STUART BEDFORD was born in New Zealand in 1960. He received his BA and MA degrees from the University of Auckland in 1982 and 1994 respectively. In between he gained valuable archaeological field experience as Assistant Archaeologist with the Clutha Valley Archaeology Project, Cromwell, New Zealand and then as Archaeologist and finally Supervisory Archaeologist with the Museum of London in the UK. I first met Stuart in 1994 at the notorious World Archaeological Congress in New Delhi. He had already applied for a PhD scholarship at ANU and got the thumbs up when he returned from his Indian travels. He arrived in the then-Division of Archaeology and Natural History in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies in 1995.

He arrived at ANU at just the right moment. The 1985 to 1994 research ban in Vanuatu had just been lifted under the enlightened policies of new Vanuatu National Museum Director, Ralph Regenvanu. There were many archaeological questions to answer there concerning whether Vanuatu had been occupied in the Pleistocene period, on the stratigraphy and pottery sequence at the Mangaasi type-site on Efate, the cultural sequence of the ethnographically-rich (but little known archaeologically) island of Malakula in the north, the biological anthropology of the Vanuatu population, and the stylistic analysis and external connections of Vanuatu rock art, among a range of other topics. Clearly, with all these projects and potential projects there were numerous opportunities for PhD and other thesis projects and I set about recruiting suitable candidates. Stuart was among the first crop, which also included Nicola van Dijk and Meredith Wilson.

Stuart’s family had earlier had business contacts in Vanuatu and so he had a ready-made social circuit of family friends in Port Vila to help him settle in to the rigours of fieldwork. Very soon after arriving he met his future wife, Caroline Brunet, daughter of a long-established French family in Vanuatu. Suitably distracted he began fieldwork on Erromango in mid-1995, investigating the site of Ponamla, an immediately post-Lapita pottery site found by one of the National Museum filwokas, Sempit Naritanton. During this trip he quickly picked up the lingua franca of Vanuatu, Bislama, and clearly displayed exactly the right attitudes and manner to fit him for independent fieldwork in local conditions.

Museum Director Ralph Regenvanu and I then accompanied Stuart to Northwest Malakula to introduce him to a new fieldwork area. After an initial misunderstanding by our party which left both Ralph and I embarrassed and necessitated a custom ‘fine’ and elaborate kava ceremony in recompense, we left Stuart to fend for himself. This he did admirably in what — as we had already discovered to our cost — was a very politically and culturally-sensitive environment. His collaboration with local filwoka Jimmyson Sanhanbath was a major key to his success in this regard, as I know he would be the first to admit.

In 1996 Stuart carried out field work on Erromango and Malakula, and that year we had also begun the re-excavation of the Mangaasi-Arapus site on Efate Island. This project lasted, with only
one year without fieldwork, from 1996 to 2003. Stuart also undertook the analysis of the pottery and other artefact sequences from that site. Only some of those analyses appeared in the PhD and in this monograph resulting from it, as the PhD was awarded in 2000 when excavations were still underway.

In 2000 Stuart took up the job of Regional Archaeologist for Auckland and Northland at the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. He was able to persuade the Trust to allow him a period of leave-without-pay each year to pursue his Vanuatu researches. Apart from jointly-directing the continuing Mangasi-Arapus excavations, he also developed and gained funding from the Sasakawa Pacific Island Nations Fund and other sources for a project on the Small Islands off NE Malakula which has produced spectacular results in terms of finding Lapita settlements — of which he had found only a hint in his PhD research in NW Malakula — on several of the islands investigated, and in the recovery of painted Lapita vessels. He has subsequently extended his Malakula research to the Maskelyne Islands to the SE of Malakula.

Early in 2004 Stuart was involved in the location of a major Lapita site at Teouma on the island of Efate, just outside the capital Port Vila by staff of the Vanuatu National Museum. The Museum asked Stuart and I to secure funding for a salvage excavation of the site, which had been impacted by quarrying activities. We were able to secure funding from the Pacific Biological Foundation and again Stuart’s legendary ‘finder’s luck’ has come into play with the excavation of what has turned out to be the oldest cemetery site yet found in the Pacific.

Also in 2004 Stuart and I put together an ARC application for a comprehensive program of research in Northern Vanuatu to investigate inter-island and inter-archipelago relations during prehistory. This was successful and has allowed Stuart to return to the ANU early in 2005 as an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow and to complete turning his PhD into a *Terra Australis* Series monograph.

Given current time and financial restrictions on PhD students a project of the scope of Stuart’s PhD would no longer be contemplated today. But in the aftermath of the lifting of the research ban in Vanuatu there just seemed so much to learn about the archipelago’s prehistory and a feeling of the need to ‘catch up’ with the kind of research coverage and results starting to be produced from other parts of Island Melanesia and New Guinea. A comparison of cultural sequences from North, South and Central Vanuatu was a tall order, given that before Stuart began the only reasonably detailed sequence we had was from the Centre through José Garanger’s work, and basically there were no cultural sequences from the North or South. Stuart, however, seemed completely unfazed by all this, and as you can read in this *Terra Australis* he came through with the goods famously.

Much, of course, remains to be done, particularly with the poorly-understood middle period of Malakula’s history, but a firm foundation has been laid in this monograph for all future work on the archaeological investigation of Vanuatu’s cultural history. I have greatly enjoyed collaborating with Stuart in our various joint Vanuatu projects and in hearing about his own projects. These projects have always been greatly enhanced by our long-standing collaboration with the staff and *filwokas* of the Vanuatu National Museum, prominent among whom at various times should be mentioned the Director Ralph Regenvanu, Jacob Kapere, Marthe Yamsiu, Willie Damelip, Richard Shing, Jennifer Toa, Marcelin Abong, Sero Kauatonga, Jimmy Kauatonga, Douglas Meto, Jimmy Sanhanbath, Numa Fred, Silas Alben, Philip Tepahae, and ‘the pugilist’ Jerry Taki.

Matthew Spriggs
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