

# LONG ISLAND, PAPUA NEW GUINEA — ASPECTS OF THE PREHISTORY

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## SUMMARY

Five archaeological sites are described from the present-day coast of Long Island, and their probable ages are discussed. The earliest human occupation was at least 1000 years ago, with further occupation between about 350-550 years ago. Obsidian was imported from Talasea, New Britain, and possibly several kinds of pottery may have been imported from the mainland of New Guinea. The relation of Long Island to historically-known trading networks is discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Long Island, in the Madang Province of Papua New Guinea, stands at the northern end of Vitiaz Strait, about 50 km from the New Guinea mainland. Although administratively placed within the Madang Province, the island is culturally, as well as geographically, intermediate between the Madang-Rai coast areas and the communities of Vitiaz and Dampier Straits. Studies of their oral history and mythology (Ball and Hughes 1982) reveal that the islanders have a recent history which reflects this position. However, their main external contacts during the period of white contact appear to have been with the peoples of the Vitiaz Strait, with the island standing at the westerly limit of the Vitiaz Strait exchange network (Harding 1967); the island appears to have been by-passed by traders operating from the Madang area.

Our interest in Long Island arose from our archaeological and ethnographic studies in the Madang (Egloff) and Huon Peninsula (Specht) areas. With Long Island standing, as it were, at the interface between our research areas, we decided to visit the island in 1973 to examine several archaeological sites reported by earlier visitors. Finds from these sites suggested that they might pre-date the last major eruptive phase to devastate the island, and thus might provide information on Long Island's position in the exchange networks of our respective research areas prior to the period of European contact.

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Five archaeological sites are known from Long Island (Fig. 2) but, with the exception of brief notices by Bassot and Ball (1972: 27), Johnson *et al.* (1972: 48), and Egloff (1975: 14), no details of these sites have been published. The first site to be recorded, JCT, was reported to Specht in 1969 by J. S. Womersley, formerly of the Botanic Gardens, Lae; this site has not been visited by the authors. The second site, JAB, was recorded in 1970 by J. Wood, then with Gem Exploration and Mining Pty. Ltd. In 1972 Hughes collected at this site and visited two others, JCB and JCC. The fifth site, JCW, was visited by R. Blong, C. Pain and C. McKee in 1976, but no artefacts were collected. In 1973 Specht and Egloff visited JAB, JCB and JCC with Hughes, and each site was visited by Ball on subsequent occasions. This paper is based mainly on data recovered in 1973, with additional information and artefacts from other visits included