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# Back to Papua New Guinea: a new phase for the Papuan Past project

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## Back to Papua New Guinea: a new phase for the Papuan Past project

After more than two years with limited international travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the team members of the Papuan Past Project from France and Papua New Guinea could finally work together again in person!

From the 20<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, Francois-Xavier Ricaut, Nicolas Brucato, Hubert Forestier and Justin [Guibert](#) (our newest team member and PhD candidate) flew from Toulouse to meet with Matthew Leavesley, Christopher Kinipi, Jason [Kariwiga](#), Kylie Sesuki and Teppsy Beni in Port Moresby. During this visit the team had four main objectives:

- to discuss with our Papua New Guinean partners the next phase of the project,
- to recruit master's students in archaeology and biological anthropology,
- to analyse and collect anthropological and archaeological data at the University of Papua New Guinea,
- to meet with the new French Ambassador (Mr Guillaume Lemoine)

This phase of the project will last for five years. It will include the continuation of the Archaeological excavation of the [Manim site](#) (Western Highlands province) which was stopped in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. We also agreed to investigate the archaeological and anthropological potential of the southern lowlands of Papua New Guinea (Gulf and Southern Highlands provinces).

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Team members

at the UPNG Archaeological lab (University of Papua New Guinea) following a meeting about the next phase of the project.

This will be achieved in part through the recruitment of two collaborators who will start a master's degree at the UPNG archaeological lab in 2023 (The School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Papua New Guinea) co-supervised by UPNG and French project team members. Mr Christopher Kinipi (director of the UPNG clinic) will do a master's degree in the field of biological anthropology around the topic of health/stress and how people deal with stress in different Papua New Guinean communities. Mrs Avis Babalu will start a master's degree in the field of archaeology based on the excavation of rock shelters along the Purari River to investigate how populations have settled and adapted to this region and environment. At the University of Papua New Guinea, the team also collected and analyzed data. Hubert Forestier and Justin Guibert performed a detailed analysis of the lithic assemblage excavated during the 2019 archaeological excavation in Manim. Days of sorting, identification, classification, photographing and drawing were spent to analyse 110 kilograms of lithic material and identify 1140 knapped artifacts. These new results will be presented at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the [Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association](#) that will be held in Thailand in November 2022. Nicolas Brucato and Francois-Xavier Ricaut conducted an anthropological survey on the UPNG students to determine their dietary habits and health status, in order to investigate local adaptation.

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Dr Forestier and Mr Guibert analyzing lithic artifacts from the Manim archaeological site at the UPNG Archaeological lab.

The Papuan Past Project team also met with the French Ambassador in Papua New Guinea. It was the occasion to discuss the work that had been completed since 2016 and to plan for future scientific and collaborative goals, with the renewed support of the French Embassy in Papua New Guinea.

### Credits

Redaction: [Ricaud](#) & [Brucato](#).

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