

SSHL encouragement fund for young researchers report

The SSLH encouragement fund for young researchers supported my attendance at the IAL-IPA joint meeting in Bariloche, Argentina from 27 November to 1 December 2022. The IAL-IPA (International Association of Limnogeology and International Paleolimnology Association) joint meeting is one of the most important conference of my field of research. Here I presented the latest findings from my PhD studies with an oral presentation titled “Molecular traces of human arrival in Remote Oceania” to the session “Human Traces in the aquatic sedimentary record”. On the first day, I could share the results of a long peat core dating back ~5000 years that we retrieved from the island of Efate, Vanuatu. For the fifteen minutes long presentation, I focused on the molecular markers found in the core such as fecal molecules and palmitone (a specific biomarker for the crop taro), which are an indication of human presence. I coupled these with proxies indicating hydroclimatic changes, such as the hydrogen isotopic composition of leaf waxes and changes in titanium. Thanks to a high-resolution radiocarbon dating of the sediment core, I could show how human associated markers are most abundant during period of archaeological known early human occupation and how these co-vary with period of hydroclimatic changes (from dry to wet). The presentation was followed by a questions and answers part, which gave me the opportunity to expand the discussion on the chronology of the sediment core. Through the feedbacks and comments from the broad audience, I could get experts’ insights that can only be shared during such invaluable in person meetings. During the many sessions I attended, I could update my knowledge on technical advances in my field of expertise while coffee breaks and social events were nice occasions to strengthen my international network and set the ground for future collaborations. As the culmination of the conference week, I was honoured to be awarded with the best presentation prize. I am grateful to the SSLH for the possibility to participate to such a pivotal event in my career.

