

ARCHE Seminar Series 2023

Dr Stuart Hawkins presents

“The peopling of the interior of Wallacean islands”

Australian Research Centre for Human Evolution Seminar Series 8

Archaeological research in the insular region of Wallacea (eastern Indonesia, Timor–Leste) has revealed widespread use of coastal cave sites by modern humans dating back to 45 thousand years ago. These demonstrate the earliest significant modern human maritime migration and socioeconomic adaptations in the world. Settlement of the inland regions of some of the largest islands of Wallacea, which has never been connected to a continental landmass, is often overlooked because of the depauperate nature of these terrestrial island environments. Recent research indicates that modern humans adapted to tropical island forests of the Asia–Pacific much earlier than previously thought.

This presentation reviews the sparse evidence for inland settlement on the largest Wallacean islands of Timor, Sulawesi and Halmahera. It then introduces new evidence for modern human adaptation at a number of inland sites recently excavated on Timor. Data reveals settlement up riverine valley systems up to 30km deep as early as seven thousand years ago. Shell ornaments, fauna and lithic technology demonstrate the flexibility of human adaptation to monsoon island interiors as well as the resilience of social connections with coastal communities in Wallacea.



Date/Time: Friday 4th August, 2023 at 2pm

Room: N78 -1.13 Seminar Room (Nathan Campus)