

Boomerangs Shape Stone Tools in Ancient Queensland: Experimental Archaeology and Traditional Knowledge Reveal a New Function of the Most Iconic Indigenous Tool

Eva F. Martellotta¹ and Paul Craft^{2,3}

Abstract

Without a doubt, boomerangs are one of the Sunshine State's symbols. But forget everything you know about their 'returning effect'. Whereas returning boomerangs were only used for games and learning purposes, non-returning boomerangs were complex, multifunctional tools. They played a crucial role in Indigenous communities' daily lives in Queensland and other parts of Australia. In our work, we put together Traditional knowledge and experimental archaeology to investigate a forgotten use of boomerangs: modifying the edges of stone tools. This activity is fundamental to producing a variety of stone implements, each of them with a specific function. In our study, experimental replicas of boomerangs proved very functional to shape stone tools. Our results are the first scientific proof of the multipurpose nature of these iconic objects.

Keywords: Australian archaeology, wooden tools, hardwood boomerangs, multipurpose

¹ *Australian Research Centre for Human Evolution, School of Environment and Science, Griffith University, Nathan, QLD 4111, Australia (eva.martellotta@griffithuni.edu.au)*

² *Birrunburra/Bundjalung/Yugambah/Yuggera & Turrbal Aboriginal Nations, Australia*

³ *Burrugin Aboriginal Cultural Services, Burleigh Heads, QLD 4220, Australia (paulcrafty@hotmail.com)*

Martellotta, E. F., & Craft, P. (2022). Boomerangs shape stone tools in ancient Queensland: Experimental archaeology and Traditional knowledge reveal a new function of the most iconic Indigenous tool. *Proceedings of The Royal Society of Queensland*, 131, 151. <https://doi.org/10.53060/prsq.2022-12>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Licence. Individual articles may be copied or downloaded for private, scholarly and not-for-profit use. Quotations may be extracted provided that the author and The Royal Society of Queensland are acknowledged. Queries regarding republication of papers, or parts of papers such as figures and photographs, should be addressed to the Secretary of The Royal Society of Queensland (rsocqld@gmail.com).