

***The Lapita Peoples: Ancestors of the Oceanic World, Peoples  
of South-East  
Asia and the Pacific***

by  
Patrick V. Kirch

This is the first account of the Lapita peoples, the common ancestor of the Polynesians, Micronesians, and Austronesian-speaking Melanesians who over the last 4000 years colonized the islands of the Pacific, including New Zealand and territories as far afield as Fiji and Hawaii. Its purpose is to provide answers to some of the most puzzling archaeological and anthropological questions: who were the Lapita peoples? what was their history? how were they able to travel such great distances? and why did they do so? Recent discoveries (several by the author of this book) have begun at last to yield a coherent picture of these elusive peoples.

Professor Kirch takes the reader back many thousands of years to the earliest evidence of the Lapita peoples. He describes the research itself and conveys the excitement of the first discoveries of Lapita settlements, tools and pottery. He then traces the remarkable cultural development and spread of the Lapita peoples across the unoccupied islands of Eastern Melanesia, Micronesia and Western Polynesia. He shows how they became the progenitors of the Polynesian and Austronesian-speaking Melanesian peoples.

The author describes Lapita sites, communities and landscapes, the development of their decorated ceramics, and their shell-tool industry. He reveals the means by which they accomplished such prodigious voyages and explains why they undertook them. He illustrates his account with specially drawn maps and with a wide range of photographs, many published for the first time.

Drawing on the latest research in archaeology, anthropology, biology and linguistics, and written in clear, non-specialized language, this is an outstanding book of great importance to the history of South-East Asia and the Pacific.

The term Lapita refers to an ancient Pacific culture that archaeologists believe to be the common ancestor of the contemporary cultures of Polynesia, Micronesia, and some areas of Melanesia. The culture takes its name from the site of Lapita in New Caledonia, one of the first places in which its distinctive pottery was discovered. While archaeologists debate the precise region where Lapita culture itself developed, the ancestors of the Lapita people came originally from Southeast Asia. This is the first account of the Lapita peoples, the common ancestor of the Polynesians, Micronesians, and Austronesian-speaking Melanesians who over the last 4000 years colonized the islands of the Pacific, including New Zealand and territories as far afield as Fiji and Hawaii. Its purpose is to provide answers to some of the most puzzling archaeological and anthropological questions: who were the Lapita peoples? what was their history? how were they able to travel such great distances? and why did they do so? He then traces the remarkable cultural development and spread of the Lapita peoples across the unoccupied islands of Eastern Melanesia, Micronesia and Western Polynesia. The Lapita culture was a prehistoric Pacific Ocean people who flourished in the Pacific Islands from about 1600 BCE to about 500 BCE.

Archaeologists believe that the Lapita are the ancestors of historic cultures in Polynesia, Micronesia, and some coastal areas of Melanesia. The characteristics of the Lapita culture are the extension of human settlement to previously uninhabited islands scattered over a large area in the Pacific Ocean, the spread of Oceanic languages in that area, the distinctive

The Lapita culture was a prehistoric Pacific Ocean people who flourished in the Pacific Islands from about 1600 BCE to about 500 BCE. Archaeologists believe that the Lapita are the ancestors of historic cultures in Polynesia, Micronesia, and some coastal areas of Melanesia. The characteristics of the Lapita culture are the extension of human settlement to previously uninhabited islands scattered over a large area in the Pacific Ocean, the spread of Oceanic languages in that area, the distinctive geometric dentate-stamped pottery, and the use and widespread distribution of obsidian. The Lapita people were the first humans to colonise the western tropical Pacific Islands. They remain visible as a distinctive cultural group for only a few hundred years, starting about 1350 BC in the Bismarck Archipelago of Papua New Guinea and ending about 650 BC in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Around the beginning of this period, from bases in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, they set out eastwards on intentional voyages of colonisation. Lapita: Oceanic Ancestors review. Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, stages the first exhibition on mainland France to focus on one of the oldest civilisations of Oceania. Chronique Mortaigne. Guardian Weekly, Tuesday 28 December 2010 09.00 EST. The world's first seafarers set off from South-East Asia, sailing into the Pacific on simple rafts. Thousands of years later their Polynesian descendants began exploring further east, guided by the stars and the winds. How did they survive these journeys into the unknown? And when did they discover New Zealand, the final major land mass to be settled? Radiocarbon dating and computer voyaging have provided a wealth of insights. Story by Geoff Irwin. Main image: Pottery of the Lapita people, ancestors of the Polynesians. So what kind of people were the Lapita people? At the beginning of this year, a graduate student from the University of Oregon, who was excavating a cave in Palau, Micronesia, found the interment site of a number of human bones which are thought to be 3,000 years old. The connection between these and the Lapita people must await further study, but Professor Intoh expresses her expectations like this, "Bones are a treasury of information. Because human bones from the Lapita pottery era are very rare, this find is big news. Where did they come from and where did they go? In the islands of the South Pacific the consciousness of being a single community had hitherto been very rare. The Lapita Peoples is an ambitious project for a series; edited by Peter Bellwood and Ian Glover, it is dedicated primarily to the living cultures of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. How can one breathe life into mute artifacts left behind by peoples that must have been gone for some 2,500 years? The islands of the south-west Pacific extend for 5000. km from New Guinea in the west to Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa in the east, and include the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia. The early European explorers called the area Melanesia because of the generally dark skin colour of the people. Subsequently, the parallel island chains have sometimes been referred to as the inner and outer [Show full abstract] Melanesian arcs.

The earliest seafaring ancestors of people living in South Pacific islands such as Vanuatu and Tonga arrived from Asia, an analysis of ancient DNA from four skeletons reveals. To uncover the origins of the Lapita people, Professor Spriggs and his colleague Dr Stuart Bedford worked closely with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre to excavate and extract DNA from skeletons from the Teouma burial ground in Vanuatu. "This is in fact the fourth attempt to extract ancient DNA over the last decade," Professor Spriggs said. Finally, a genetic analysis by a team led by Dr David Reich at Harvard University revealed three skeletons aged between 3,100 years and 2,700 years contained no traces of Papuan DNA. The Lapita culture is the name given to a prehistoric Pacific Ocean people who left evidence of their livelihood on several Pacific Islands, by way of ceramic constructs that range in date from about 1600 BCE to about 500 BCE. Some archaeologists believe that the Lapita are the ancestors of historic cultures in Polynesia, Micronesia, and some coastal areas of Melanesia. Others believe that these are two distinct cultures that evolved separately within shared areas. The historically recognized The Lapita Peoples: Ancestors of the Oceanic World. Oxford: Blackwell. Google Scholar. Kirch, P. V., and T. L. Hunt, eds. (1993). The Toā™maga Site: Three Millennia of Polynesian Occupation in the Manuā™a Islands, American Samoa. Archaeological Research Facility Contribution, No. 51. Berkeley: University of California, Archaeological Research Facility. Google Scholar. Mead, S. M., L. Birks, H. Birks, and E. Shaw (1975). (1998). The Lexicon of Proto Oceanic: The Culture and Environment of Ancestral Oceanic Society, vol. 1: Material Culture. Pacific Linguistics C-152. Canberra: Australian National University. Google Scholar. Sand. C. (1998). Archaeological Report on Localities WKO013A and WKO013B at the Site of Lapita (Kone, New Caledonia). The world's first seafarers set off from South-East Asia, sailing into the Pacific on simple rafts. Thousands of years later their Polynesian descendants began exploring further east, guided by the stars and the winds. How did they survive these journeys into the unknown? And when did they discover New Zealand, the final major land mass to be settled? Radiocarbon dating and computer voyaging have provided a wealth of insights. Story by Geoff Irwin. Main image: Pottery of the Lapita people, ancestors of the Polynesians.

Pacific Islands - Pacific Islands - Early period: The prehistory of the Pacific Islands, the period before written records begin, extends back at least 33,000 years, according to archaeological remains in the Bismarck Archipelago, and migration to the region may have begun more than 40,000 years ago. Settlers had reached every habitable island by the 2nd millennium ce. There is also disagreement about the speed with which the Lapita culture, distinctively linked with the Polynesians, moved from Southeast Asia through Melanesia into Fiji and thence to eastern Polynesia. The Marianas were probably settled about 1500 bce. The world of the Pacific Islands was not a static one, but changes were slow compared with those that attended European contact. The Lapita people were the first humans to colonise the western tropical Pacific Islands. They remain visible as a distinctive cultural group for only a few hundred years, starting about 1350 BC in the Bismarck Archipelago of Papua New Guinea and ending about 650 BC in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Around the beginning of this period, from bases in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, they set out eastwards on intentional voyages of colonisation. Lapita: Oceanic Ancestors review. Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, stages the first exhibition on mainland France to focus on one of the oldest civilisations of Oceania. Vronique Mortaigne. Guardian Weekly, Tuesday 28 December 2010 09.00 EST. Kirch, Patrick V., *The Lapita Peoples: Ancestors of the Oceanic World*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. Kirch, Patrick V., *On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands before European Contact*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. Lilley, Ian (ed.), *Archaeology of Oceania: Australia and the Pacific Islands*, Carlton, Vic.: Blackwell, 2006. Lourandos, Harry, *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers: New Perspectives in Australian Prehistory*, Cambridge University Press, 1997. Macfarlane, Ingrid, Mountain, Mary-Jane and Paton, Robert (eds.), *Many Exchanges: Archaeology, Histor*