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Why did people in the highlands of New Guinea move from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle and subsistence pattern, and develop a subsistence pattern centered on root and tree crop agriculture? How did the ancient residents of the highlands actually move around the landscape in the late Pleistocene, and how did that change though the Holocene? The research presented in this dissertation addresses these questions through and analysis of intensity of reduction of stone tools, paleoclimate reconstructions, and statistical analyses of regional radiocarbon dates. Competing models of processes driving change are compared against the accumulated evidence, with precipitation and other climate phenomena determined to be the mechanism with the strongest effect driving changes in site use, subsistence, and related technology.