Lapita People: an Introductory Context for Skeletal Materials Associated with Pottery of this Cultural Complex

R.C. GREEN
Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland
Auckland, New Zealand

ABSTRACT. Various theoretical statements in the 1970’s and 1980’s by Howells, Bellwood, Pietrusewsky, Brace & Hinton, Terrell, and Houghton on the likely biological origins and affinities of populations which settled the geographic areas of Melanesia and Polynesia are outlined. They serve to highlight some of the background issues involved in a set of papers assembled here that constitutes the first thorough examination of human burials associated with the Lapita cultural complex. These are the only skeletal materials recovered so far from the Oceanic area to bear directly on the nature of the biological populations present in Island Melanesia and Western Polynesia 3,500 to 2,100 years ago and as such allow limited assessment of the different theories which to date have largely been derived from the analysis of either fairly recent palaeobiological evidence or from the study of still living populations.