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Introduction: The human histories of West New Guinea

Dylan Gaffney and Marlin Tolla

Abstract

This chapter is an introduction to *West New Guinea: Social, Biological, and Material Histories*. It first describes the sparse information available about the environmental and cultural history of the area before describing the boundary-making that has formed West New Guinea in the recent past. The chapter then identifies seven key research themes with implications for both global and regional anthropology: the early peopling of Oceania, human adaptation within varied and challenging ecologies, the emergence of food production, the dispersal of languages, the connections between the Pacific and global trade networks, the transformative lives of material culture, and the history of museums and collecting. Finally, the chapter provides an outline of the book structure and the chapters that follow, all of which contribute in important ways to the seven identified research themes.

Abstrak

Bab ini merupakan bagian pengantar judul buku "Papua bagian barat: Sejarah sosial, biologi dan budaya materi". Bab ini dibuka dengan uraian mengenai sejarah lingkungan dan budaya Papua bagian barat yang dilanjutkan dengan uraian latar belakang sejarah wilayah ini secara utuh hingga masa kini. Terdapat tujuh pokok tema yang dideskripsikan pada bab ini, dimana tema-tema tersebut berimplikasi pada studi antropologi baik itu dalam lingkup skala regional maupun secara global. Topik ini antara lain: penduduk awal Oseania, adaptasi manusia dalam keanekaragaman ekologi serta tantangannya, awal-mula produksi pangan, penyebaran bahasa, transformasi budaya materi, dan sejarah museum dan koleksi. Garis besar topik yang terdapat dalam 21 bab ini kemudian diuraikan pada bagian akhir.

Introduction

This is a book about the human histories of the western part of New Guinea and its offshore islands. When we speak of human histories, we mean the ongoing processes of social, material, linguistic, and biological transformation that have characterised the distant and more recent past, as well as those histories which continue to be made by living communities, and those which are yet to be carved out in the future. As it stands, West New Guinea (Figure 1.1) is superbly situated to address numerous

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unresolved anthropological questions about the early settlement of Australasia and the Pacific Islands via Island Southeast Asia, along with the subsequent processes of cultural diversification that have occurred within a range of distinct ecological zones, not to mention the emergence of dynamic interaction networks that connected these areas with other parts of the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and Eurasia. However, despite this latent potential, with respect to its archaeology, material culture traditions, languages, and human biology, this vast landmass remains poorly described and under-researched. In large part owning to West New Guinea's geographic and political context, the area is often left to the Southeast Asian specialists by Pacific researchers, and vice versa. As a result, it has been relegated to a conceptual fringe rather than featuring as an important link between the two regions. The wider discipline is therefore in serious need of published information from the western half of New Guinea to not only connect the scholarship of Asia and the Pacific, but also to tell more detailed and accurate stories about New Guinea's vibrant cultures.

This book focuses expressly on the western part of New Guinea (today administered by Indonesia), excluding, for the most part, the eastern side of this contiguous landmass (today the independent state of Papua New Guinea). It is the first volume of its kind, bringing together research from scholars, both within West New Guinea and internationally, who present novel regional syntheses, describe never-before-published archaeological sites, and provide fresh ethnographic insight into the material culture traditions of the region. To date, there have been no volumes dealing exclusively with the deep histories of West New Guinea as a whole. In the Dutch literature, *Papoea: Een Geschiedens* (Vlasblom 2004) summarised the area's social and political history from the time of European voyages through to the twenty-first century. Similarly, the French monograph *L'Indonésie et la Nouvelle-Guinée Occidentale* (Defert 1996) provides a detailed history of West New Guinea, especially covering the late twentieth century. In the Anglophone literature, an issue of *The Journal of Pacific History* (Volume 34, 1999) collected papers on the recent history of the region. *New Guinea: Crossing Boundaries and History* (Moore 2003) compiled archaeological literature from Papua New Guinea and historical sources from West New Guinea to provide a broad diachronic overview of the island's past. Several chapters included in *The Ecology of Papua* (Marshall and Beehler 2007) dealt with human culture and long-term interactions with the environment (Hope 2007; Hope and Aplin 2007; Mansoben 2007; Pasveer 2007). Previous multidisciplinary volumes have had a regional focus on the Bird's Head of New Guinea (Bartstra 1998; Miedema and Reesink 2004; Miedema et al. 1998), but contributions from archaeology, material culture studies, and human biology were generally peripheral. Greub's (1992) edited volume explored the art of Lake Sentani, Yos Sudarso Bay and Cenderawasih Bay, and is, to date, one of the most extensive explorations of the region's material culture. Finally, and most recently, Martin Slama and Jenny Munro's edited volume *From 'Stone-Age' to 'Real-Time': Exploring Papuan Temporalities, Mobilities and Religiosities* (2015) presented a range of anthropological papers which explored the changing face of West New Guinea (including the trope proliferated in both European and Indonesian societies that casts Papuans as living in the Stone Age).

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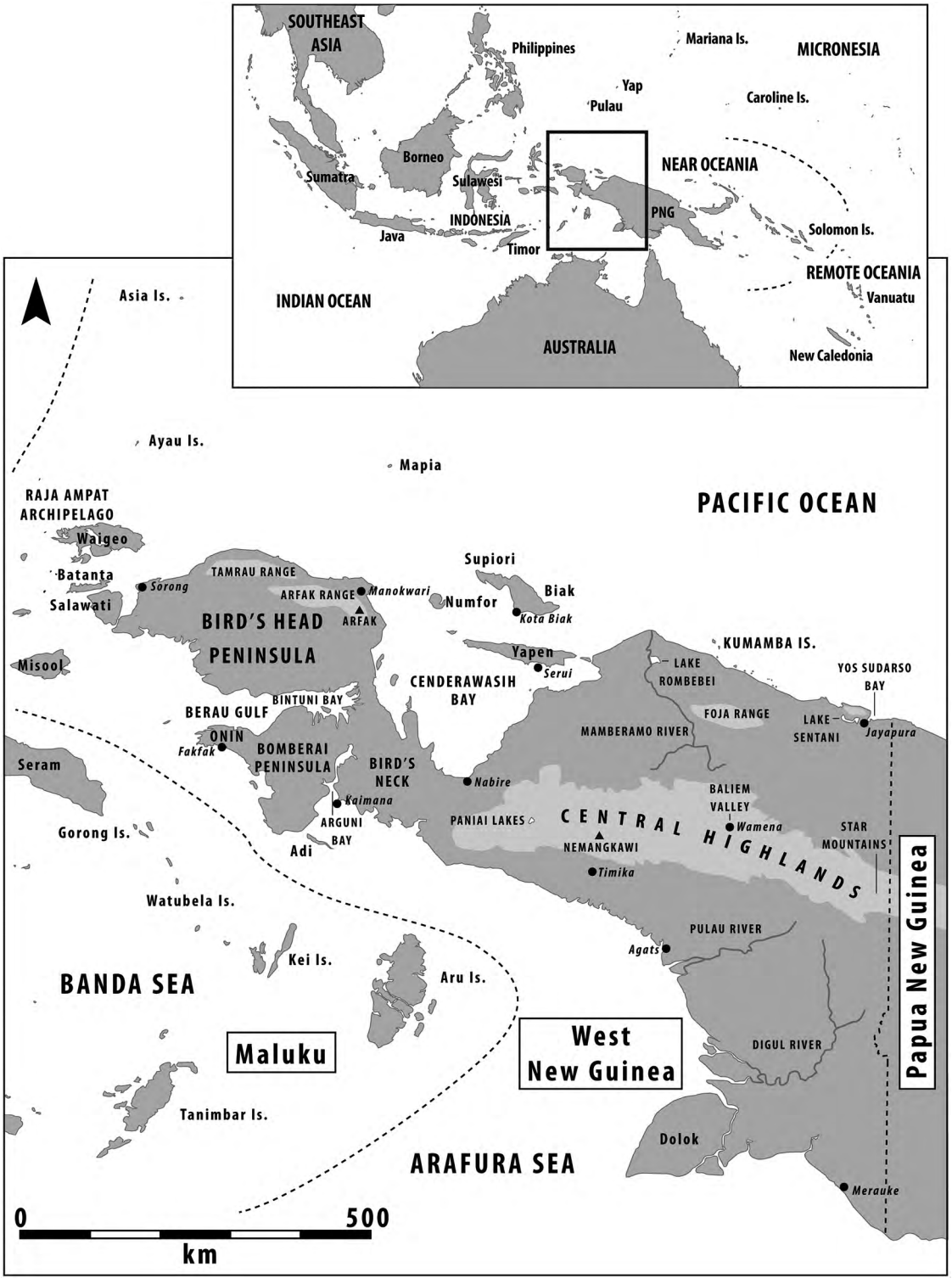

Figure 1.1: West New Guinea with key geographic features in the wider Asia-Pacific region.
Source: Dylan Gaffney.

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Increasingly there has been a rich and diverse array of publications produced by Papuan and Indonesian researchers. In the Bahasa Indonesia literature, the Balai Arkeologi Papua[1] (Papua Centre of Archaeology, later subsumed within Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional, or BRIN) has, since 2009, produced a regular journal called *Papua*, which publishes archaeological and ethnographic research undertaken in West New Guinea. Numerous reports on this research are also available from the archaeological centre in Jayapura but many of these remain 'grey literature'. Additionally, a recent monograph deals with Melanesian migration around eastern Indonesia and West New Guinea, but this draws from existing literature rather than presenting new data (Abdullah and Paeni 2015). In social anthropology, several Papuan and Indonesian authors have published key papers in *Masyarakat Indonesia* and local journals published by Universitas Cenderawasih and Universitas Papua (see Chapter 2). Most of this archaeological and social anthropological material is written in Indonesian and one aim of the present volume is, therefore, to make available to an international audience the mounting evidence produced by Indonesian authors including Papuan researchers.

In this introduction to the book, we describe the West New Guinea area and tie together what little is known about the environmental and cultural histories of the region. We then describe colonial boundary marking and administration throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which has been responsible for how research in West New Guinea has diverged from the east of the island. The chapter then highlights several important research themes that have emerged in the wider Southeast Asian and Pacific literature, and which critically need to be addressed by research in West New Guinea. These themes include the early peopling of Oceania, human adaptation within varied and challenging ecologies, the emergence of food production, the dispersal of languages, the connections between the Pacific and global networks, the history of museums and collecting, and the active and ongoing lives of material culture. At the end of the chapter, we provide an outline of the book structure and a summary of the contributions that follow.

West New Guinea

West New Guinea refers to the whole mainland of New Guinea from the Bird's Head Peninsula in the west to the 141st meridian east, as well as its outlying islands in Cenderawasih Bay, the Raja Ampat archipelago, and smaller satellite islands and atolls. For our purposes, we exclude the Aru Islands and other Malukan islands like Gebe, Halmahera, and the Banda group, even though there are strong cultural, linguistic, and biological affinities between these areas and New Guinea, with some islands even being host to 'Papuan' languages ultimately deriving from New Guinea.

Geological and environmental history

New Guinea was formed by the rapid collision of two tectonic plates: the westward-moving Pacific Plate and the northward-moving Australian Plate (Baldwin et al. 2012). This gives New Guinea its distinctive central highland range, which runs like a spine through the centre of the island, flanked on its sides by lowland hills and alluvial plains (Figure 1.2). The mountains rise to above the snowline in some parts of West New Guinea, with the highest peak being Nemangkawi[2] at 4884 m above sea level (asl). These peaks are often interspersed with flat intermontane valley systems between 1200–2000 m asl (Löffler 1977), home to the vast majority of highlanders (Brookfield and Allen 1989). Although the northern and southern lowlands are characterised by swamp and

1 Throughout this and other chapters in the book, local language words are italicised and Papuan Malay or Indonesian words are underlined at first mention. Words from other languages (such as Dutch) are provided in single quote marks.

2 Puncak Jaya or Mt Carstensz.

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mangrove forests, produced by large river systems, the north coast is generally emergent and looks over the Pacific Ocean, while the southern coast is subsiding and accreting into the Arafura Sea (Ellison 2005). As Terrell (2004) notes, the northern coastline of New Guinea, being precipitous and tectonically unstable, may have acted as a barrier to movements between the Pacific and Island Southeast Asia in the past. Prevailing winds, strong tidal currents, and expanses of mangrove forest may have similarly inhibited movements along the southern coast.

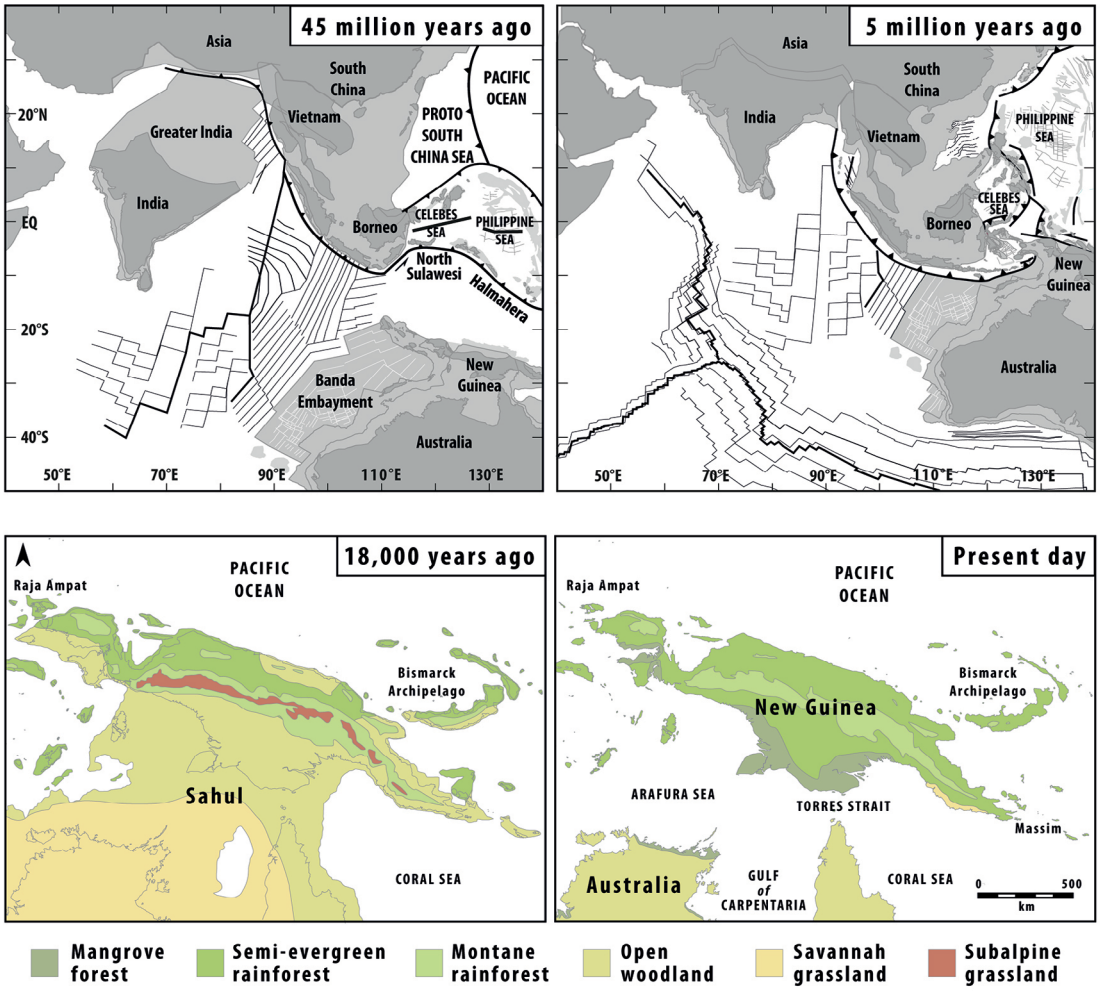

Figure 1.2: The formation of New Guinea.

Notes: Above shows the tectonic movement of New Guinea on the Australian Plate northwards towards the Pacific and Philippine plates alongside the westward movement of satellite islands of northern Raja Ampat and Cenderawasih Bay. Below shows the 'separation' of New Guinea from Australia owing to raised sea levels after the Pleistocene.

Source: Dylan Gaffney, redrawn from Hall (2017) (above) and van der Kaars (1991) (below).

Active tectonics have created the distinctive Bird's Head, or Doberai, Peninsula, connected to New Guinea by the relatively flat Bomberai Peninsula and the steep valleys of the Bird's Neck, shaped by the Lengguru fold and thrust belt (Dam and Wong 1998; Ratman 1998). This area offers a complex coastline with numerous sheltered bays and canoe harbours. Offshore, the northern Raja Ampat Islands—Waigeo and Batanta—have moved westwards along the Sorong Fault to their current position (Charlton 1996). This contrasts with the southern Raja Ampat Islands—Salawati and Misool—which sit on the Bird's Head microplate (Sapin et al. 2009). In Cenderawasih Bay, the

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islands of Biak, Supiori, and Numfor lie to the north of the Yapen Fault, while Yapen Island itself straddles the fault, along which these islands have been moving westward (Bertoni and Álvarez 2012). Uplift, subsidence, and lateral displacements have characterised these areas in the past, evident at several sites of raised coral terraces around the Bird's Head and on Biak, similar to the better-known Huon terraces of Papua New Guinea (Chappell et al. 1996). Smaller atolls—Ayau, the Asia Islands, and Mapia—have formed during the Quaternary and lie to the north of New Guinea, acting as stepping stones between West New Guinea and Micronesia (Milsom et al. 1992).

Today New Guinea is separated from Australia by the Arafura Sea, but owing to depressed temperatures and lower eustatic sea level during the Pleistocene period (2.58 million to 11,700 years ago) the two landmasses were formerly connected along with Tasmania, the Aru Islands, and the southern Raja Ampat Islands (see Boesl et al., this volume). In the archaeological literature this landmass has come to be known as Sahul (Ballard 1993). In areas with low relief such as the southern reaches of New Guinea, sea level changes at the start of the Holocene (11,700 to 8000 years ago) were dramatic and led to the flooding of the Arafura Plain, whereas the high-relief north coast broadly retained its shape. During the Last Glacial Maximum—the coldest phase of the Pleistocene about 18,000 years ago—temperatures in the central highlands and other mountainous areas, like the Cyclops range near Jayapura and the Tamrau Mountains of the Bird's Head, were on average 4–6 °C cooler than today, depending on altitude (Haberle et al. 1991, 2001; Hope 2007). This cooling compressed montane forest boundaries by about 500 m and subalpine grasslands commonly occurred in places 1000–1500 m lower than today (Figure 1.2). The lowlands, by contrast, experienced less extreme temperature depression (van der Kaars 1995). However, lower precipitation during the Pleistocene meant that the southern lowlands (now mangroves and evergreen rainforests) were likely woodlands and grasslands at that time (van der Kaars 1991) and some equatorial forests were less dense than they are today (Gaffney 2021).

Sociolinguistic groupings and cultural histories

Within these variable and changing environments, West New Guinea has long been host to highly diverse cultures (see Ronsumbre 2020 for a recent encyclopedia of indigenous groups in the region). Among most local communities, ethnic affiliation is usually signified by clan grouping and language use (Mansoben 2007). West New Guinea boasts over 270 languages (Arnold, this volume) and, although there have been dynamic population movements and intermarriages in the past (e.g. Donohue and Crowther 2005; Haenen 1998), the semi-isolated nature of genetic admixture between linguistic groups (Kusuma et al., this volume) supports the idea that language grouping provides one possible avenue to explore cultural variability at a very coarse resolution. This is not to say that cultural attributes are always delimited by language borders, because physical and social proximity, exchange networks, and shared communal practices are also crucial factors (see discussion in Moore and Romney 1994; Roberts et al. 1995; Welsch et al. 1992). Moreover, although the high ecological diversity of New Guinea is mirrored by a similarly high diversity of languages, the environment alone cannot explain the distribution of this diversity (Antunes et al. 2020). This is likely because, although some ecological features like rivers, mountain ranges, and malarial-prone lowland areas have contributed to shaping people's mobility (Summerhayes et al. 2017), in many places these features have not totally constrained people's settlement; linguistically related groups are often present on both sides of major rivers, mountain peaks and sea straits (Schiefenhövel and Vanhaeren 2017). Therefore, if we are to understand the complex distribution of West New Guinea's cultures, we must look to the contingent historical processes that gave rise to them.

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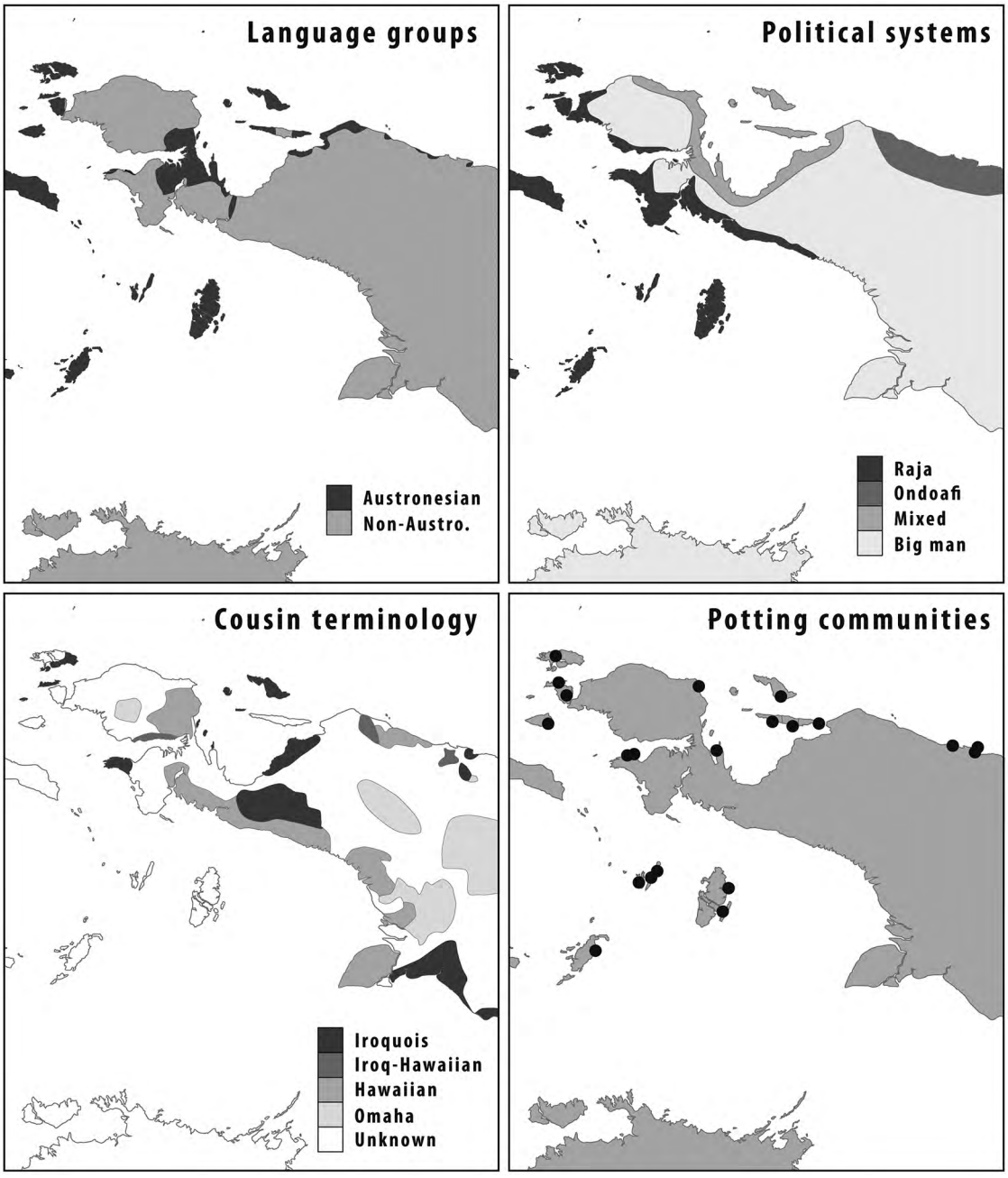

Figure 1.3: Distribution of four cultural attributes around West New Guinea.

Notes: Language grouping, whether Austronesian family or non-Austronesian (see Arnold, this volume); customary political system (Mansoben 1995); kinship as reflected by cousin terminology (Pouwer 1966); and historically recorded potting communities (Pétrequin and Pétrequin 2006).

Source: Dylan Gaffney, compiled from Mansoben (1995), Pouwer (1966), and Pétrequin and Pétrequin (2006).

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In the north-western part of New Guinea, there are numerous groups that speak languages belonging to the Austronesian family. These include those in the Raja Ampat Islands, Bomberai Peninsula, Bird's Neck, on the offshore islands and coast of Cenderawasih Bay, around the Mamberamo River delta, and along the north coast (Figure 1.3). These speech communities are strongly associated with a complex coastal geography and, prior to the recent introduction of rice, fishing and shellfish collecting in these areas heavily supplemented sago processing and gardening. These factors suggest that the speakers of the first Austronesian proto-languages to enter the area were mobile seafarers and had a distinctive insular and coastal settlement pattern. This settlement pattern may be echoed in the archaeological record by extensive rock art on coastal cliff faces in this region (Arifin and Delanghe 2004; Ballard 1992).

Within the past few centuries, some of these groups produced pottery (Figure 1.3), developed maritime raiding and trading networks, and increasingly took part in globalising exchange systems that connected New Guinea with Eurasia (Swadling 1996). The presence of bronze axes and drums, ultimately of Vietnamese origin, around Lake Sentani and the Bird's Head provide material evidence for these exchange relationships (see Suroto, this volume). Until recently, many of the populations around Raja Ampat and the Bomberai Peninsula followed a raja political system, whereby power was bestowed by sultans from Maluku upon influential local leaders who held authority over several linguistically distinct villages (Figure 1.3). Those groups in Cenderawasih Bay followed a mixed political system whereby leaders could interchangeably arise owing to their lineage or their merit (Healey 1998). Meanwhile, around north New Guinea, there was a chiefly system, whereby an *ondoafi* (clan leader) held authority over a settlement or multiple settlements of the same linguistic group (Mansoben 1995). Around these areas, kinship tends to be expressed following Iroquois cousin terminology, wherein parallel cousins are classified in the same group as siblings, cross cousins are classified in a separate group, and fathers are classified in the same group as all maternal and paternal uncles (Pouwer 1966). The distribution of pottery making, more stratified political systems, and Iroquois kinship terminology, again, overlaps with coastal complexity, as well as the presence of dynamic maritime exchange systems in the past that connected New Guinea with Maluku and beyond (Ellen and Latinis 2012; Swadling 1996). These overlapping cultural attributes may provide evidence for the presence of a wider maritime network of interaction that brought Austronesian-speaking groups into contact with non-Austronesian (or 'Papuan') language speakers in the fourth millennium before present, and which facilitated increasing connections between eastern Indonesia and New Guinea.

On the mainland of western New Guinea and the Bird's Head, non-Austronesian languages are present. Many of these languages have likely descended—over tens of thousands of years—from the initial speech communities that entered Sahul. These people shared common genetic ancestry, which had diverged from that of Australians prior to the continent splitting into New Guinea and Australia (see Jacobs et al., this volume). Along the central highland range, southern lowlands, Bomberai Peninsula, and Bird's Head are numerous languages that may belong to a single family: the purported Trans–New Guinea grouping (Pawley and Hammarström 2018; Voorhoeve 1975). Although still hypothetical, it is possible that Trans–New Guinea expansions within the highlands were associated with demographic growth, leading to movements of people into the lowlands, which were more sparsely populated owing to less arable land, differing subsistence systems, and disease risk (see Attenborough et al., this volume). In the recent past, intensive field agriculture, horticulture, and pig rearing, sometimes supplemented by hunting and collecting, made the highlands distinctive from lowland areas (see originally Bulmer and Bulmer 1964). Large populations of highlanders were interconnected through trade and exchange, marriage, and warfare, and had indirect access to coastal products like shells (see Voirol, this volume; Tekege, this volume). These

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groups participated in decentralised and meritocratic political systems, commonly glossed as 'big men' and 'great men' societies (Ploeg 1966). Although systems of achieved status may have emerged millennia ago (Golson and Gardner 1990), big men groups as we know them may be an innovation reflecting recent material and political transformations—changes related to the adoption of sweet potato and the intensification of pig rearing in the central highlands (Bayliss-Smith et al. 2017), and the kain timur textile trade linking mountain people with coastal groups around the Bird's Head (Elmberg 1966; Healey 1998). Except for evidence of marsupial hunting in the Holocene (Hope and Hope 1976), there is currently no published archaeological evidence from the central highlands of West New Guinea. Therefore, the history of social and political change before the twentieth century remains an enigma.

In the northern lowlands and foothills, and the interior of the Bird's Head, are smaller populations speaking languages from distinct families and isolates. In swampy lowland areas, sago processing is common, supplemented by fishing and hunting, and in the foothills, horticulture may be supplemented by sago processing, hunting, and collecting. We currently know very little about the deeper past in the lowlands of western New Guinea (see Wright et al. 2013 for a review). Humans have lived around the hills of the Bird's Head since at least 30,000 years ago (Pasveer et al. 2002), and on the Aru Islands, at that time connected to Sahul, since 27,000 years ago (O'Connor et al. 2002). These people hunted in rainforests and grasslands, particularly specialising in wallabies, but also capturing cuscus, bandicoots, fruit bats and snakes, and collecting shellfish, seeds, and cassowary eggs (Aplin and Pasveer 2005; Aplin et al. 1999). Bone points were produced from the skeletons of these animals, whether for fibrecraft or projectile hunting, and stone tools were made in an expedient manner (Pasveer 2004, 2005). However, despite the clear diversity that characterises lowland material culture traditions today (see Jacobs, this volume; Kanem, this volume; Powell Davies, this volume), we know nothing about how this variability arose in the deeper past.

Colonial boundary-making and administration

West New Guinea has been witness to colonial partitioning for hundreds of years, with most of its inhabitants likely unaware of such pretensions until recently. There are tentative hints that settlements on the Onin Peninsula were tributaries to Java's Majapahit Empire by the mid-fourteenth century (Kern 1903), and parts of the coast and offshore islands paid tribute to sultanates around Maluku between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries (Swadling 1996), but no attempts were made to claim land on New Guinea itself. Indeed, those Papuans providing tribute often conceptualised these relationships not as marking subservience but as facilitating new exchange possibilities (Andaya 1993, 108; Kamma 1982, 80).

In 1545, Yñigo Ortiz de Retez, who had travelled along the north coast of New Guinea to the mouth of the Mamberamo River, asserted ownership of the island for Spain (van der Veur 1966, 6). So too did Luis Váez de Torres in 1606 when he voyaged along the south coast of New Guinea (Hilder 1980); however, these claims remained symbolic with no capital invested by Spain to settle the island, convert its people, or monopolise its resources. Since the early seventeenth century, the 'Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie' (Dutch East India Company, VOC) occasionally visited New Guinea, expanding from strongholds in Ambon and Batavia (now Jakarta), from which they controlled the maritime spice trade and occasionally organised raiding, trading, and slaving operations around coastal New Guinea (Wichmann 1909, 104). The Netherlands initially asserted ownership over West New Guinea only in so far as it appeased the Sultanate of Tidore, which laid claim to tributaries around the island's coast, and because it acted as a buffer to competing colonial interests in the region (Bone 1964). In the late eighteenth century, as Dutch naval superiority declined, the British

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began to make claims to the coast of New Guinea too, establishing Fort Coronation on Mansinam Island (Dore Bay) in 1793 proclaiming the northern part of the mainland 'New Albion' and under the possession of the Crown (Lee 1912). With rumours that the British had also established forts in the south-west of New Guinea, the Dutch established their first administrative post, Fort Du Bus, in Triton Bay on the Bird's Neck in 1828 and annexed all land west of the 141st meridian east. This fort was officially abandoned after less than a decade owing to high disease rates and mortality (Haneveld 1961). A later 1848 decree asserted that Dutch-controlled Tidore had a claim to this land with a line drawn from the 141st meridian in the south to Cape Bonpland in the north (van der Veur 1966, 1). Only in 1884 did the British and German empires formally acknowledge this boundary, thereby separating Dutch New Guinea from German New Guinea and British Papua. The Dutch administration initially remained small-scale in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with administrators, missionaries, traders, and some military personnel being the only real European presence, although Dutch, American and Japanese corporations increasingly sought natural resources for extraction from 1935 to 1960 (Poulgrain 1999).

During the Pacific War, brief occupation by Japan in 1942–1945 was primarily confined to the coasts. The interior was relatively unaffected except for harbouring Dutch intelligence and resistance groups and a small group of Japanese troops at the Paniai Lakes (Cheesman 1943). However, on the coast and offshore islands, the takeover and subsequent indentured labour used for infrastructure projects led to many local deaths (Rottman 2005). Following the Allied defeat of the Japanese in 1945, and the Indonesian struggle for independence from 1945 to 1949, many 'Indische Nederlanders' (i.e. Dutch and Dutch–Indonesian descent communities living in the East Indies) began to relocate to West New Guinea, and Dutch legislation encouraged this process of transmigration for several decades (Lugten 1985, 75). By 1961, the Papuan population was estimated at below half a million people (487,800), with Indonesian and Chinese migrants numbering 16,600 and Europeans numbering 15,500 (Pouwer 1999).

West New Guinea, as the territory was generally called after the war, became a focus of development and administration. It was placed under the authority of the governor and divided into 'Residentie' (provinces) led by a 'Resident' (district commissioner) (Jaarsma 1994). These provinces were divided into 'Districten' (districts) headed by a 'Controleur' (assistant district commissioner) (Figure 1.4). In 1945, only 5 per cent of West New Guinea was within reach of Dutch administrative centres; however, by 1962 this situation had changed, and the Dutch had made their mark on industry and urbanisation as well as language, culture, and education (Pouwer 1999). This process of nation-building increasingly fed a Dutch preoccupation with being perceived as compassionate colonisers (Rutherford 2009), despite events that reinforced ongoing suppression (e.g. the Obano uprising, the raid on Omadesep–Otsjanep, and so on). At that time, a requirement of the Netherlands being a member state of the United Nations was that they adhere to Article 73, which stipulated that colonial governments needed to work towards self-determination for non-self-governing territories as soon as possible (Jaarsma 1994).

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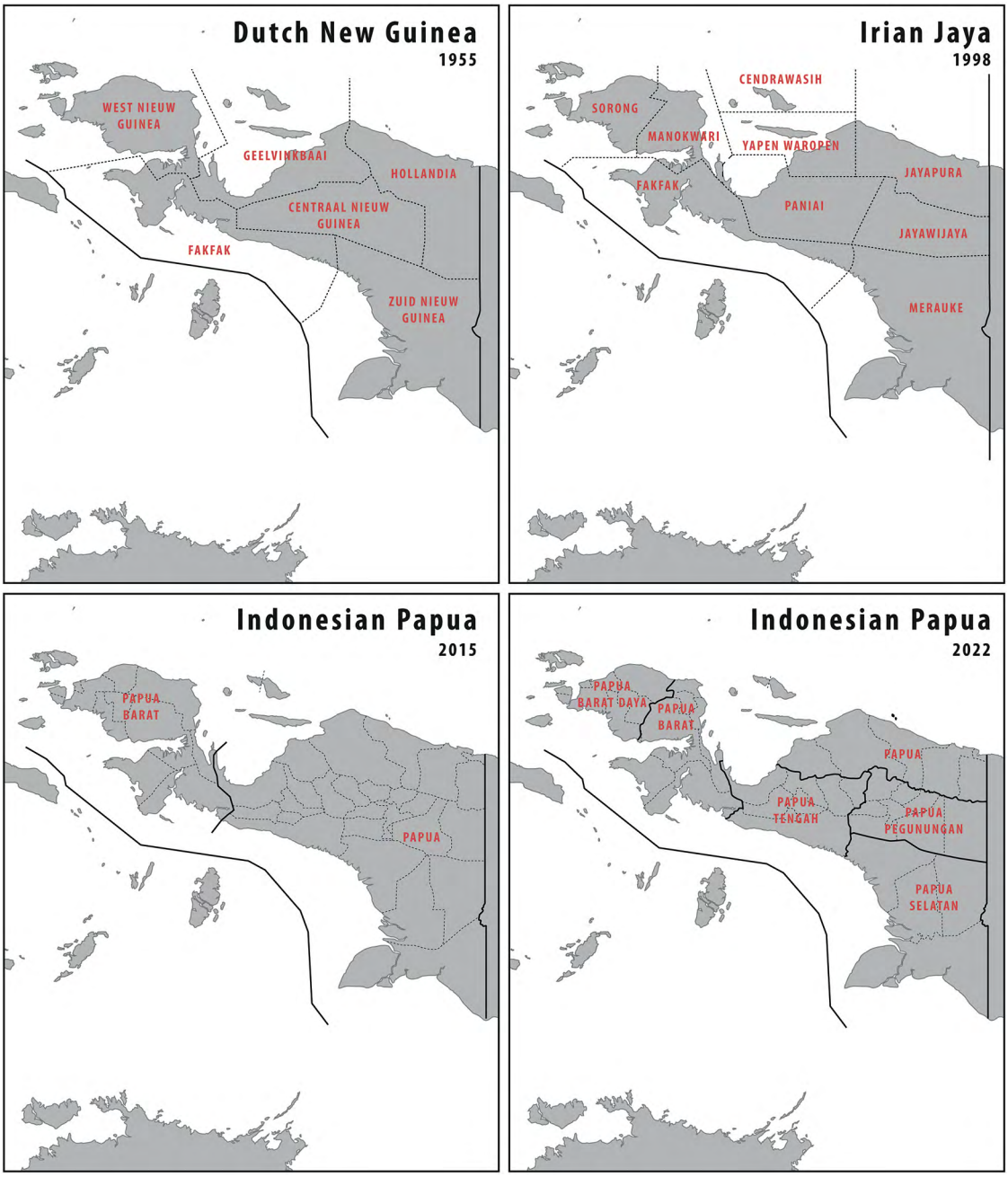

Figure 1.4: Administrative 'residentie' of Dutch New Guinea (as of 1955), regencies of Irian Jaya (as of 1998), and provinces and regencies of Indonesian Papua (as of 2015 and 2022).
Source: Dylan Gaffney.

Although the Indonesian independence movement laid claim to all of the Dutch East Indies from Sumatra to the 141st meridian, the transfer of control over West New Guinea to Indonesia did not occur until 1963. This process was facilitated by the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) backed by the United States, despite being fiercely contested by the Netherlands (see Kuitenbrouwer 2016; Penders 2002; Webster 2013 for details). Then renamed Irian Barat

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and later Irian Jaya,[3] it was administered as a single province of Indonesia until 2001 when it was renamed Papua and given 'special autonomy' status. In 2003 the area was subdivided into Papua and Papua Barat provinces, and, in 2022, it was further divided into six smaller provinces (Figure 1.4), part of a gradual process of devolution and decentralisation (Kusumaryati 2019). In recent years, the demography of West New Guinea has rapidly changed: the population has increased tenfold since 1963 and has doubled since the turn of the twenty-first century, primarily owing to transmigration from western, central, and eastern Indonesia to urban centres in New Guinea (compare 1999 census data with 2020 census data). As of 2020, over 5 million people now live in an area of 415,000 km^2 (a density of 13 people per square km) with over half of those now being recent settlers (Ananta et al. 2016). For histories of Indonesian administration beyond what can be written here see, for instance, Gietzelt (1989), Timmer (2007), and Viartasiwi (2018).

A note on terminology

Owing to the turbulent and often violent history of colonial administrative changes in West New Guinea, the names used to refer to the western part of the island and its satellites can be confusing and contentious, carrying important social and political implications (Table 1.1). We refer here to West New Guinea to describe the former Netherlands New Guinea, the portion of New Guinea and its outliers now administered by Indonesia. Internationally, this is usually referred to as West Papua and has previously been referred to as Irian Barat (until 1973) and Irian Jaya (until 2002). Within Indonesia, the area tends to be referred to as Papua, comprising the provinces of Papua, Papua Barat (West Papua), Papua Barat Daya (Southwest Papua), Papua Tengah (Central Papua), Papua Pegunungan (Highland Papua), and Papua Selatan (South Papua). To describe indigenous people within West New Guinea, we use the term Papuan, to align with the commonly used self-identification.

Table 1.1: Terminology often used to describe parts of New Guinea.

Name	Description
West New Guinea West Papua Papua Irian Jaya (obsolete) Irian Barat (obsolete)	The former territory of Netherlands New Guinea (Nederlands-Nieuw-Guinea). Today Indonesian-administered Papua, Papua Barat, Papua Barat Daya, Papua Tengah, Papua Pegunungan, and Papua Selatan provinces including the mainland and outlying islands.
Western New Guinea (WNG)	The island of New Guinea west of the 141st meridian east, including the mainland of Indonesia-administered New Guinea but excluding outlying islands.
Eastern New Guinea (ENG)	The island of New Guinea east of the 141st meridian east, forming modern mainland Papua New Guinea but excluding outlying islands.
Papua New Guinea (PNG)	The modern nation-state of Papua New Guinea incorporating the eastern half of New Guinea and circum-New Guinea Islands in the Bismarck Archipelago, Southeast Papuan Islands, and northern Solomon Chain.
Circum-New Guinea Islands	Small islands peripheral to New Guinea, including the Raja Ampat Islands, Cenderawasih Bay, the Aru Islands, the Bismarck Archipelago, the Southeast Papuan Islands, the Solomon Islands, and the Torres Strait Islands, often extended to also include the Malukan Islands, Lesser Sunda Islands, and Sulawesi.

Source: Dylan Gaffney.

3 For clarification, the term Papua likely derives from a Spanish transliteration of the Biak term *sup i papwa* which denotes the 'land below the sunset', initially referring to the islands of Raja Ampat and Halmahera, and later mistakenly applied to the island of New Guinea and its people (Gelpke 1993). New Guinea, or 'Nueva Guinea', was first used by Ortiz de Retez, referring to the similarities he perceived between the islanders and those on the west African coast. Irian is an acronym for Ikut Republik Indonesia Anti-Nederland (Join the Republic of Indonesia Anti-Netherlands) that was, in 1945, associated with the Biak term *iryan* meaning 'the rays of the sun that drive the sea-fog away' by the brothers Marcus Wonggor Kaisiëpo and Frans Kaisiëpo on the suggestion of the Indonesian nationalist Soegoro Atmoprasodjo (Mote and Rutherford 2001).

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Key research themes

As noted by Ballard (1999), the process of colonial boundary-making and naming has meant that historical narratives have been primarily produced at the macro scale from outside of New Guinea. As we will see in Chapter 2, these lines drawn up by competing colonial powers have come to shape the nature of academic research in the region, and in particular account for the long neglect of West New Guinea in the scholarship of the Pacific and Island Southeast Asia. Key debates in Asia-Pacific anthropology have been driven from research outside of West New Guinea; however, with systematic research being undertaken in the area, West New Guinea is now well placed to contribute in important ways to several research themes about the history of the region. Here, we identify seven key themes that have emerged from the wider literature, and which are the focus of chapters in the present volume.

Early peopling

The timing and nature of maritime dispersals by our species—*Homo sapiens*—out of Eurasia and into Oceania during the Pleistocene (Ice Ages) remains unresolved. During the hypothesised window of colonisation (>65,000–50,000 years ago), Australia and New Guinea were connected by lowered sea levels as one continent called Sahul. Recent computer modelling suggests north-western New Guinea would have been the most easily reached navigational target along a seafaring corridor of intervisible islands on the equator, in what is today Indonesia (Kealy et al. 2018). Moreover, genetic research suggests that these northern movements may have led to interaction and admixture between distinct hominin groups, especially between *Homo sapiens* and the Denisovans. The latter are known from fossil remains in Eurasia (Demeter et al. 2022; Slon et al. 2017) but Papuan people are host to some of the highest contributions of Denisovan DNA on the planet (Teixeira et al. 2021). Finds at Madjedbebe in north-western Australia may date human occupation to around 65,000 years ago (Clarkson et al. 2017), and certainly humans were present around other parts of Australia and Papua New Guinea by about 50,000–45,000 years ago (Norman et al. 2022; Summerhayes et al. 2010). We might, then, expect similar ages for West New Guinean sites, especially because genetic studies suggest there was a dual entrance into Sahul from the north and the south (Pedro et al. 2020). Toé Cave on the Bird's Head provides some of the only published radiocarbon dates from West New Guinea, which indicates occupation began just before the Last Glacial Maximum (c. 30,000 years ago; Pasveer 2004). This is consistent with the earliest archaeological sites from Maluku: at Golo cave on Gebe Island (c. 35,000 years ago; Bellwood 2019) and Liang Lemdubu in the Aru Islands (c. 27,000 years ago; O'Connor et al. 2005). However, it means that there is now a considerable temporal lag between West New Guinea archaeology and that of Australia and Papua New Guinea, which can only be resolved with ongoing fieldwork and publication, particularly from the Raja Ampat Islands and the Bird's Head Peninsula.

Human adaptation and transformation

The settlers of Sahul were the descendants of the world's very first maritime peoples, who crossed several biogeographic divides to populate their newfound continent. Important questions therefore abound about processes of human behavioural diversification as these colonists then moved into a range of novel ecologies around northern Sahul, including lowland tropical rainforests, high altitudes, mangrove swamps and small offshore islands (Summerhayes et al. 2017). A key marker of our species is our ecological plasticity, hyper-adaptable to a huge variety of challenging environments. We can ask similar questions about people's adaptive responses to fluctuating climates, sea level rise, the disappearance of megafauna and changes to tropical forest cover which occurred at the end of the Pleistocene period

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(Hope and Haberle 2005). Another common feature of *Homo sapiens* is that we creatively transform our worlds around us. We can, therefore, ask how humans shaped these variable and changing ecologies which they came to live within, and how these long histories of ecological management contributed to the present distribution of flora and fauna around New Guinea. Similarly, we can explore how humans illustrated their experiences in these ecologies in the archaeological record; with that in mind, the connection between rock paintings and portable art dating to between 50,000 and 30,000 years old in Sulawesi, Borneo, and Timor (Aubert et al. 2007, 2014, 2018; Brumm et al. 2021; Langley et al. 2020), and similar, but as yet undated, paintings preserved around parts of coastal and highland New Guinea (Arifin and Delanghe 2004) remains totally unexplored.

Food production

Following climatic warming at the beginning of the Holocene period (11,700 years ago), New Guinea became separated from Australia and there is strong evidence from Kuk Swamp, in highland Papua New Guinea, that communities began to experiment with diverse forms of food production like cultivation, horticulture, and agroforestry, eventually leading the island to become an important setting for early agriculture at a comparable time when changes occurred in Eurasia and Meso-America (Denham 2018). The multidirectional exchange of vegetatively propagated plants like aroids, tubers, and bananas between the highlands and lowlands, and from New Guinea to its outlying islands, generated a wide array of cultivars (Barton and Denham 2011; Denham and Donohue 2009). Hypothetically, some of these crop movements may have been interlinked with the dispersal of the Trans–New Guinea languages across western New Guinea and even into Island Southeast Asia (Pawley and Hammarström 2018), alongside more intensive landscape modification and forest clearance (Haberle et al. 2001), and the emergence of technologically 'Neolithic' societies with polished stone, fixed structures, and exchange systems, in the highland zone (Shaw et al. 2020). There are no published archaeological sequences from West New Guinea that provide evidence for the emergence of agriculture, although ethnographic observations and palaeoecological research indicate that complex innovations in cultivation, like those at Kuk, may also have occurred in the Baliem Valley (Haberle et al. 1991). Further research is required to clarify when and how humans in West New Guinea began to experiment with cultivation and diversify their modes of plant food production.

Language dispersals

The coasts of western New Guinea are strategically located to address the migration of Austronesian-speaking cultures from Taiwan into the Pacific during the fourth millennium before the present. Based on linguistic evidence, Cenderawasih Bay in north-western New Guinea has long been posited as the immediate source of Austronesian speech communities before they skirted the north coast and migrated to the Bismarck Archipelago and the remote Pacific (Pawley 2003). Currently, the nature of these dispersals in Oceania is debated, with one group of scholars supporting a fast-track model, whereby highly mobile Austronesian speakers moved through Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific, bringing with them pottery and domesticated animals (Kirch 2017; Spriggs 2012), while another group supports gradual technological and language shifts that resulted from established social networks operating around New Guinea and Island Southeast Asia during the Holocene (Donohue and Denham 2010). The only way to resolve these issues is by investigating pottery-bearing sequences in north-western New Guinea and its offshore islands. Currently, there are only tentative hints at these connections, for instance in the presence of jade tools geochemically sourced to a western New Guinea origin but discovered at Lapita pottery-bearing sites in the Bismarck Archipelago (Harlow et al. 2012).

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Exchange networks and the recent past

A rich record detailing the emergence of the Indonesian Metal Age and the expansion of Indian Ocean Rim trade networks also awaits publication from West New Guinea, which increasingly became interconnected with the globalising world economy in the last 2000 years (Bellwood 2019). These new connectivities especially involved the introduction of bronze axes, glass beads and later iron into West New Guinea (Elmberg 1968; Kamma and Kooijman 1973), interlinked with the expansion of the Maluku spice trade (Ono et al. 2018). In return, New Guinea communities sent highly desired goods such as bird-of-paradise feathers westwards where they became signs of prestige in south-west Asia and Europe (Swadling 1996). The involvement of New Guinea in these exchange networks further increased in the colonial period as traders from New Guinea, Maluku, Southeast Asia, China, and Europe situated themselves in strategic positions to facilitate the movement of goods back to their home communities. Fortifications and churches relating to the initial expansion of Dutch colonial control have been recorded in Maluku and Timor (Lape 2006; O'Connor et al. 2012; Veth et al. 2005) but remain sparsely reported from West New Guinea (Galis and Kamma 1958). There remains much to uncover about these globalising processes through archaeological, historical, and oral history records in the area. As Ballard (2010) notes, the heritage of the recent past can resonate with Papuan communities and become a meeting ground for local and academic interests that generate an array of novel questions to ask about the past. The necessary synthesis of archaeological and oral historical information about the recent past, in particular, could create important methodological innovations like those increasingly developed in Papua New Guinea (Tsang et al. 2022; Urwin et al. 2023).

Materialising culture

The careful examination of the technological sequences employed to produce ethnographically collected objects such as axes, pottery, and string bags can provide important information about group relatedness, mobility, and social boundaries across West New Guinea (Pétrequin and Pétrequin 2006). These observations can shed light on how their technological antecedents—those objects uncovered archaeologically—might have been made, and what their implications are for understanding society in the past. These art and craft traditions, some of which have long histories spanning hundreds or thousands of years, remain significant for many people in West New Guinea today. The manufacture, use, and display of such objects not only reinvigorates customary technologies but also creates new forms of tradition. Increasingly, organic materials are now substituted by synthetic ones and the growth of urban centres and large plantations are reconfiguring people's social and physical environments and access to resources (Chao 2018). As such, there is a real need to explore how people are navigating these changes and transforming their material worlds.

Museums and collecting

The Dutch colonial expansion into West New Guinea was initially stimulated by its strategic position to protect sovereign trade interests within the East Indies, but later became the focus of control, development, missionisation, and natural resource extraction from within New Guinea itself. Alongside this came early attempts at ethnographic documentation and a period of collecting, during which time thousands of art pieces and everyday objects were transported to museums in Batavia (now Jakarta) and Europe (Corbey 2017, 2019; Corbey and Weener 2015). The exploration of these museum collections alongside their historical documentation provides important insight into the day-to-day activities of the users and the cosmology and material expression of the makers, not to mention the peculiarly European practices of collecting in New Guinea (Haslwanter 2018; Jacobs

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2011; Veys 2018). More importantly, things now housed in museums can resonate emotionally with visitors and connect Papuans—sometimes quite literally—with their ancestors. The records, photographs and collections produced by early ethnographers may similarly be powerful catalysts that connect people with their past (see examples from Papua New Guinea in Bell 2003; Gillespie 2017). The potency of these materials raises important questions about the ethics of display and storage; conversations which Papuans are increasingly part of (Hermkens and Timmer 2022).

Book structure

In the following chapters, the contributors bring to bear new archaeological, linguistic, biological, and ethnographic observations on the abovementioned research themes. First, we begin with macro-regional syntheses of West New Guinea's human histories from the perspective of historiography, linguistics, and biological anthropology. In Chapter 2, Gaffney and Tolla examine West New Guinea's ecological, cultural and colonial history before proceeding to outline how these have shaped social science research in the region from the sixteenth to twenty-first centuries. Arnold, in Chapter 3, provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of West New Guinea's languages and their historical relationships. Jacobs, Kusama, and Attenborough then present three linked chapters that examine the human genetic data from West New Guinea: in Chapter 4, they focus on broad-scale processes of demographic fluctuation and archaic hominin introgression during the Pleistocene; in Chapter 5, they examine local demographic shifts, and the geneflow between social and linguistic groupings; in Chapter 6, they present an overview of selective pressures acting on the human genome in New Guinea.

The volume then moves to area- and site-focused archaeological chapters primarily stemming from the work of Indonesian and Papuan archaeologists at BRIN who have been excavating in the region (Figure 1.5). Most of these chapters are provided in translation from the original Bahasa Indonesia. Other contributions come from international research teams who have excavated collaboratively at a series of key locations. In Chapter 7, Boesl, Adhityatama, and Wall describe the major landscape transformations that occurred around the southern Raja Ampat Islands and Bird's Head, formerly Sahul, at the end of the Pleistocene. They also speculate how future archaeological research in the area may help us to re-evaluate how Sahul was first colonised. In Chapter 8, Gaffney, Tanudirjo, Mas'ud, Novita Idje Djami, Razak Matcap, and Russell describe their results of a reconnaissance survey in the northern Raja Ampat Islands and examine how archaeological site distributions may document different settlement patterns in the past. Mene, Setiawan, and Gaffney then, in Chapter 9, provide provisional radiocarbon, lithic, and bone artefact results from Andarewa site on the Bomberai Peninsula, frequented from the Last Glacial Maximum to the Late Holocene. In Chapter 10, Tolla, Roberts, Lucas, Bonatz, and Posth present isotopic data from several lowland sites to explore changes to diet during the Holocene. In Chapter 11, Fairyo describes rock art from the lowland interior of Keerom, north New Guinea. Chapter 12, contributed by Suroto, describes recent survey and test excavations in the western part of Lake Sentani on the north coast of New Guinea; an area which may prove important in documenting expansions of Austronesian language groups into West New Guinea, alongside the emergence of globalising trade networks. With a focus on the area's recent material past, Fairyo then presents a brief report of decorated pottery recovered from burial cave sites in the nearby Kayu Batu area, in Chapter 13. Kawer and Gaffney next describe survey and surface artefact collections relating to the Pacific War on Biak and its satellite islands in Cenderawasih Bay. They note how Biak's extensive wartime archaeology not only reflects its importance for the Japanese and Allied military, but also the resonance of this event for local people.

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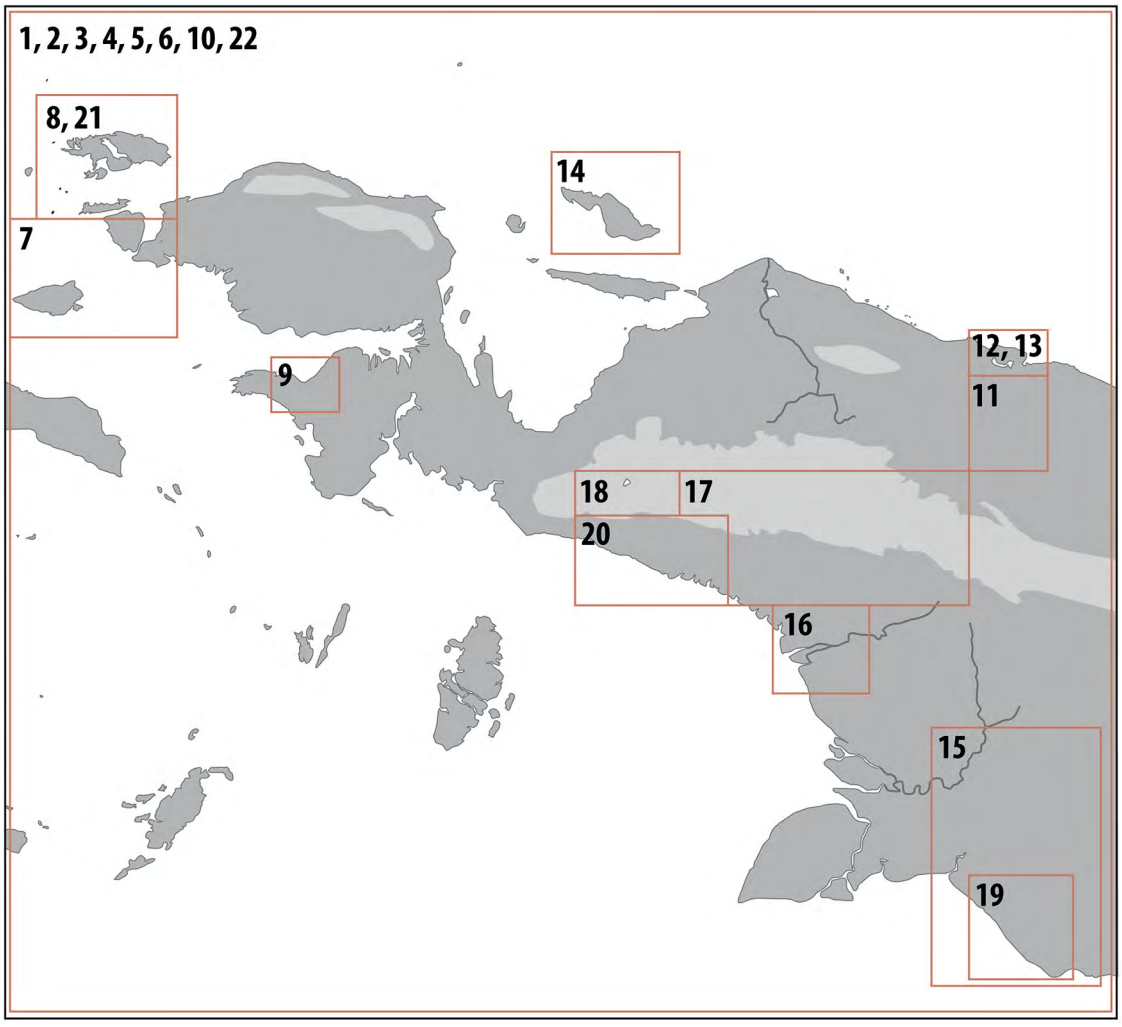

Figure 1.5: West New Guinea, highlighting study areas described in each chapter of the volume.
Source: Dylan Gaffney.

The book then moves to explorations of ethnographic material culture from the recent past, including its connections with deep time and the present, which brings Papuan, Indonesian, and international dialogues to the fore. These chapters provide vivid descriptions of how material culture can activate new understandings of West New Guinea societies, both historically and in the present. In Chapter 15, McNiven charts the social lives of Marind-anim canoes as they traded and raided along the south-central coast of New Guinea and in the Torres Strait. The author also speculates how these processes could be explored in the archaeological past through the sourcing of stone artefacts like axes and clubs. Powell Davies then presents an ethnographic account of the transformative ways in which Asmat carvers think about stone and steel tools in Chapter 16. Far from just revisiting the Stone Age trope, this chapter examines how Papuans conceptualise their materials, and themselves, in the wider context of state-level economic changes.

In Chapter 17, Voirol describes the marine shell trade in the West New Guinea Highlands, drawing from ethnographic, oral historical, and museum-based research among the Mee, Dani, Lani, Yali, and Eipo. This is followed, in Chapter 18, by Tekege's personal reflection on how shells are used as bride wealth among the Mee and how the perception of these practices has changed in the twenty-

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first century. In Chapter 19, Kanem describes women who make noken string bags in Merauke and how these processes have begun to change dramatically in recent years following, but not wholly related to, these objects being recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as intangible heritage. In Chapter 20, the social relationships that remain bound up in Kamoro material culture housed in ethnographic museums are described by Jacobs. Following on from this, in Chapter 21, Veys elucidates the politics of displaying West New Guinea ritual art in European museum settings, especially in view of both Papuan and pan-Pacific audiences.

Finally, Tsang and Summerhayes provide an afterword in Chapter 22 that reflects upon the significance of West New Guinea anthropology, archaeology, linguistics and material culture, in the context of the Pacific's deep human history. They also provide comments on future avenues for developing these disciplines within New Guinea more broadly. Given the current political and economic landscape, this process is likely to be a gradual one and attention should initially be directed towards meaningful community involvement, equitable knowledge exchange, and capacity-building. With this in mind, we hope that this volume will be of value to Papuans interested in their island's history and become a time capsule of information that will be available to future generations of Papuan archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists, geneticists, and curators.

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