated to mobility and networks in Oceania addressed a diversity of questions based on a wide range of methods and approaches from archaeological sciences, historical linguistics, as well as ethnography and ethnohistory. The presentations tackled different topics, which included the reconstruction of interaction patterns based on material and immaterial evidence, as well as the relationships between exchange networks and settlement strategies in Sahul and the Western Pacific, during the Lapita period and later on in the Polynesian settlement of islands located on the fringe of Melanesia

and Micronesia collectively known as the Polynesian Outliers. Other papers presented the symbolic and social content of exchange, the functional aspect and integration of intercommunity exchange in specific social organisations, as well as case studies of ‘proto-currencies’ in the western Pacific, such as the stone money banks on Yap, the shell valuables in the Solomon Islands and the pig tusks in Vanuatu.

This volume presents a combination of papers based on the two sessions, with papers drawing on archaeological, ethnohistorical, and ethnological material:

Christophe Sand proposes a reconstruction of the vegetal landscape at the monumental site of Nan Madol on Pohnpei Island (Federated States of Micronesia) at different periods based on a compilation of early historical accounts and photographs dating from the last two centuries. Sand also discusses the traditional use and maintenance of specific taxa around or on the monuments of the famous megalithic site, as well as the changes associated with the modern impact of archaeological programs and tourism.

Geoffrey Clark and Phillip Parton provide an inventory and a classification of monumental stone-faced burial mound sites and sitting platforms or house mounds on the island of Tongatapu (Kingdom of Tonga). The authors particularly highlight the correlation between the distribution of stone architecture and the places of the political elite, therefore demonstrating that monumentality was an important aspect of manifesting political authority in Tonga, one of the most politically complex ‘proto-state’ societies at the time of European contact.

Hubert Forestier and colleagues present a techno-morphotypological analysis of lithic drill points from Motupore (Papua New Guinea). The authors argue that these were standardized products made by craft specialists from the Motu community, and that they were used in rotating pump drills to transform items used and exchanged as part of the ‘hiri trade circle’, a large network of exchange that might have started 800 years ago between Motupore and the Gulf of Papua.

Peter Sheppard reviews the archaeological evidence of exchange networks in the Solomon Islands, and especially the phenomenon of shell money in the western part of the archipelago over the last millennium, therefore providing insights on the antiquity and the evolution of the regional exchange systems described by ethnographers during the 19th and 20th centuries. Sheppard’s discussion of ‘proto-money’ or ‘proto-currency’ also breaches the divide between what anthropologist Douglas Oliver called ‘good-focused’ and ‘relationship-focused’ exchanges in Pacific island societies.

Wanda Zinger and colleagues revisit the archaeological evidence of migration and interisland mobility in the Polynesian Outliers. By stressing the importance of human biological data (skeletal, genetic, genomic), which have been often overlooked in previous archaeological assessments on this complex topic, the authors highlight different mixing situations between Polynesians newcomers and local populations in the northern and southern Outliers. Zinger and colleagues also propose that external exchanges have been a major driver of the ethnogenesis in these regions, through multi-scale interactions between Polynesian Outlier communities, related ‘source populations’ in the Polynesian triangle, and the surrounding Melanesian and Micronesian populations.

Sophie Chave-Dartoen and Denis Monnerie elaborate an ‘anthropological grammar’ to understand ceremonial components among Pacific societies. Beyond the diversity of cultural practices related to the institutions of exchange in Oceania, the authors identify common ceremonial components in Arama (New Caledonia) and ‘Uvea/Wallis Island (Western Polynesia), which articulate a dyadic and asymmetrical relationship formalised between a welcoming and an arriving party. This seems to function as an underlying rationale for more general ceremonial

activities and relationships. This structural commonality highlighted by Chave-Dartoen and Monnerie, based on two ethnographical cases from Southern Melanesia and Western Polynesia, also suggests a deep historical origin of the dyadic relationship as a foundational element of intercommunity relationships in the Pacific.