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# SAFEGUARDING INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURE IN VANUATU



# SAFEGUARDING INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURE IN VANUATU



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Project implemented by:

**The Vanuatu National Cultural Centre and Museum**

**Wendy Christie: Architect and Cultural Heritage Consultant**

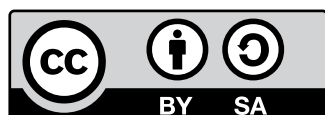
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# Executive Summary

Nakamals play a significant role in the maintenance of kastom in Vanuatu, as well as having an important functional role in Disaster Risk Reduction in rural areas.

Without better protection and recognition, the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the nakamal is at risk of being lost due to:

- the proliferation of imported building materials and construction techniques;
- a lack of heritage recognition;
- the decimation of traditional building materials by Tropical Cyclone Pam;
- the inability to grow new plantations due to the El Nino induced drought;
- the resulting shortage of local building materials required to renovate or reconstruct them;
- the resulting inability for building and renovation skills to be passed onto the next generation;
- the very real potential that other cyclones might cross the region over the coming cyclone season, potentially causing further damage to the structures and impacting on the ability of the communities to repair them; and,
- a lack of funding for communities to provide immediate protection to the existing damaged buildings.

Without the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the nakamal, there is no tangible building, as the built form is dependent on the knowledge and skills retained within the communities. The loss of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the nakamal will inevitably lead to its extinction, which would be a devastating loss for Vanuatu.

Without the nakamal there is no place to house kastom; without kastom there is no place for the nakamal.

This report highlights the urgent need of protection and recognition for the nakamal in Vanuatu.

# Preface

I take pleasure in presenting this publication on *nakamal*, an indigenous architecture form used by the traditional chiefs for meetings related to governance, decision making, and teaching in Vanuatu. The publication brings out the process and findings of a research on the condition of seven significant *nakamal* that were affected by Tropical Cyclone Pam in March 2015.

A category 5 cyclone, Pam caused widespread damage across the country composed of 83 islands, affecting more than half of its population of 270,000 persons speaking around 90 different languages. The role played by *nakamal* during the cyclone as evacuation shelters were much talked about in the local community and media. This research was initiated as a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) to gather information on the *nakamal* per se and data on damage to tangible and intangible aspects of the *nakamal* to further determine recovery needs and inform the recovery plan.

This research included collection of data, assessment of structural and material damage, traditional building skills and knowledge and the role of *nakamal* in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and interpretation of the findings. The publication brings out invaluable testimonies of the village chiefs and community members that stress the importance of *nakamal* as a shelter, their cultural meanings, and social functions that revolves around wellbeing of community.

The publication recommends safeguarding the *nakamal* through measures, including, natural resource management, retention and transmission of building know-how, and legal protection. It also recommends the use the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and its international cooperation mechanisms to raise awareness of the significance of the *nakamal* in DRR and, importantly, their critical role in maintaining social cohesion. Yet another key recommendation is to safeguard the values, skills and practices associated with the *nakamal* which support community resilience.

This research, carried out under the auspices of the Vanuatu Culture Centre (VCC) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, by Ms Wendy Christie, an architect and an expert on cultural heritage and a group of field-workers, was financed by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund of UNESCO. On behalf of the UNESCO, I thank the VCC for the partnership and Ms Christie and the field-workers. UNESCO hopes that this research will motivate stakeholders to integrate protection of *nakamal* in DRR plans.

**NISHA**  
**Director and Representative to the Pacific States**  
**UNESCO Office for the Pacific States**



# Preface by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre

It gives me great pleasure to present 'Safeguarding Indigenous Architecture in Vanuatu', which illustrates the state of indigenous architecture in Vanuatu post-Tropical Cyclone Pam.

The main objective of this project has been to compile a set of best safeguarding practices that will encourage the revitalisation of building skills, in order to ensure the continuing existence of our traditional architecture.

In terms of sustainability, this project aims to encourage communities to repair or rebuild their *nakamals*, as well as to provide recommendations for further safeguarding mechanisms. It is expected to encourage and trigger a new wave of traditional building in the region.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and Museum and our partner agencies for the successful implementation of this project.

Retaining the skills and building knowledge related to the indigenous architecture of Vanuatu will contribute to the strengthening of our culture that will drive our young nation towards a brighter future.

The Preamble of the nation's Constitution already paves our way forward and as a Sovereign State we need to implement policy directives that are informed by thorough research.

Slowly the Republic of Vanuatu is emerging like a bird that will one day fly out of its nest with two parallel wings, balanced in the air and bound for its destination that is enshrined by the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu.

**Asal Lazare**  
**Director**  
**Vanuatu Cultural Centre and Museum**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Thank you to the many people who shared their stories and histories and allowed access to the nakamals for them to be a part of the community based inventories, in particular:**

Chief Seni Mau Tsirupe, President of the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs

Chief Donald Manamena of Taloa Village, Nguna Island

Chief Sani Pakoa of Euta Village, Tongoa Island

Respected elder Grandpa Charlie of Mangarisu Village, Tongoa Island

Chief Matu and Respected Elder Danny and Eric of Nikaura Village, Epi Island

Chief Esau of Moriu Village, Epi Island

Daniel Epsi of Ipota Village, Erromango

### **Thank you also to:**

Ms. Akatsuki Takahashi, from UNESCO, for encouraging and enabling the project.

Professor Phil Harris (Troppo Architects), Associate Professor Veronica Soebarto and the Master of Architecture students who attended the University of Adelaide's *Overseas Experiential Studio: Vanuatu Study and Studio* (September 2015) and assisted with the inventorying of the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island. Particular thanks to Phil Harris, Nivedita Bhowmik, Vu Nguyen Le and David O'Brien, whose drawings/notes/photographs are included in this report. Also special thanks to Veronica Soebarto and Scott Murdoch for assisting with the delivery of the students work.

Chris Ballard and Meredith Wilson for their ongoing encouragement, support and advice.

Doug Christie, Mimi Christie and Huy Nguyen for editing assistance.

## PROJECT TEAM

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Brigitte Laboukly



Siri Seoule



## Consent

The fieldworkers gained verbal consent to undertake research/fieldwork on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage aspects of each nakamal. The guides in each village location provided this consent, which included the recording of oral histories and access to each nakamal, on the understanding that the information would be reproduced within this report. The purpose of inventorying the tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources is for the future safeguarding and protection of the nakamal. The Malvatumauri, the National Council of Chiefs in Vanuatu, has reviewed the final report and provided consent for it to be published.

## Image referencing

All of the images reproduced in this report are acknowledged back to the original sources within the references section. The authors have attempted to make contact with all of the owners of the images to gain permission for their reproduction. In some instances the owners could not be contacted. Should you be the owner of any image in this report and have concerns regarding its reproduction, please contact the publisher of the report directly.

## Note

1. The research for this report focused on the existing graphic and photographic documentation of the nakamals. A thorough literature review that considers all historical accounts should be conducted during the nomination process, should it transpire.
2. All direct translations and spelling of names and places are to be confirmed by the guides in the communities during the recommended post-report activities.
3. A more in-depth analysis of each nakamal would be useful, especially one that pays close attention to the meaning behind the structural and decorative elements. A more thorough spatial analysis of the structures and their surrounds would also be highly beneficial.
4. Across Vanuatu there are many different regional names for the nakamal, including farea and na-gamal. For the purposes of this report, the Bislama term nakamal, which is recognised throughout Vanuatu, has been used generally to represent the traditional meeting house of the Chiefs.

**“A Chief without a Nakamal,  
we consider him nothing”<sup>1</sup>**

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# INTRO- DUCTION

“When the cyclone came, our community was huddled inside the cyclone shelter, gripping onto the posts and praying. Inside the cyclone shelter it was very quiet, and when the cyclone went away we came out again. None of us were harmed.”<sup>2</sup>

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

This community based project inventories the pre- and post- cyclone condition of seven significant traditional nakamals (also commonly known as fareas) in Vanuatu that were recently damaged by Tropical Cyclone Pam, a Category 5 system that crossed the region on the 13th of March 2015. Before and after satellite images<sup>3</sup> illustrate a sobering view of the damage made to communities across Vanuatu. It is estimated that the cyclone damaged or destroyed 80 to 90 percent of all structures and buildings<sup>4</sup>.



Figure 1: Map of Vanuatu locating the nakamal project sites.

This report includes inventories of both the tangible and intangible aspects of each nakamal, as well as recommendations for the best safeguarding practices for them. The UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund generously provided funding for the project.

## THE INVENTORIED NAKAMALS

The project fieldwork was conducted in 7 different locations within Vanuatu where exceptional examples of the nakamal were recently subjected to damage from Tropical Cyclone Pam. These are as follows:

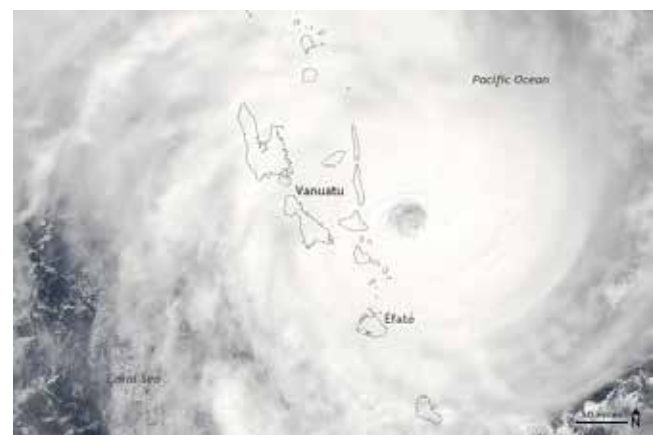


Figure 2: Satellite Image of Tropical Cyclone Pam crossing Vanuatu on March 13, 2015.



Figure 3: Historical image from 1875 showing one of the earliest representations of the nakamal in Vanuatu.





**Figure 4:** The Chiefs' Nakamal in Port Vila post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 5:** The Taloa Farea on Nguna Island post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.

1. Chiefs' Nakamal: Port Vila, Efate
2. Taloa Farea: Nguna Island
3. Euta Nakamal: Tongoa Island
4. Mangarisu Nakamal: Tongoa Island
5. Nikaura Nakamal: Epi Island
6. Moriu Nakamal: Epi Island
7. Erromango Nakamal: Happy Land, Erromango

## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the project was to compile a set of best safeguarding practices that would encourage the revitalisation of building skills related to the indigenous architecture in the region, in order to ensure the continuing existence of these structures and the practices related to using and building them.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The following activities were conducted as part of this project:

### Activity 1: Preliminary research

Preliminary research established the existing documentation of each nakamal. Where existing documentation was found, it provided insight into

the history and condition of the structures prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam. As part of this activity, Vanuatu Cultural Centre researchers searched the National Library databases, local provincial council office archives as well as the Internet.

### Activity 2: Structural and material damage assessment

An assessment of each nakamal was conducted to establish its current structural/material condition, including any damage that was caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam. Fieldworkers visited each project location and inventoried the condition of each nakamal through photography and detailed drawings. They also interviewed people intimate with the knowledge related to the nakamals in each village.

### Activity 3: Intangible Cultural Heritage damage assessment

An assessment was made of the risk of loss of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of each nakamal. Fieldworkers conducted interviews in each project location to record the Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects related to them. This included recording stories relating to the knowledge and skills retained within each community that are required to build and renovate the nakamals.

### Activity 4: Indigenous architecture and Disaster Risk Reduction

Several of the interviews focused on the role that the nakamals played during Tropical Cyclone Pam, in particular in regards to their capacity to be used as evacuation centres. An assessment based on each structure's role in Disaster Risk Management was then made.

### Activity 5: Interpretation of the findings

The damage caused to each nakamal was assessed by comparing images taken pre- and post- Tropical Cyclone Pam. Through the interpretation of the notes and audio recordings of the interviews, the potential risk of loss of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of each nakamal was assessed, as well as the role that each structure plays in Disaster Risk Reduction for its community. A draft report was completed and sent out for comment to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and UNESCO in March 2016.



Figure 6: The Euta Nakamal of Tongoa Island post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



Figure 8: The Nikaura Nakamal on Epi Island post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



Figure 7: The Mangarisu Nakamal on Tongoa Island post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.

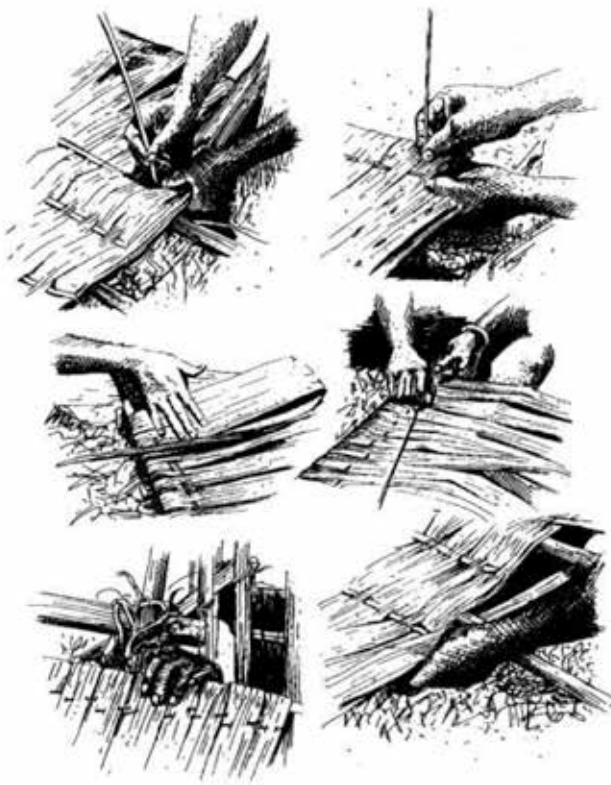


Figure 9: The Moriu Nakamal on Epi Island post- Tropical Cyclone Pam



**Figure 10:** The Erromango Nakamal at Happy Land, Erromango post-Tropical Cyclone Pam.

Stages in the construction of the roofing of a traditional house



**Figure 11:** Drawing by C. Coiffier showing the stages in the construction of the roofing of a traditional thatched house, which is typically an activity undertaken by women during the construction process.

## Activity 6: Final report

This final report listing the best safeguarding measures for each of the seven nakamals was then compiled.

## Recommended post-report activities

1. Translate the final report into Bislama to ensure that it is accessible to a wide audience located in rural and remote areas of Vanuatu. If this is not possible, ensure that the executive summary and the recommended best safeguarding measures are translated into Bislama and distributed back to the communities.
2. Printed and bound copies of the final report should be distributed as widely as possible.
3. Archive the final report in the National Library so that it can be made publicly available.
4. Publish the report on the Internet for wider circulation.
5. Members of the project team will need to return to the seven project sites with the final report and associated visual aids to communicate the best safeguarding measures back to the communities. This will be an extremely important step of the project to ensure that the information gathered during the project is returned to the people who are best positioned to safeguard the nakamals for the future. This activity is expected to take the form of a community meeting in each village using visual aids such as posters that highlight the main safeguarding principles.
6. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre should endeavour to source funding for these activities accordingly.

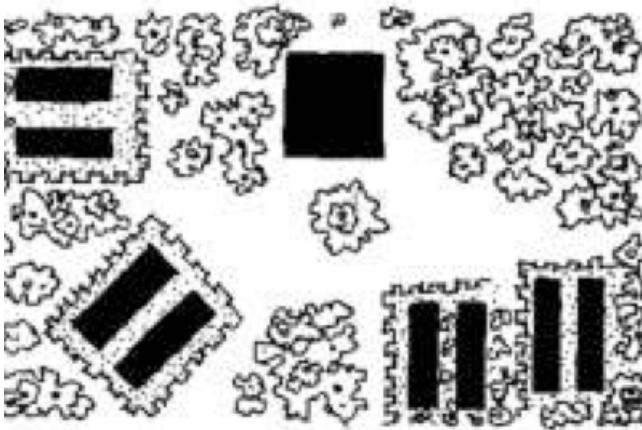


## NAKAMALS: A BRIEF BACKGROUND

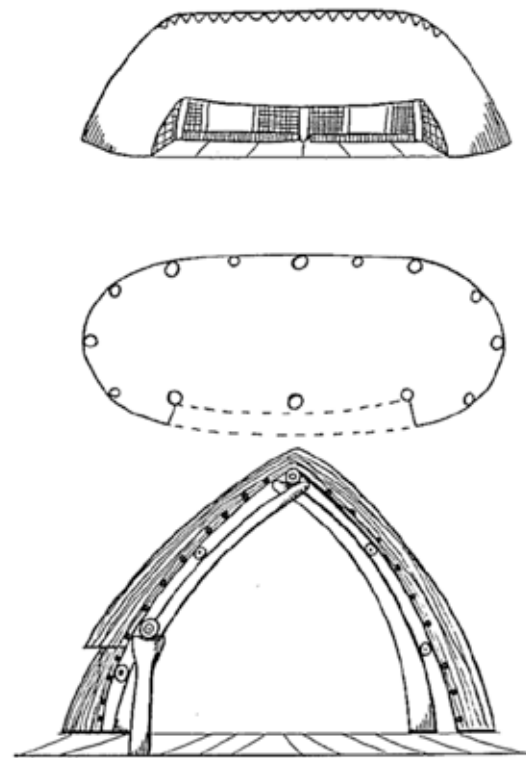
### Traditional meeting places

Nakamals are traditional meeting places for Chiefs in Vanuatu and play a significant role in kastom (custom/culture) in Vanuatu. The nakamal traditionally accommodates the functions for kastom governance, kastom court and other kastom ceremonies.

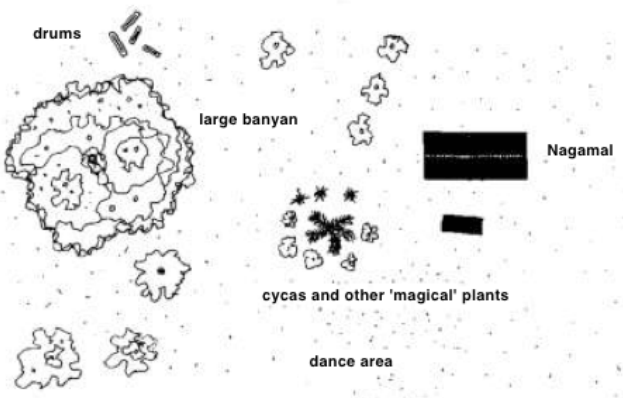
*“The nakamal corresponds to a small hamlet of about thirty to forty people living in a clearly defined area. In the true sense of the word the nakamal merely means ‘the house of men’ and is a fairly long building whose different compartments symbolize the main divisions in rank or status. Its size and the beauty of its ornamentation reflect the political importance of the group or, more exactly, the prestige and the extent of the powers of its main chief.”<sup>5</sup>*



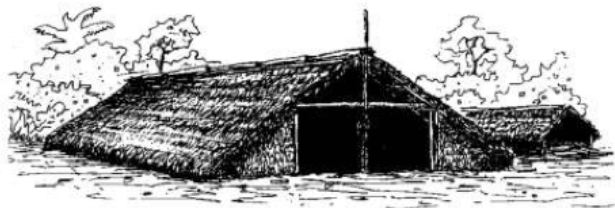
**Figure 12:** Drawing by F. Speiser in 1923 of a village on Ambae. The centrally located large square plan shape is the men's house, or nakamal, in this village cluster.



**Figure 14:** Drawings by B. Hebert in 1966, of a 'Na-Suma', a traditional house in Vanuatu. Note the similarity in form to the nakamals/fareas on Nguna, Epi and Tongoa Islands inventoried in this report.



**Figure 13:** Drawing by C. Coiffier in 1982 showing the ceremonial areas outside a nakamal in a village on Santo.



**Figure 15:** Drawing by C. Coiffier of a men's house in south-east Santo.



**Figure 16:** Drawing by F. Speiser of a men's house on Ambrym, illustrating the location of the tam tam nearby the entry.

In recent times, particularly in urban areas, the word *nakamal* has come to also represent the kava bar, which is a place where kava is sold and consumed;<sup>6</sup> however, the word *nakamal* in this report refers to the traditional meaning.

### Current use of *nakamals*

While typically in the past *nakamals* enclosed a space that was exclusively used by men, in recent years they have opened up to allow and children inside. Today they play a multipurpose function accommodating the traditional activities related to *kastom* governance as well as providing the space for broader community activities. *Nakamals* provide the space for *kastom* ceremonies such as weddings, bride price and funerals, and also host events such as workshops and educational forums.

### Built description

The *nakamal* is usually the most significant building in a village, as determined by its size and location.<sup>7</sup> They are usually constructed from local building materials using traditional construction techniques; however, it is not uncommon now to find that some communities have adopted the use of imported building materials such as concrete or nails. Each region in Vanuatu has its own vernacular building style, as exemplified in the case studies in this report. Typically,

*nakamals* are constructed with 'bush' (sourced from local forests or plantations) structural members, thatched with woven *natangura* (sago palm) leaves or wild cane and tied together with fibrous ropes.

### Decoration and symbolic objects

Some *nakamals* incorporate decoration in the form of wood carved elements or hanging objects. It is quite common to find a *tam tam* (slit drum), bell, cycad and *kastom* stones located near the entrance. These elements all embody specific cultural meaning to the owners of the *nakamals*.

### Site planning

The *nakamal* is typically located central to the village and one would expect to find the Chief's house positioned nearby.<sup>8</sup> Located near the entrance there would usually be a *nasara*, which is a flat open space that is used for dancing and ceremonies, as well as a large sheltering tree such as a Banyan or Casuarina. In some places the tree serves as the *nakamal* itself.<sup>9</sup>

### Intangible Cultural Heritage of *Nakamals*

The knowledge and skills required to build the *nakamal* are based on centuries old knowledge passed down from generation to generation. These include the knowledge required to

procure building materials and building skills. The Intangible Cultural Heritage of each nakamal also relates to the activities performed in and around it, as well as to the stories and songs associated with both its use and construction.

### Life span

While a nakamal in a particular location might be several centuries old, the actual built fabric is ephemeral. Over time it would have been renovated or replaced by new materials many times. Communities generally have renovation schedules to replace thatching materials, and at a time when the structure is judged unsuitable, the entire nakamal would be rebuilt. New

nakamals also exist in Vanuatu, where they are built according to kastom.

### Maintenance

Nakamals require ongoing maintenance, particularly to the roof and wall thatching that has a limited life span. In some instances kastom techniques are used to prolong the life of materials, including the lighting of fires inside the nakamal to deter infestations of termites or borers or the soaking of timber structural members in the sea prior to construction.



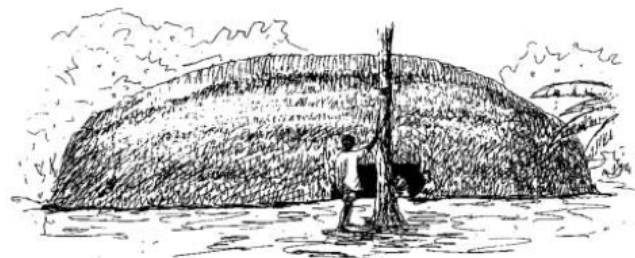
**Figure 17:** Drawing by B. Herbert in 1965 of a 'hurricane shelter' at Mara, Emae. Note the similarity of the main entry opening to the one on the Taloa Farea.



**Figure 19:** Drawing by C. Coiffier of the interior of a 'hurricane shelter' near White Sands, Tanna.



**Figure 18:** Front entry of the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island, post-Tropical Cyclone Pam. Despite some damage made to the natangura thatch, the farea remains in reasonable condition.



**Figure 20:** Drawing by C. Coiffier of a 'hurricane shelter' at Ifira, Fila Island. Note the similar form to the Taloa Farea.





**Figure 21:** Side view of the Taloa Farea, Nguna Island, in October 2015. This is the last example of a farea built in the Efate region vernacular.



**Figure 22:** Roof connection detail on the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island, post-Tropical Cyclone Pam. The plaited pandanus rope connections remained intact despite the category 5 winds.

### Community building process and kastom ceremonies

Each nakamal is typically built according to the rules of kastom, where kastom ceremonies are performed before, during and after the building process. It is interesting to note that several of the nakamals inventoried in this report have special songs related to their construction, and specifically to the hauling of timber back to the building sites. Typically men build the primary structure and women weave the thatched roof and walls.

### TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND TOURISM

In the last few years the important role traditional architecture plays in the tourism industry has been both recognised and promoted.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Australian Government-funded Vanuatu

Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (TVET Program) has encouraged local tourism accommodation businesses to incorporate traditional materials into their bungalow designs as an alternative to the unappealing concrete box.<sup>11</sup> This is based on the understanding that tourists to Vanuatu come for a unique island experience that includes local architecture.<sup>12</sup>

*“We were amazed to see that foreign investors were using more local materials than the Ni-Vanuatu! I think we have fooled ourselves by trying to use modern construction materials as (we) now realise there was not one piece of cement or one calico on a table, only wood everywhere.”<sup>13</sup>*

Traditional architecture plays an important role in tourism in Vanuatu, which makes up approximately 40% of Gross Domestic Product and employs about one third of those in formal employment.<sup>14</sup> The collaborative Department of Tourism Vanuatu/TVET Program “Build Local Build Strong”, has continued to encourage participants to build from local materials post-Tropical Cyclone Pam.<sup>15</sup>

*“It is encouraging to see that the training encourages participants to use materials from their surrounding environment as it offers visitors a unique experience.”<sup>16</sup>*

### ROLE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND THE NAKAMAL IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

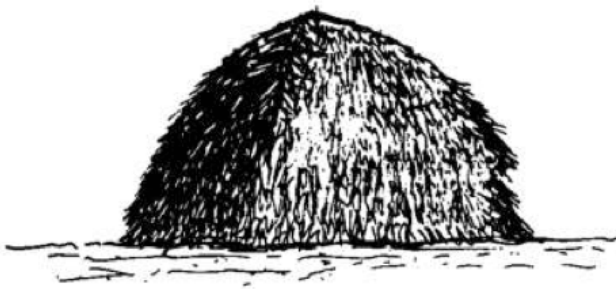
*“The performance of nakamals (community buildings built using traditional material and techniques) during Tropical Cyclone Pam demonstrates why traditional knowledge remains relevant and must be preserved as part of living heritage and culture.”<sup>17</sup>*

Nakamals are anecdotally known to have been designed to withstand high winds and cyclonic conditions and are historically often described as hurricane shelters.<sup>18</sup> Several of the nakamals inventoried in this report played an important role in Disaster Risk Reduction to the communities in which they are located.

After the cyclone stories emerged from the islands about people sheltering in the traditional buildings during the cyclone. A debate focusing on the role of vernacular architecture in Vanuatu emerged post- Tropical Cyclone Pam, with many advocating for the role of traditional buildings.<sup>19</sup>

***“What contributes to the low death toll is the fact that the materials are not so heavy... So you’re not dealing with masonry falling on people.”<sup>20</sup>***

In favour of indigenous architecture was the view that the palette of materials was potentially less damaging, particularly to people, due to the lightweight construction of the buildings. Also, the flexibility and ‘breathability’ of the traditional structures assisted in mitigating damage caused by high winds.



**Figure 23:** Drawing by C. Coiffier of the back view of a Chief’s house at Matarisu, North Efate. Note the similar form to the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island.



**Figure 25:** A house constructed from imported materials in Port Vila that was completely destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 24:** The back of the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island in October 2015, looking somewhat ruffled after Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 26:** A house constructed from traditional materials in Tanna that was completely destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Pam.





**Figure 27:** A house constructed from both traditional and imported materials that was completely destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Pam.

***“They’re lashed together rather than nailed together and that gives the building the ability to flex... The walls and roofing materials are somewhat porous so they don’t create these huge pressure differences that you see in modern structures.”<sup>21</sup>***

From reviewing the images of Vanuatu post-Tropical Cyclone Pam, the damage to buildings constructed from both imported and local materials seems somewhat indiscriminate; however, it is likely that the traditional buildings that incorporated a hybrid traditional/imported system were affected more than the exclusively traditional structures,<sup>22</sup> as shown in this report. This possibly represents a loss of Intangible Cultural Heritage where the knowledge and skills related to building a resilient kastom house able to withstand high winds has faded.

***“The cyclone damage highlighted the fact that construction of traditional nakamals has come to include western materials and techniques—which contributed to their collapse. Traditional building techniques are in use in some villages, but elsewhere they are being lost. The building of nakamals using traditional skills is a part of ni-Vanuatu culture that is under threat.”<sup>23</sup>***

Almost certainly the many houses built exclusively from imported materials that were destroyed were not built to an adequate cyclonic resistant standard, which would be in part due to the lack of building control in Vanuatu. While the Republic of Vanuatu Building Act of 2013<sup>24</sup> was passed in 2014 and there exists a *National Building Code for Vanuatu*, as well as its companion, the *Home Building Manual*, both which were written in 1990,<sup>25</sup> it is not a requirement for buildings in Vanuatu to be built to any specified standard.

The quick adoption of imported materials has led to a proliferation of poorly made buildings by people not adequately trained in how to construct them. Compare this to the intergenerational knowledge related to building kastom houses that is based on centuries old expertise. This knowledge is now being lost in part due to the uptake of building with imported materials, the hybridisation of buildings construction types and the subsequent loss of kastom knowledge required to build from local materials.

***“Until Pam, local people had been preferring concrete, iron roofs, and nails because they are so easy to use. The vines used for traditional cyclone shelters take time to prepare. They need to be harvested from deep in the forest, heated close to the fire for several hours, then left in the ocean overnight for several days before they can be used. With nails it’s ‘bang’, and finished just like that. But then again, the corrugated iron roofs nailed on just flew off in the wind.”<sup>26</sup>***

This discussion is similar to the one that occurred in Samoa post- Tropical Cyclone Evan, where the precedent of the traditional Samoan Fale structure was placed central to the role of ‘Building Back Better’ through the housing reconstruction programme supported by the UN Development Programme.<sup>27</sup>

***“The Samoan architects were doing it right; using lashed arches and steep, pitched roofs which were much stronger in cyclones.”<sup>28</sup>***

While an abundance of anecdotal and historical evidence exists in support of the use of nakamals as evacuation centres during cyclonic conditions, there exists no structural analysis that confirms their capacity to perform under high winds. Such an analysis would be worthwhile and is likely to support the anecdotal and historical evidence.

***“The performance of nakamals during Cyclone Pam proves the value of traditional knowledge and its need to be preserved as part of living heritage and culture.”<sup>29</sup>***

There is certainly a place in Vanuatu for both traditional and imported construction types, including a hybrid model that utilises the best combination of both systems; however, the uptake of constructing with imported materials poses a risk to the Intangible Cultural Heritage of kastom building, which once gone will be very difficult to revive.

***“To build a strong family you need a strong house and that (sic) a strong house does not need to be built from bricks and corrugated iron roofing material.”<sup>30</sup>***

An ideal situation would be a new set of building guidelines for dwellings in Vanuatu that both improves the level of buildings constructed from imported materials, while at the same time encourages the continuation of the kastom building tradition.<sup>31</sup> This will be particularly important to those people living in rural and remote areas that might not have access or the means to purchase imported materials, and whose shelter requirements depend on locally sourced building materials.

***“We wanted to show that a combination of the traditional techniques with modern building techniques correctly applied creates an extremely durable structure... It would be very difficult to pull this structure off the ground!”<sup>32</sup>***

Post- Tropical Cyclone Pam, there has been an influx of pre-fabricated buildings to Vanuatu.<sup>33</sup> While they certainly have a significant role to play in post- disaster situations, pre-made dwellings potentially create implications related to a loss of building knowledge, self-reliance, identity and social connection.<sup>34</sup> Certainly a pre-fabricated primary base structure that supports the inclusion of local secondary materials would allow for local building traditions to continue and communities to self determine the environments in which they live. A discussion in Fiji post- Tropical Cyclone Winston about the role of the prefabricated house has also recently emerged.<sup>35</sup>

It is reassuring to see that several organisations working in the area of shelter reconstruction, as coordinated by the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster,<sup>36</sup> have advocated for the role of traditional architecture in their shelter programs.<sup>37</sup>

## INTRODUCTION FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figure 2:** NASA Image from: National Atmosphere and Oceanic Administration. March 25, 2015. "Twin tropical cyclone in western Pacific."

**Figure 3:** Image from: Messer, Adam Brunton. 1875. "Rongavai or club house of a cannibal island, New Hebrides." The library description reads: "A clearing in a forest, looking towards a large thatched open-sided house, adorned with skulls and totems. Several people seated below the roof on the left and three men in a group in the foreground on the right."

**Figure 4:** Photography: Wendy Christie, October 2014.

**Figure 5:** Photography: Wendy Christie, September 2015.

**Figures 6-9:** Photography: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

**Figure 10:** Image from: Stars End 2. June 19, 2015. "I Survived the Trek to Happy Land."

**Figure 11:** Image from: Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*, Appendix C: P 159.

**Figure 12:** Image from: Speiser, Felix. 1923. "Ethnographische materialen aus den Neuen Hebriden und den Bank-Inseln," Berlin, C.W Kreidel in Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*: P 29.

**Figure 13:** Image from: Coiffier, Christian. 1982. "Un inventaire de l'habitat vernaculaire des îles melanesiennes, l'archipel du Vanuatu," in *Architecture Melanesienne*, Paris, Ecole d'architecture de Paris-la-Villette: P 170, in Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*: P 40.

**Figure 14:** Image from: Hebert, B. 1965. "Note sur les cases traditionnelles d'habitation et de reunion des îles du centre sud," *Etudes Melanesian*: P11.

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**Figure 18:** Photography: Wendy Christie, October 2015.

**Figure 19:** Image from: Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*: P 146. Drawing by C. Coiffier from a photo.

**Figure 20:** Image from: Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*: P 136: Drawing by C. Coiffier over Image by Beattle 1980. *Vanuatu*: P 17.

**Figures 21-22:** Photography: Wendy Christie, October 2015.

**Figure 23:** Image from: Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*: P 140. Drawing by C. Coiffier from a photo.

**Figure 24:** Photography: Wendy Christie, October 2015.

**Figure 25:** Image from: Fredrickson, Terry. March 17, 2015. "Cyclone Pam survivors struggle to recover."

**Figure 26:** Image from: Radio New Zealand. March 18, 2016. "Officials visit cyclone-ravaged Tanna." Photo supplied by Jeremy Pinero.

**Figure 27:** Image from: Christie, Wendy and Laboukly, Brigitte. June 18, 2015. "Rebuilding a safer and stronger Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam". AAP Image. Photographer: Kris Paras.

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**26** Quotation: Daniel Ben, a resident of Tanna Island: Minowa, Tomoko. September 22, 2015. "Local knowledge saves lives in Vanuatu."

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**31** It is acknowledged that a mandated building code for Vanuatu would be beneficial; however, the regulation of such a code across Vanuatu would be compromised due to the dispersed nature of the archipelago and limited resources. An updated building code for Vanuatu might best be suited to buildings of a public or commercial nature, while dwellings could be informed by a set of guidelines that are accessible to all people across Vanuatu, which are published in Bislama and include a broad range of building and construction types.

**32** Guiomar Grande of Care International, an architect from Spain supporting the recovery and rehabilitation process in Tanna Island: Minowa, Tomoko. September 22, 2015. "Local knowledge saves lives in Vanuatu."

**33** For example see: Solomons, Mark. April 19, 2006, 'The Nev House,' and Stackelroth, Jarrod. December 8, 2015. "First service help in rebuilt Vanuatu Church." It is encouraging to read that the designers of the Nev House are interested in pursuing a model that

allows for the incorporation of local materials, as referred to in: Cheng, Linda. May 17, 2016. "Surfing design duo creates cyclone resistant shelters."

**34** Madigan, Damian. January 2012. "Prefabricated housing and the implications for personal connection."

**35** Fox, Liam. February 27, 2016. "Cyclone Winston: Village built by Australian man for Fiji's poor survives unscathed."

**36** Vanuatu Shelter Cluster, June 2015. "Tropical Cyclone Pam Response Lessons Learned."

**37** The author:

- Met with Andrew Peacock, Technical Coordinator for the Shelter Cluster in Vanuatu, at the National Disaster Management Office in Port Vila (July 28, 2015);
- Spoke via Skype with Bill Flinn, Senior Shelter Advisor at CARE International assisting with the Vanuatu shelter response (July 10, 2015); and,
- Spoke via Skype with Andrew Powell from Save the Children who was assisting with the Vanuatu shelter response (March 3, 2016).

All of these experts in the field of shelter reconstruction emphasised the important role of traditional architecture in their shelter responses to Tropical Cyclone Pam.

# CHIEFS' NAKAMAL

Port Vila, Efate

“If there is no nakamal in the community, this means that the Chiefs have no significance to that community... A Chief without a nakamal, we consider him nothing.”<sup>1</sup>

## NAME OF NAKAMAL

Chiefs' Nakamal

## LOCATION

### Address

Adjacent to Saralana Park and the Vanuatu National Cultural Centre and Museum, Port Vila, Efate, Shefa Province, Vanuatu.

### Significance of location

The location of the Chiefs' Nakamal is central to the political and cultural activities of Vanuatu's capital city Port Vila.

## HERITAGE LISTING/STATUS

Nil

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAKAMAL

The Chiefs' Nakamal is a highly significant building that accommodates Kastom Governance for the Republic of Vanuatu. The building is considered a 'national treasure' in Vanuatu, and is one of the most well-known and respected buildings in the country.



Figure 1: Map locating the Chiefs' Nakamal in the capital city of Port Vila on the island Efate.



Figure 3: Exterior view of the front and side of the Chiefs' Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.



Figure 2: Site plan illustrating the significant location of the Chiefs' Nakamal in Port Vila, which is in close proximity to the Parliament Building and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and Museum.



Figure 4: Exterior of the Chiefs' Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam. Note the colourful painted split bamboo thatching to the front gable end wall.



**Figure 5:** Picture showing use of the Chiefs' Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam as a conference venue for the *Kastom Governance Storian Workshop* in April 2011.



**Figure 6:** The rounded form of the back of the Chiefs' Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.

## EXISTING VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

Despite its prominence, there is very little existing graphic or illustrative documentation of the Chiefs' Nakamal. While there are a few articles about the nakamal on the Internet, most of these have been posted post- Tropical Cyclone Pam. A motion picture recording of its construction from 1990 is housed in the National Library of Vanuatu.<sup>2</sup>

## HISTORY OF THE CHIEFS' NAKAMAL BUILDING

Construction of the Chiefs' Nakamal began on April 26, 1990 and it was officially opened on July 25, 1990. Kastom ceremonies related to the construction process were held prior to and during the build. As nakamals are traditional places that are tabu (forbidden) to women and children, a special ceremony was held prior to the opening that included the killing of pigs and the erection of the statue outside the nakamal that made it acceptable for women and children to enter it.<sup>3</sup>

At the time the nakamal cost about Vt 10 Million to build; however, the people of Vanuatu donated much of the building materials.<sup>4</sup> A total of 6000 woven natangura lengths were used to thatch the roof, and the natangura was sourced

from over 10 different regions in Vanuatu. The primary structural members were sourced from the villages of Eton and Teoma on the island of Efate.<sup>5</sup>

The design of the nakamal is based on the vernacular architecture found in the Shepherd Islands, in particular on Tongoa. The architect/foreman responsible for its design and construction was Chief Abel Moses of Tongoa Island. He was assisted by two other primary builders, Chief John Mark from Maewo and Chief Jeffrey Sett from Malekula.<sup>6</sup>

By 1993 the natangura roof thatching had deteriorated to a point where it had to be replaced. After that, the natangura had not been replaced again up until the time when Tropical Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu in March 2015. In early 2014 the facilities related to the Chiefs' Nakamal were renovated, and the adjacent Six Province Kava and Food Bar was completely rebuilt.<sup>7</sup> The Chiefs' Nakamal is constructed predominantly from local materials and building traditions, which symbolise kastom and the traditional ni-Vanuatu way of living.<sup>8</sup>

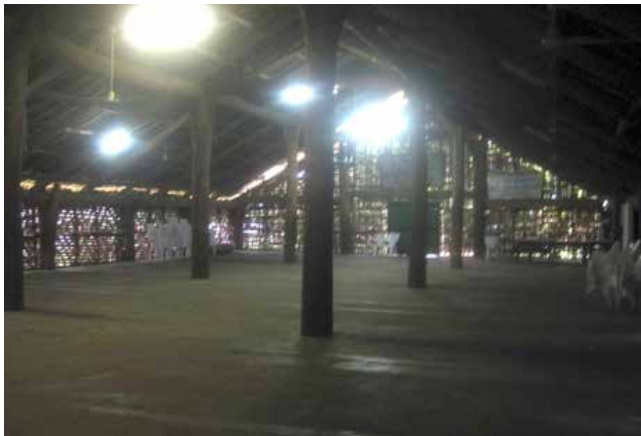


## BUILDING USAGE

The Chiefs' Nakamal is a multi-purpose building used by chiefs, the government and the broader community. In the past it has been used as a venue "...for national, regional and international events such as national and regional forums, policy conferences, socio, economic and political meetings, numerous Church denominational Services and Worship, Traditional and Customary marriages, State traditional funerals, resolving major national conflicts, the West Papua political reconciliation ceremony, the political reunification meeting, and an endless list of events over the past years (sic)".<sup>9</sup>

## The Malvatumauri

The Malvatumauri is the National Council of Chiefs in Vanuatu and is recognised by the Constitution of Vanuatu as a formal advisory body of chiefs. It plays a central role in advising the Government on matters related to kastom and language.<sup>10</sup> The Malvatumauri has also been involved in establishing structures for chiefly councils and procedures for registering chiefly title.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 7:** Chiefs' Nakamal interior prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam. Note how the space is illuminated by both the overhead electrical lights and by the natural sunlight filtering through the thatched walls.



**Figure 9:** Interior of the Chiefs' Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam. In this image the space has been set up with many plastic chairs in order to seat a large audience, illustrating one of the nakamal's many uses.



**Figure 8:** Chiefs' Nakamal interior prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam. View towards the front door.



**Figure 10:** Interior of the Chiefs' Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam. This picture was taken during a Customary Lands Tribunal, where the rules of kastom are applied as a means to determine land ownership.



**Figure 11:** The Malvatumauri office sign. The office is located just behind the Chiefs' Nakamal.

The council was established as a constitutional body and named in 1983. The council consists of 31 Kastom Chief members who are elected by their Island or Urban Council of Chiefs. The Malvatumauri represents twenty-two Island Council of Chiefs, as well as the two Urban Council of Chiefs in Luganville and Port Vila. The term for each elected President is four years and Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe is the seventh President of the Malvatumauri. The Malvatumauri meets annually, and also as required by Parliament to address urgent matters. The Chiefs' Nakamal is the kastom house for the Malvatumauri and the Malvatumauri Office is located just behind it.<sup>12</sup>

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE BUILDING

### Construction type

While significantly traditional in form and material use, the building is a hybrid construction of both traditional and imported building technologies. The traditional material palette includes hardwood 'bush' columns and roof/wall framing members, as well as woven split bamboo thatched wall cladding and natangura roof thatching. The imported building materials include the concrete floor, milled hardwood wall framing elements and electrical wiring/fixtures such as lights and fans.



**Figure 12:** The Six Provincial Kava and Food Bar prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam. The kava and food bar is located across the road from the Chiefs' Nakamal and plays an important role in the activities of the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs. It was recently destroyed by the cyclone.

### Plan form

The plan form of the building is a long rectangular shape with a semicircular shaped end bay. Its dimensions are approximately 37 metres long by 18 metres wide.

### Openings

The entrance to the nakamal, which is a large double door, is located centrally along the front gable end. Another more discrete opening is located along the side that relates to the Malvatumauri offices situated behind the nakamal. Other than this, the entire interior space is completely enclosed by wall thatching.

### Interior space

The interior of the nakamal is an open space interrupted only by a grid of large timber columns that support the roof. Prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam, the semicircular end bay was demarcated as private space by partition walls. This area seemed to be used as a storage area.

### Sectional form

The sectional form of the building sees a large roof rising steeply from the edge beams located along the perimeter line of columns. The roof configuration mirrors the column grid around



the semicircular end bay, creating a rounded roof form at the back of the nakamal. The Chiefs' Nakamal is considerably larger in both plan and sectional form than the other nakamals found in Vanuatu, which emphasises its significance as the nakamal dedicated to the Chiefs across Vanuatu.

### Material palette

The material palette consists of hardwood 'bush' timber, woven split bamboo, natangura thatch, fibrous rope and imported materials including concrete, milled timber, plywood sheeting and nails.

### Structural members

The building is predominantly constructed from primary and secondary hardwood timber structural members. Milled timber has been used as wall framing to the exterior walls. The primary structural members are large hardwood 'bush' posts/columns that form the structural grid to the nakamal. Heavy timbers supported in the forks of these posts create an edge beam that in turn supports a sequence of rafters that extend to a large ridge beam. A layering of smaller purlins/battens over the rafters supports the natangura roof thatching.



**Figure 13:** Eave detail of the Chiefs' Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 15:** Light is filtered into the interior of the Chiefs' Nakamal through the split-bamboo wall thatching, prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 14:** Pattern detail to the split-bamboo wall thatching prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 16:** The front gable of the Chiefs' Nakamal was significantly damaged during Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 17:** The damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam to the front eaves of the Chiefs' Nakamal.



**Figure 18:** The rounded eaves and walls at the back of the Chiefs' Nakamal were damaged during Tropical Cyclone Pam.

## Flooring

The floor is made from concrete that is level with the natural ground on one side, but higher at the other side. A ramp exists to enable access to the front entry of the nakamal, which is also made from concrete. The posts/columns are set into concrete footings.

## Walls

The perimeter walls are made from milled timber wall framing and clad with split bamboo thatching, which is woven prior to being fixed to the frame. There is no separate interior lining to the perimeter walls. The internal partition walls are lined with a plywood wall-sheeting product over milled timber framing.

## Roof

The roof cladding is made from natangura thatch, which is woven prior to being fixed to the hardwood battens. There are no separate interior ceiling linings.

## Connections

The structure is tied together using both traditional fibrous ropes and imported nails.

## Carved / decorative / symbolic elements

There are two carved tam tams (slit drums) within a garden bed located outside the front of the nakamal. There are also some significant stones laid on the ground near to the main entrance, and a large carved pig inside. A namele tree (cycad) planted near to the front entrance survived the cyclone. It was planted 100 days after death of the first president of the Malvatumauri, Chief Willie Bongmatur Maldo who passed away on June 11, 2009. The sign beside it explains that:

***“The Namele Tree is a kastom symbol of peace. It reminds us of our duty to always respect our traditions and kastom.”<sup>13</sup>***

## Furniture

There is no built-in furniture inside the large open space of the nakamal. Plastic chairs have been observed stacked along the side of the interior walls, or laid out in rows across the floor to accommodate large seated groups of people. There are also a few loose timber tables that can be moved around the space as required. Prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam, the space behind the partition walls was used as a storage space, where several other loose furniture items and equipment were stored.



## Site planning

The main entrance to the Chiefs' Nakamal directly faces the Parliament Building and the sea beyond. The entry opens out onto a large space facing Saralana Park and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. The Malvatumauri offices are located in very close proximity and to the rear. The Six Province Kava and Food Bar is sited just across the road. Typical to other nakamals in Vanuatu, directly outside the front entrance is a very large tree, two carved tam tams, the namele tree as well as some significant stones.



**Figure 19:** The damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam to the Chiefs' nakamal's roof thatching is particularly evident over the eaves.

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Intangible Cultural Heritage significance

The Chiefs' nakamal provides the venue for many activities that are related to the maintenance of kastom (culture) in Vanuatu, including traditional ceremonies and forums that promote the continuation of kastom practices in Vanuatu. The building itself is constructed predominantly from traditional materials and building knowledge unique to Vanuatu. The construction and ongoing maintenance of the building rely on kastom skills and knowledge for the continued existence of the building, including the transfer



**Figure 20:** The damaged roof and wall thatching at the front of the Chiefs' Nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 21:** Tropical Cyclone Pam stripped the front elevation of the Chiefs' Nakamal of its wall cladding and significantly damaged the natangura roof thatching.



**Figure 22:** The interior of the Chiefs' Nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam. A significant hole was torn in the roof over the centre of the nakamal.



**Figure 23:** While the main structure remained intact during Tropical Cyclone Pam, the secondary structural members and traditional cladding/roofing materials were damaged by the high winds.

of this knowledge to younger generations, while the kastom governance system relies on the building itself as a venue for kastom governance. The Chiefs' Nakamal is highly significant with regards to the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Vanuatu due to the fact that it is directly related to the maintenance of Kastom Governance in Vanuatu. It is also a significant example of a traditional building in Vanuatu.

### Caretakers of Kastom

Chapter 5 in the Vanuatu Constitution mandates a place for the Malvatumauri in society and outlines the required duties and roles of the chiefs, which include their responsibilities as the caretakers of kastom knowledge, in particular customs, culture and language.<sup>14</sup> They also play a significant role in Vanuatu by acting as peacekeepers, and by assisting authorities with domestic disputes and customary issues including land disputes.<sup>15</sup>

***“For the Malvatumauri, Kastom knowledge is considered just as, if not more, significant than the knowledge that can be gained through formal education. It doesn't matter what you have achieved at school as long as you have Kastom knowledge.”<sup>16</sup>***

### An essential meeting place

It is essential for the Malvatumauri to have a meeting place to bring together the representatives of the Council of Chiefs. The word nakamal itself means 'meeting place' and the nakamal is traditionally a place where people would come together to meet. While each Island Council of Chiefs has its own meeting places within its island localities, the Chiefs' Nakamal is the national meeting place for the Council of Chiefs of Vanuatu. Although some of these island meeting places might be actual buildings, others may be in less constructed environments such as under a banyan tree.

## TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM AND THE CHIEFS' NAKAMAL

### Use during Tropical Cyclone Pam

Unknown

### Damage sustained from Cyclone Pam

The built structure of the Chiefs' Nakamal was significantly damaged during the cyclone and rendered uninhabitable. Considerable damage was made to wall and roof thatching, as well as some secondary structural members. The gable wall ends were particularly damaged. A large hole in the roof was made over the central areas where roof thatching and roof battens/purlins were damaged.



## Interim maintenance and control measures

Interim maintenance and protection measures were evident in October 2015 in the form of a fence that prevented public access to the Chiefs' Nakamal. The interior had also been cleared of debris.

## Plans to reconstruct in 2015

Reconstruction was expected to commence on October 21, 2015 with the anticipation that the building work would be completed by March 5, 2016 so that it could be re-opened on Kastom Chiefs' Day 2016. Builders from across Vanuatu were expected to assist in the rebuilding process.<sup>17</sup>

Technical drawings prepared for the reconstruction illustrate a building that would be almost identical in form, with only minor alterations to the interior to accommodate internal office spaces, as well as changes to the side verandah forms. While the primary structure of the nakamal might be able to be reused, many secondary structural elements would need to be replaced, along with the roof and wall thatching; however, the extent of reuse/demolition is not clear in the drawings.



**Figure 24:** Image showing the hole made in the roof to the Chiefs' Nakamal by Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 26:** The Namele tree (cycad) outside the Chiefs' Nakamal remained in reasonably good condition after Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 25:** Column/post detail post- Tropical Cyclone Pam. While the structural members remained significantly in tact, the rope tie-down details show signs of damage.



**Figure 27:** The President of the Malvatumauri, Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe, pointing to the damaged Chiefs' Nakamal in May 2015.

## Ceremonies related to the reconstruction

Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe explained that prior to the work commencing, all of the 22 Council of Chiefs would be invited to come Port Vila to perform a kastom ceremony for the work to be initiated. The ceremony would include the sacrifice of 40 pigs. Half of the pigs would be killed prior to the demolition, and the other half would be killed to celebrate the starting of the new construction work.

***“We will be bringing in 40 pigs; 20 to be killed when the house is pulled down and another 20 (when) work starts.”<sup>18</sup>***

## Material sourcing for the reconstruction

As many materials as possible would be sourced from Efate for the reconstruction, but as Tropical Cyclone Pam destroyed many local resources, materials would also have to be sourced from islands further away. The focus would be to build using tradition, with local materials and knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

## Transition of kastom building skills to the next generation

The plan for the reconstruction was to utilise the knowledge of local ni-Vanuatu architects and to build with the assistance of young people. The Chiefs from around Efate were expected to bring their young people to Port Vila to assist with the reconstruction.<sup>20</sup>

## Involvement of women in the reconstruction process

Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe explained that women would be involved in the reconstruction process by weaving the natangura and the bamboo thatching. Once the natangura and bamboo was woven, the men would install the thatch on the roof and walls.<sup>21</sup>

## Commencement of reconstruction work in 2016

A news article from Vanuatu in December 2015 suggests that reconstruction of the Chiefs' nakamal was delayed. The President of the

Malvatumauri is quoted as saying, *“May I stress that my executive committee and I will be watching from the sideline with the keenest of interest to make sure that relevant custom requirements are followed...”<sup>22</sup>*

***“We depend on ourselves, our own powers and our own wisdom to make our homes. Our biggest fear is that this eye sore sight of a dilapidated nakamal whose roof has already caved it (sic), does not become another court house project in Vila and also in Santo which have not been built after the foundation stones were laid. This is our concern.”<sup>23</sup>***

According to a local media report reconstruction commenced and on Friday April 11, 2016 the initial act of demolition began when part of the bamboo wall was torn down.<sup>24</sup> A visit to the Chiefs' Nakamal in July 2016 by the author verified that the reconstruction was well under way.

At a subsequent visit in February 2017, the author noted that the reconstruction was nearly complete. The opening ceremony for the reconstructed nakamal was held on March 6, 2017, on National Chiefs' Day.<sup>25</sup>

## Reconstruction funding

Multiple organisations, groups and agencies are funding the reconstruction of the Chiefs' Nakamal, including UNESCO, the Chinese Embassy, the Vanuatu Government and other private sector groups. The original estimated cost of the reconstruction was about Vt 18 million (or approximately US \$162,000).<sup>26</sup> This cost would allow for the incorporation of imported cyclone resistant connections, as well as a fence around the entire compound.<sup>27</sup> More recent reports suggest that US \$260,000 (or approximately Vt 29 million) is available for the reconstruction.<sup>28</sup>

## Potential threat / damage to Intangible Cultural Heritage values

Without the Chiefs' Nakamal, there would be no place for Kastom Governance to be accommodated, thereby threatening the national

Kastom Governance system. For this reason the repairs of the Chiefs' Nakamal are critical. Fortunately funding for this work was prioritised post-Tropical Cyclone Pam and the reconstruction will hopefully be completed soon. The rebuild of the Chiefs' Nakamal provides the opportunity for younger generations of ni-Vanuatu to learn from master-builders how to repair and rebuild the nakamal according to kastom.

## NOTE

38. The fieldwork for the Chiefs' Nakamal was conducted between October 2015 – February 2017. The reconstruction of the nakamal commenced in April 2016 and was completed prior to March 6, 2017. Further analysis of the reconstruction process will be required to determine to what extent kastom building knowledge has been transferred on to the next generation of ni-Vanuatu builders.
39. The primary source for the above information was the President of the Malvatumauri, Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe speaking at the UNESCO conference, as referenced below.

## DATE OF FIELDWORK

October 2015 – February 2017.

## FIELDWORKERS

### Artist

Siri Seoule: Vanuatu Cultural Centre Illustrator.

### Photography

Wendy Christie, Architect and Cultural Heritage Consultant.





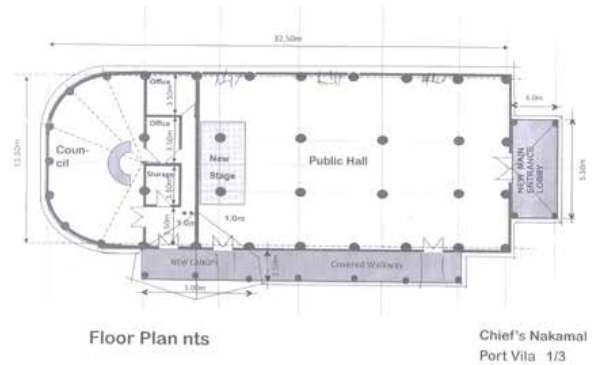
**Figure 28:** Chinese Ambassador to Vanuatu, Xie Bohua presents a cheque of Vt 1,050,000 to the President of the Malvatumauri, Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe, to assist with the reconstruction of the Chiefs' Nakama



**Figure 29:** The President of the Malvatumauri, Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe, outside the damaged Chiefs' Nakamal in December 2015.



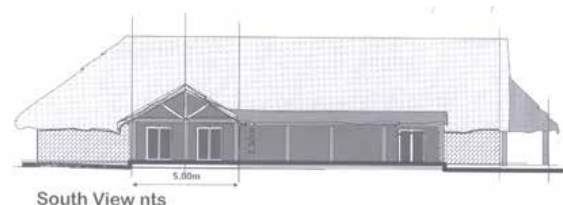
**Figure 30:** Kastom Ceremonies were held outside the Chiefs' Nakamal on March 5, 2016, which is Kastom Chiefs' Day in Vanuatu and a national public holiday.



Floor Plan nts

Chief's Nakamal Port Vila 1/3

**Figure 31:** Technical plan drawing prepared for the reconstruction of the Chiefs' Nakamal. The plan includes a new entrance lobby, covered walkway, stage and council offices.



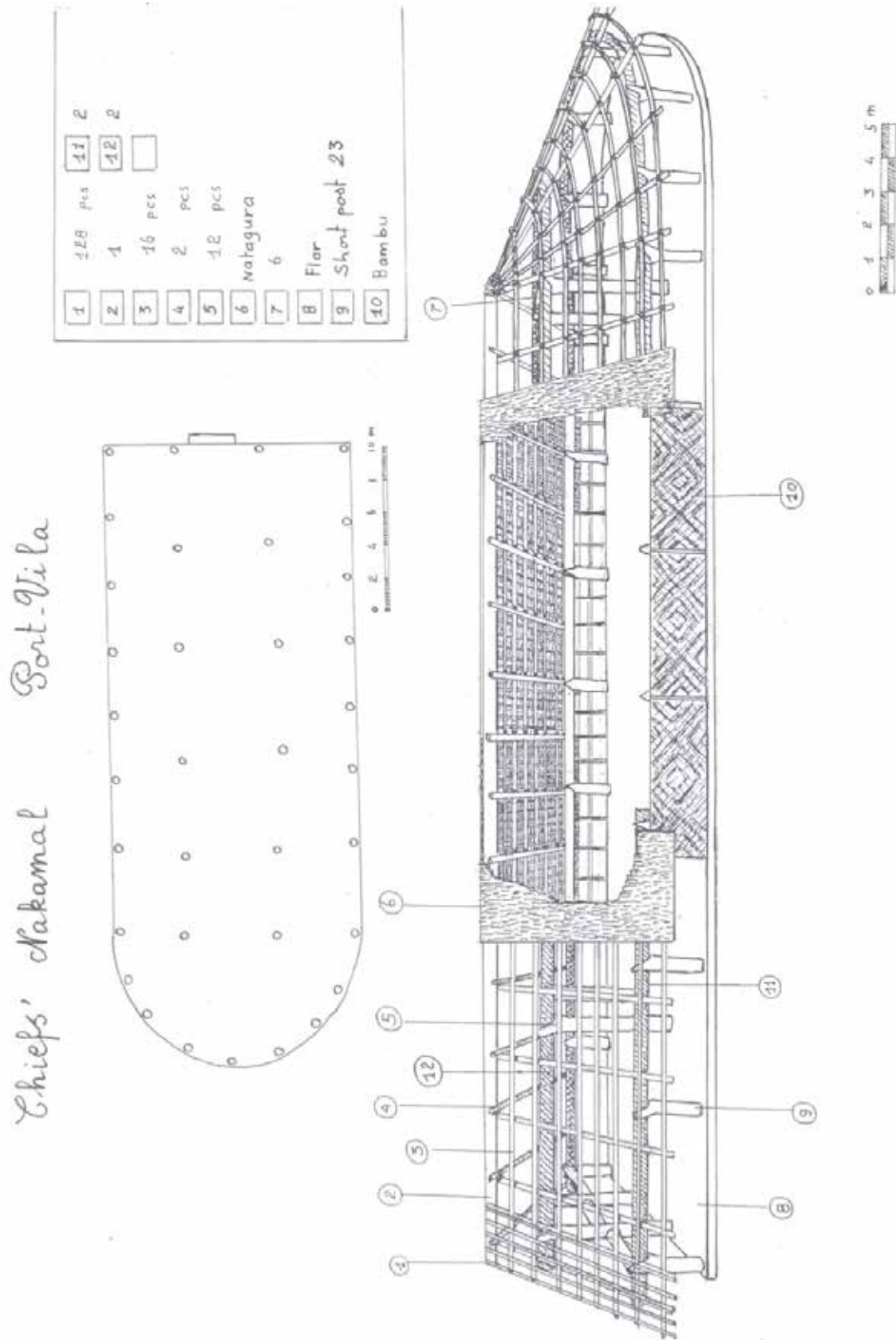
South View nts



East View nts

Chief's Nakamal Port Vila 2/3

**Figure 32:** Technical elevation drawings prepared for the reconstruction of the Chiefs' Nakamal. The elevations show the proposed new entrance lobby and covered walkway.



**Figure 33:** Perspective drawing illustrating the structural layout and the layering of materials used to form the Chiefs' Nakamal.





**Figure 34:** The Chiefs' Nakamal being reconstructed in July 2016.



**Figure 37:** Note the scaffolding system being used during the reconstruction.



**Figure 35:** The primary structural members are being reused in the rebuild.



**Figure 38:** The Chiefs' Nakamal being reconstructed in February 2017



**Figure 36:** Builders working on the reconstruction of the Chiefs' Nakamal in July 2016.



**Figure 39:** The renovated interior includes a large with the word "MALVATUMAURI" as well as carved columns.



**Figure 40:** The reconstructed interior utilises woven pandanus ceiling linings and bamboo infill walls.



**Figure 41:** Sections of the exterior of the Chiefs' Nakamal have been painted in bright colours.

## CHIEFS' NAKAMAL FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figure 2:** Map created by Wendy Christie using Google Earth Overlay.

**Figure 3:** Image from: World Bank Group, "Dealing with Land Disputes in Vanuatu."

**Figure 4:** Image from: Garae, Len. June 20, 2014. "Vanuatu national sustainable development plan 2016 – 2030."

**Figure 5:** Image from: University of Queensland, School of Political Science and International Studies. "Kastom Governance is for everyone, Activities and impacts of the Vanuatu Kastom Governance Partnership 2005 – 2012."

**Figures 6-8:** Photography: Wendy Christie, December 2013.

**Figure 9:** Image from: Bigel Blog. August 2003. "Chiefs nakamal inside."

**Figures 10-11:** Image from: World Bank Group, "Dealing with Land Disputes in Vanuatu."

**Figure 12:** Image from: Cullwick, Jonas. August 3, 2014. "New 6 – window nakamal opens."

**Figures 13-15:** Photography: Wendy Christie, December 2013.

**Figure 16:** Photography: Wendy Christie, October 2014.

**Figure 17:** Image from: UNESCO. October 2015. Pacific Training on Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage in Small Island Developing States.

**Figures 18-26:** Photography: Wendy Christie, October 2014.

**Figure 27:** Ligo, Godwin. May 13, 2015. "Government to Fund Repair on Chiefs Nakamal."

**Figure 28:** Ligo, Godwin. August 7, 2015. "China Donates over Vt 1 Million for Chiefs Nakamal Reconstruction."

**Figure 29:** Image from: Garae, Len. December 12, 2015. "Malvatumauri sad and disappointed."

**Figure 30:** Image from: Yumi Tok Tok Stret. March 5, 2016. "Sam Pikja long Jif Nakamal."

**Figures 31-32:** Technical drawings of the Chiefs' nakamal provided by the President of the Malvatumauri, Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe. The author of the drawings is not known.

**Figure 33:** Drawing by Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre Illustrator, November 2015.

**Figures 34-37:** Photography: Wendy Christie, July 2016.

**Figures 38-41:** Photography: Wendy Christie, February 2017.



## CHIEFS' NAKAMAL NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Quotation: The first President of Malvatumauri, Chief Willie Bongmatur. From: Kapere, J. (Director). 26 April, 1990. *Construction of Chief's Nakamal* in: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. October 27, 2015. "Preliminary report", *Safeguarding indigenous vernacular architecture and building knowledge in Vanuatu*. Translated by the authors of the preliminary report.
- 2 Kapere, J. (Director). 26 April, 1990. *Construction of Chief's Nakamal*.
- 3 There are several conflicting dates for the construction of the Chiefs' Nakamal. Many reports suggest that it was started in 1989, and it is likely that this relates to the initial planning of the Chiefs' Nakamal. The dates in this report were provided in: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. October 27, 2015. "Preliminary report", *Safeguarding indigenous vernacular architecture and building knowledge in Vanuatu*. The dates mentioned in the "Preliminary report" were obtained from Kapere, J. (Director). (26 April 1990). *Construction of Chief's Nakamal* [Motion Picture].
- 4 Ligo, Godwin. August 7, 2015. "China Donates over Vt 1 Million for Chiefs Nakamal Reconstruction."
- 5 Vanuatu Cultural Centre. October 27, 2015. "Preliminary report", *Safeguarding indigenous vernacular architecture and building knowledge in Vanuatu*. Information sourced from: Kapere, J. (Director). 26 April, 1990. *Construction of Chief's Nakamal*.
- 6 Vanuatu Cultural Centre. October 27, 2015. "Preliminary report", *Safeguarding indigenous vernacular architecture and building knowledge in Vanuatu*. Information sourced from: Kapere, J. (Director). 26 April, 1990. *Construction of Chief's Nakamal*.
- 7 Cullwick, Jonas. April 28, 2014. "Changes at Chiefs Nakamal."
- 8 Quotation: Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal".
- 9 Malvatumauri President, Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe quoted in: Ligo, Godwin. August 7, 2015. "China Donates over Vt 1 Million for Chiefs Nakamal Reconstruction."
- 10 Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia, *Malvatu – Mauri*.
- 11 Forsyth, Miranda. September 2009. "The Malvatumauri, Chapter 5: The relationship between the state and kastom systems," P 162.
- 12 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal."
- 13 The sign beside the namele tree (cycad) located near the entrance to the Chiefs' nakamal is written in Bislama. Translation provided by the author.
- 14 Government of Vanuatu, March 2014, *Budget narrative*: Page 33.
- 15 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal."
- 16 Quotation: Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal".
- 17 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal."
- 18 Roberts, Anita. October 17, 2015. "Reconstruction of the Chiefs' Nakamal begins this month."
- 19 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal."
- 20 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal."
- 21 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe (President of the Malvatumauri). October 14, 2015. "History and future plans for the Chiefs' Nakamal."
- 22 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe, President of the Malvatumauri quoted in: Garae, Len. December 12, 2015. "Malvatumauri sad and disappointed."
- 23 Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe, President of the Malvatumauri quoted in: Garae, Len. December 12, 2015. "Malvatumauri sad and disappointed."
- 24 Rnaranyan. April 13, 2016. "Vanuatus Malvatumauri nakamal being demolished."
- 25 bobmakin. March 9, 2017. "National Chiefs Day celebrated with opening of new Malvatumauri nakamal."
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- 27 Attributed to Malvatumauri President, Chief Seni Mao Tirsupe by: Ligo, Godwin. August 7, 2015. "China Donates over Vt 1 Million for Chiefs Nakamal Reconstruction."
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# TALOFA FAREA

Taloa Village, Nguna Island

“How does one know how to build the farea?  
Perhaps it is in the blood.”<sup>1</sup>

## NAME OF FAREA

Taloa Farea

## NAME OF GUIDE

Chief Donald Manamena (on behalf of the Paramount Chief) of Taloa, Nguna.

## LOCATION

### Address

Taloa Village, Nguna Island, Shefa Province, Vanuatu.

## Significance of location

The farea is located central to Taloa village, near the sea.

## HERITAGE LISTING / STATUS

Nil

*“How is that this farea doesn’t already have World Heritage status?”<sup>2</sup>*



Figure 1: Map locating the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island.



Figure 3: The form of the Taloa Farea from the back (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



Figure 2: The form of the Taloa Farea with the main entrance facing away from the sea (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

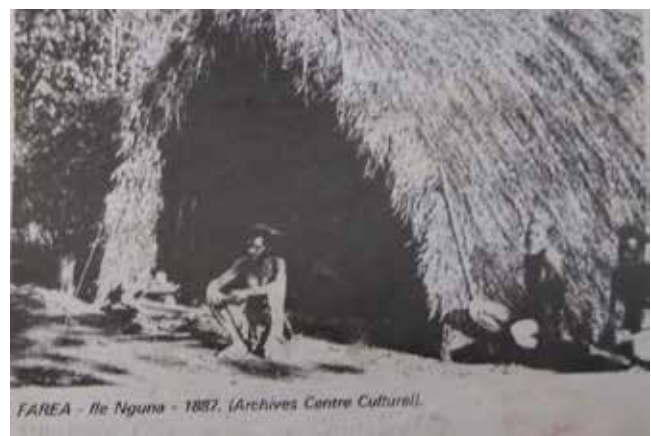
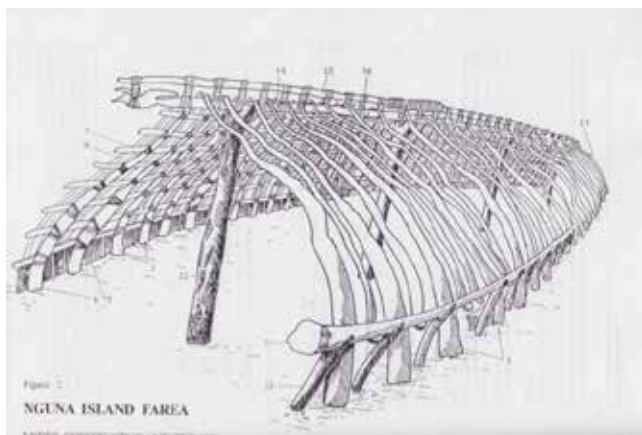


Figure 4: Image showing what is known to be the first representation of the farea at Taloa on Nguna Island, from 1887.



**Figure 5:** Drawing from 1990 showing the structural system of the Talao Farea. Note that the drawing does not show the side entrance, which may have been an oversight by the illustrator.



**Figure 6:** Photograph from 2010 revealing the structure of the farea during the rebuilding process.

## EXISTING VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

Possibly due to its proximity to Port Vila and access to tourists, there is more existing graphic and illustrative documentation of this farea than the other nakamals located further afield. While nakamals/fareas in the Efate region are discussed in Coiffier's *Architecture in Vanuatu*,<sup>3</sup> very little reference is made to a farea in Talao Village. There is included, however, the following passage from 1972 that describes a farea on Nguna to "...look very like the hull of an inverted boat with its stern cut off, thus leaving it completely open at the end, which is the main entrance of the farea. In addition to this there is a long low opening on the windward side extending from the open end to almost half the length of a farea, the equivalent of an entrance to an ordinary house."<sup>4</sup>

### Earliest documentation

A photograph from 1887 is recognised to be the first representation of the Talao Farea on Nguna Island.<sup>5</sup> The photograph shows three men sitting outside a farea that bears a striking resemblance to the existing one at Talao. The ground plane shown in the photograph in front of the entry rises towards an embankment, which still exists today. The main difference is that the structure in the photograph does not include the side opening, which is said to have been added in 1962.

## Recent documentation

The *Vanuatu Cultural and Historic Sites Survey, Interim Report Series, Report No. 1: Nguna Tikilasoa – Unakapu*,<sup>6</sup> which was conducted in 1993, shows that there are still several significant traditional sites located within the area of Tikilasoa (now known as Talao) and the neighbouring village of Unakapu. At the time, these sites still maintained significance to these communities. The sites found within this area include the large farea. Documentation of the farea in the report includes a detailed perspective drawing of it with the structural members named in the local language. Images of the Talao Farea can also be found on the Internet in tourist blogs and reviews.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FAREA

### Centuries old institution

The Talao Farea is a centuries old institution. Its built fabric has been renovated and rebuilt over the years. It is the last remaining example of a farea typical of the vernacular architecture in the Efate region.

### Kastom governance

The village of Talao has its own constitution that includes fiscal policy, council guidelines



and over 400 by-laws. The constitution includes rules relating to the protection of the farea and mandates that it be looked after and maintained. It also includes rules about how other structures cannot be built too close to it.<sup>7</sup>

*“The law protects and guides us.”<sup>8</sup>*

## REBUILDING AND RENOVATION

According to Chief Manamena, the Taloa Farea has been rebuilt and renovated several times over the last century. His records confirm that the wild cane thatching was replaced in 1887, 1904, 1933, 1947, 1962, 1976 and 2001, while it was completely rebuilt in 1918, 1990 and 2010.<sup>9</sup>

These dates suggest that rethatching occurs about every 15 years. A fire located inside the farea is regularly lit and assists with the ongoing maintenance by deterring termites and borers. The community had plans to renovate the farea and to replace the wild cane in 2015 (due to the premature deterioration of the poor quality wild cane used in 2010); however, due to Tropical Cyclone Pam hitting the island in March 2015, this never happened.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 7:** Photographs from 2010 showing the community rebuilding the farea.



**Figure 9:** View of the Taloa Farea showing the recently incorporated side opening (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 8:** Photograph from 2010 showing the Taloa Farea under construction at a time when the wild cane thatching was being secured. Note the timber scaffolding near the front entry.



**Figure 10:** The front entry of the Taloa Farea (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 11:** The low side entry to the Taloa Farea. Note that even prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam, there was already damage to the wild cane over the side eaves.



**Figure 12:** The interior of the farea prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.

## BUILDING USAGE

### A place for kastom governance

The Taloa Farea is a built physical place that represents kastom. The Chief and the community of Taloa primarily use it as a place that accommodates kastom governance.

### Community use

The Taloa Farea is also used for broader community purposes, such as hosting workshops, community meetings, and dances, as well as for kastom ceremonies including bride price, weddings and funerals. Occasionally it is used as a large kitchen to cook for special events. The kastom court of law is also held there during times when disputes within the community need to be resolved.<sup>11</sup>

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE BUILDING

### Construction type

The Taloa Farea is traditional in form and utilises predominantly vernacular building techniques and local materials. While supposedly not used in the construction, the occasional nail can be seen at a few post junctions.

### Plan form

The plan form of the building is primarily a long rectangle with an oval shaped end bay. The majority of the farea is completely enclosed by wild cane thatching along the perimeter of the building.

### Openings

There are two significant openings: the main entrance, which is formed by a large opening at the front, and a low opening across one of the longer sides that was added in 1962 to allow more light and fresh air into the interior.

### Interior space

Two large posts located within the interior support the ridge beam. There are no interior walls. Closely spaced columns that support the framework for the wild cane thatching form the envelope of the building.

### Sectional form

The sectional form of the building resembles an arc shape, where the perimeter columns bend to form the rafters supporting the roof. Along the low side opening, the rafters do not extend to the ground, but splay outwards to a point where they are supported along a low height beam. At this point the sectional form of the building changes, and the result is that the wall/roof framing members are straight rather than bent.

### Material palette

The building is mainly constructed from hardwood timber structural members and wild cane thatching. These are tied together with plaited pandanus ropes.



## Structural members

The primary structural members are hardwood 'bush' posts that bend to form the wall/roof framing members. A layering of smaller battens/purlins over the top of the posts supports the wild cane roof and wall thatching.

## Flooring

The floor is made from crushed coral that is at the same height as the natural ground level. The posts are set straight into the natural ground. Evidence of a plastic lining was noted at the base of some of the footings. A large piece of timber lying flat along the ground at the entrance

creates a threshold and demarcates the interior space from the exterior. The fireplace is made from a collection of stones situated on the floor in the centre of the farea.

## Roof and wall cladding

The roof and wall cladding are made from woven wild cane thatch that is fixed to the hardwood battens/purlins. There are no separate interior ceiling or wall linings.

## Connections

The structure is mainly tied together using traditional plaited pandanus ropes. While the community's ambition was to use only local materials, a few nails can be seen at a few significant structural junctions.



**Figure 13:** The interior wall texture made up of a layering of locally sourced materials (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 15:** The carved ridge beam in the form of a pigeon at the front entry of the farea (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 14:** The carved edge beam at the front entry of the farea (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 16:** The whaling pot located at the front entry of the farea (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 17:** The layers of texture at the roof edge, including woven pandanus, chamfered battens and wild cane thatching (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 18:** The thick layer of wild cane thatching over the farea (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

## Carved elements

There are carved elements inside the farea, including: the end of the ridge beam near the entrance that is carved in the shape of a bird with a fish in its mouth; a patterned carving along the edge beam; and a carving of two spears behind the Paramount Chief's seat.

## Decoration and objects

Hanging inside from the roof/wall structure is a collection of pig jawbone skeletons and a large iron whaling pot sits just outside the entrance. A few miscellaneous building materials are stored towards the back of the farea.

## Furniture

Two bamboo seats, located on opposite sides of the farea, extend along the interior walls, while timber stumps form individual seating places. A table with bench seats made from milled timber is located near the entrance.

## Site planning

The farea is located very close to the sea and at the centre of the village. Nearby are the community cooperative building, the community centre (recently destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Pam), the village school and the Presbyterian Church. The Chief's house is also located nearby and is situated on axis to the farea. The main

entrance faces inland, away from the sea. This is a deliberate strategy aimed at minimising wind from blowing into the farea, where a fire is usually left burning.<sup>12</sup> Located only a few metres away from the entrance are a cycad, tam-tam and bell, which is typical of the fareas/nakamals found in the region. A public toilet building clad in sheet metal is located on the same site as the farea, as are two large concrete water tanks. There is also a recently constructed aquaponics (fish growing) pond facility situated beside the farea. Chief Manamena has expressed some concern about the siting of the pond being too close to the farea, as it compromises the space required to renovate it.<sup>13</sup>

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Intangible Cultural Heritage significance

Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects of the Taloa Farea include the knowledge retained within the community that relates to its construction as well as to the procurement of the local materials sourced from across the island. The farea is significant to the continuation of kastom governance in Taloa as it accommodates several activities related to kastom that take place on a daily basis. It also signifies kastom through a built visual form and materiality. The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Taloa Farea is extremely important given its central role in the maintenance of kastom in Taloa.



## Spatial use of the farea

The internal spaces are divided into different sections for men and women to use. Women are designated the areas near to the side opening, where they tend to sit on pandanus mats, while men generally sit along the bamboo seats. The timber stump seats are specifically designated for the Paramount Chief and the other smaller Chiefs. These seats are tabu (it is forbidden for others to use or touch these seats).<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that traditionally women were not allowed inside the Nguna Farea and it was not until 1962 that the building was opened up to women to use.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 19:** The density of the wild cane (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 20:** View of the Taloa Farea showing the damage made by Tropical Cyclone Pam to the side entry and front eaves; however, overall the farea fared very well and was still being used as per usual. At this time the village was hosting both a church group workshop and a tour of the farea by architecture students from Australia.

## Timber species and sourcing

The timber used for the large posts/rafters comes from the local Namariu Tree, which is an especially durable hardwood that is too hard for termites to penetrate. For this reason the timbers do not need to be soaked in the sea prior to construction, which is a traditional process commonly used in Vanuatu to preserve other less resilient hardwood species. The large ridge beam is sourced from the local Natapoa Tree. The large columns are set into the ground approximately 2 metres, while the posts/rafters extend down about 1.5 metres. The tie-down ropes are made from plaited pandanus.



**Figure 21:** View from inside the farea looking back towards the front entry, showing how the farea could still be used despite the damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 22:** The damaged eaves over the side entry post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 23:** The damaged eave over the front entry post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 24:** The wild cane fared quite well during Tropical Cyclone Pam and only appears to have been ruffled.

### Wild cane thatch sourcing

The wild cane grows further inland at a higher altitude near the neighbouring village of Malaliu. If not sourced from the proper plantations, the wild cane can be poor in quality and not last as long as it should. During the last renovation (2010), some of the wild cane was sourced from the local gardens rather than from the plantation at Malaliu, and as a result some of the wild cane thatching rotted prematurely.<sup>16</sup>

### Community building process and custom ceremonies

During the first week of building, the community selects who will be the master-builders, who once chosen, start preparing for the build. A custom ceremony would then be held, which would include the killing of pigs and kava ceremonies. Then the existing farea would be demolished and materials for the new farea would be sourced.<sup>17</sup> Everyone in the community gets involved in the building process. The men cut the timber and transport it back to the building site where they then erect the structure. Each household in the village is required to weave 20 pandanus ropes. The women cut the wild cane, transport it back to the village and weave it into thatching. The women also assist by preparing the meals for the community during the build. Children also get involved. Young children, for example, assist

with passing the wild cane thatch high up to the men on top of the farea roof while they are tying down the thatch. Children also assist with the food preparation. The children are involved from a very early age so that they learn how to build each stage of the farea. At each subsequent stage, whether the farea is being rebuilt, renovated or maintained, the children will progress to a new task that they have not done previously. This is a very good example of an apprenticeship system where master-builders teach the youth in the community how to build the farea. It would take about 5 months to rethatch the farea and approximately 7 months to completely rebuild it.<sup>18</sup>

***“A small community could not have built it. Only a big, strong community that doesn’t have any disputes could build a farea like this.”<sup>19</sup>***

### Meaning and symbolism

The bird carving at the end of the ridge beam represents the people and the fish in the bird’s mouth represents the Chief. In essence, the people hold on tight to the Chief, and the Chief looks after the community.<sup>20</sup> The carving along the edge beam represents the Chief’s warrior club. While Chief Manamena is familiar with the ‘upturned boat’ metaphor more commonly used in other villages for this building form, he prefers the metaphor of the ‘whale fish’ in reference to the structural skeleton of the farea.<sup>21</sup>



## TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM AND THE TALOA FAREA

### Use during Cyclone

Several community members sheltered in the Taloa Farea during Tropical Cyclone Pam. Typically during a cyclone, those sheltering in the farea would first start a fire. As a means to block the wind, timber lengths would be cut to make a frame to go across the large opening at the front, which would then be covered with coconut fronds. During the cyclone, those sheltering inside would tell stories to each other. The farea plays an important role in Disaster Risk Management for the Taloa community where community members rely on it as a place to shelter during cyclonic conditions.<sup>22</sup>

### Damage Sustained From Tropical Cyclone Pam

The Taloa Farea suffered minimal damage during Tropical Cyclone Pam. Some parts of the wild cane thatch were damaged, and there are now holes in the roof, particularly along the side opening. All of the primary structural members appear to be intact. It is possible that the rope connections have been weakened due to the forces exerted by the cyclone.

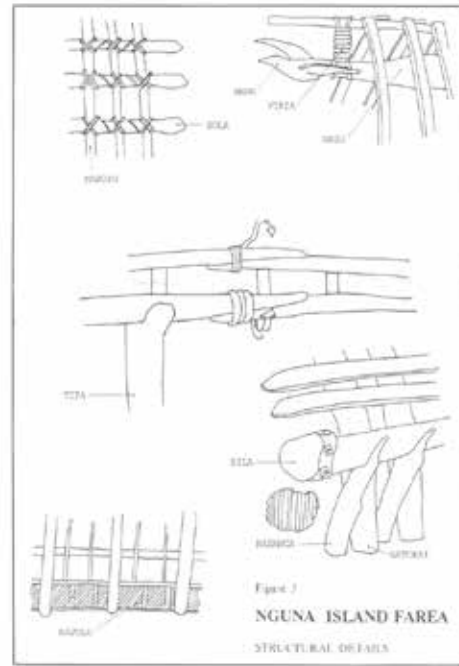


Figure 26: Drawings from 1990 showing structural and connection details of the farea.

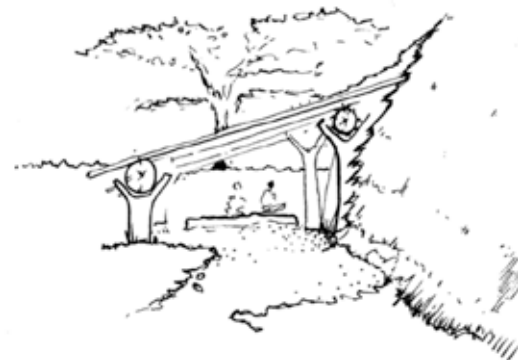


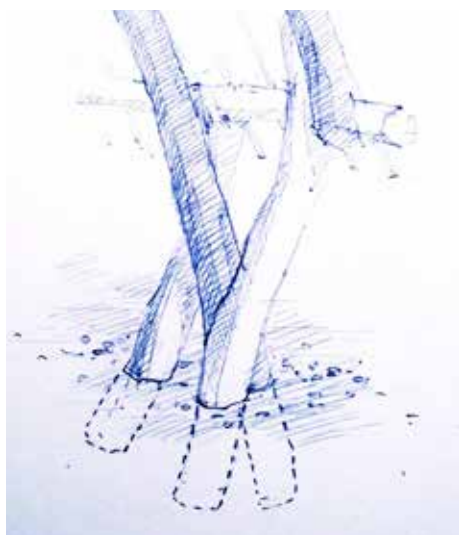
Figure 27: Sketch of the side entry of the Taloa Farea.



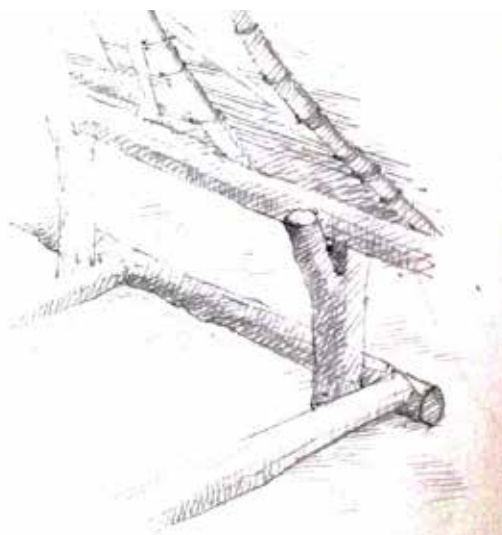
Figure 25: The ruffled wild cane post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



Figure 28: Sketch of the interior wall framing near the front entry of the Taloa Farea.



**Figure 29:** Detail sketch of the post/beam connection near the side entry to the Taloa Farea. Note how the posts extend down into the ground.



**Figure 30:** Sketch of the post/beam connection near the side entry of the Taloa Farea.

### Plans to reconstruct

The Taloa Community would like to renovate the farea as soon as possible, but lack the resources to do so. The village is currently undergoing an urban renewal/ beautification process, as seen by the elephant grass planted along the shore near the farea. The elephant grass is also part of an erosion program. The Chief is also planning to strengthen the 'Central Business District' (CBD) of Taloa, which will include the site of the farea. The CBD will include a newly built community centre directly adjacent to the farea. It will also include the reopening of the nearby cooperative (store). The adjacent aquaponics (fish growing) pond has now developed to include a large trial chicken coop. Chief Manamena said that this would have to be relocated as it is too close to the farea, and compromises the space required for renovation works.<sup>23</sup>

### Current re-building/renovation issues for the farea

The wild cane plantations on Nguna Island were destroyed during Cyclone Pam. While the community has already planted new wild cane stocks, the El Nino weather pattern and ensuing drought that started in 2015 have hampered attempts to grow new wild cane stocks as it cannot grow without adequate rainwater. They plan to plant more wild cane in 2016 (in anticipation that the drought will end shortly). The wild cane

will need to grow for at least 3 years prior to harvesting. As a result, the community will not be able to re-thatch the roof using local resources for at least 3 years. The community hopes that towards the end of 2018 or by early 2019 they will be able to renovate the farea.<sup>24</sup>

### Current re-building/renovation issues for the adjacent Community Centre

The community cannot currently build the adjacent community centre to replace the existing one that was destroyed during Tropical Cyclone Pam (regardless of funding) due to the lack of freshwater on Nguna, as water is required to mix with the cement to make the concrete blocks. Without funding, wild cane or freshwater (to grow the cane and to make the concrete blocks), all building plans are currently on hold.<sup>25</sup>

### Available reconstruction funding

Nil.

*"How can we find funds to build?"<sup>26</sup>*

### Potential threat / damage to Intangible Cultural Heritage values

As the Taloa Farea remained primarily intact during Tropical Cyclone Pam, there is a reduced threat to its Intangible Cultural Heritage values. However, ongoing maintenance will be an issue for the community at Taloa given

that the cyclone significantly damaged local building material resources. Without adequate maintenance regimes and resources for the Taloa Farea, the structure risks degradation over time. Maintenance will be critical as it accommodates kastom governance for the community at Taloa Village. For this reason, planning into how to carry out future repairs is critical. The ongoing process of its renovation by the community provides the opportunity for younger generations on the island of Nguna to learn from master-builders about how to repair and rebuild the farea according to kastom.

**NOTE**

1. The post- cyclone fieldwork for the Taloa Farea was conducted in September and October 2015. The pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam fieldwork is based on ongoing research on the Taloa Farea conducted by the author since 2012.
2. The above information was gained through consultation with Chief Manamena from Taloa, as referenced below. The above commentary has also been based on interpretation of the photographs and drawings made by the author of this report.

**DATES OF FIELDWORK AND FIELDWORKERS**

**December 5, 2012**

Notes, observations, drawings and photography by Wendy Christie as part of the Chief Roi Mata’s Domain World Heritage Bungalows Field Trip.

**January 7, 2014**

Notes, observations, drawings and photography by Wendy Christie as part of an independent field trip.

**August 1, 2014**

Notes, observations, drawings and photography by Wendy Christie as part of an independent field trip.

**September 21, 2015**

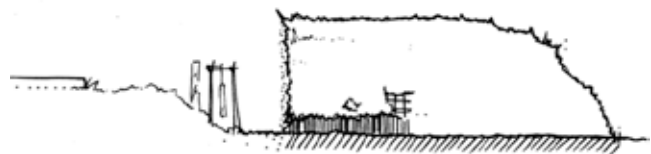
Notes, observations, drawings and photography by Master of Architecture Students as part of the University of Adelaide’s *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*, under the guidance of Professor Phil Harris (Troppo Architects), Associate Professor Veronica Soebarto and Tutor Wendy Christie.

**October 17, 2015**

Notes, observations, drawings and photography by Wendy Christie as part of an independent field trip.

**July 10 - 12, 2016**

Delivery of report to Chief Manamena for comment during the University of Adelaide’s *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio (Part 2)*, under the guidance of Professor Phil Harris (Troppo Architects), Associate Professor Veronica Soebarto and Tutor Wendy Christie.



**Figure 31:** Site study showing the relationship of the farea to the adjacent ground and surrounding objects.

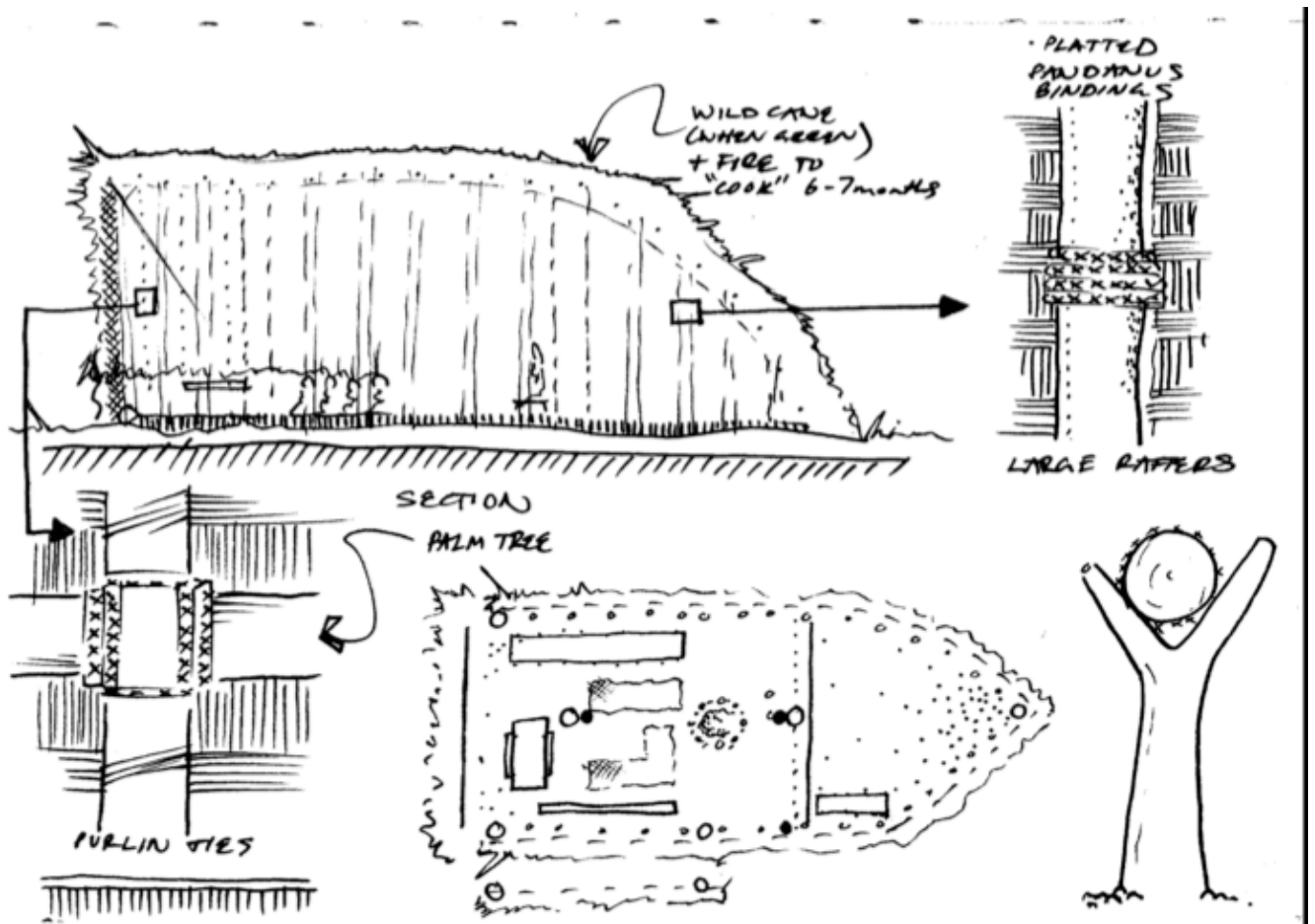


Figure 32: Diagrammatic drawings of the farea.

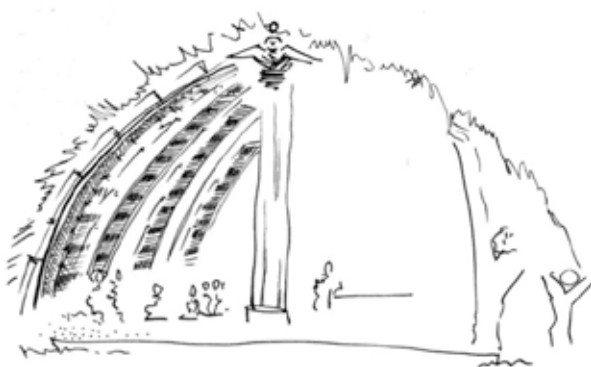


Figure 33: Sketch of the front entry of the Taloa farea.

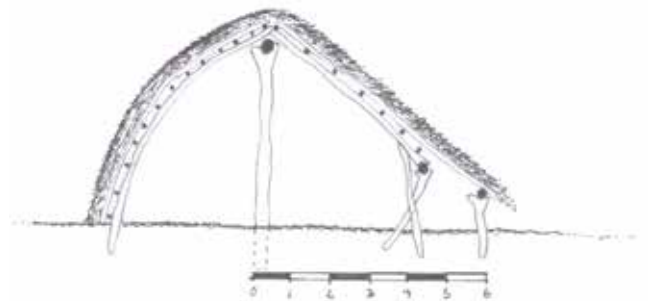
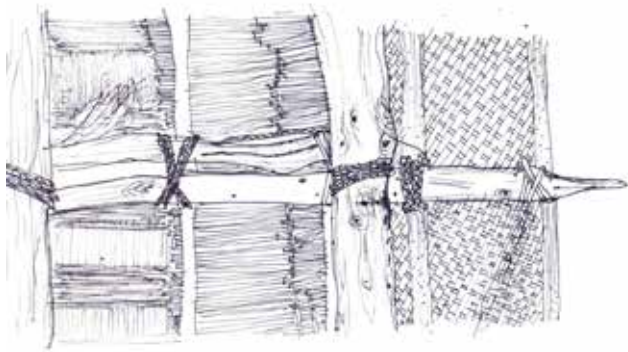


Figure 34: Section drawing of the Taloa Farea.





**Figure 35:** Sketch illustrating the rich palette of local materials used to make up the farea.

## TALOA FAREA FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figures 2-3:** Photography: Wendy Christie, July 2014.

**Figure 4:** Nguna Farea. 1887. Photograph of a photograph provided to the author by Chief Manamena in July 2016. The caption reads: "Farea – Ile Nguna – 1887 (Archives Centre Culturel)". Original photographer unknown.

**Figure 5:** Image from: Roe, D., Galipaud J-C., Yoringmal F. and Komas P. 1993. *The Vanuatu Cultural and Historic Sites Survey*.

**Figures 6-7:** Photograph from a family holiday photo book found in the reception area at the Uduna Cove Island Bungalows that included this picture of the farea under construction. Photographer/author of the photo book unknown.

**Figure 8:** Image from: Trip Advisor Canada, *Uduna Cove Beach Bungalows Reviews*.

**Figure 9:** Photography: Wendy Christie, December 2012.

**Figures 10-11:** Photography: Wendy Christie, July 2014.

**Figure 12:** Photography: Wendy Christie, December 2012.

**Figure 13:** Photography: Wendy Christie, July 2014.

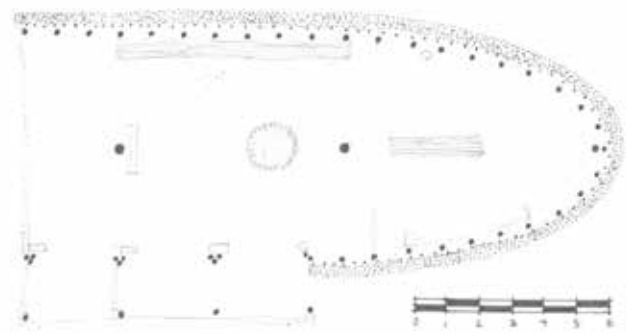
**Figures 14-15:** Photography: Wendy Christie, December 2012.

**Figure 16:** Photography: Wendy Christie, July 2014.

**Figure 17:** Photography: Wendy Christie, December 2012.

**Figures 18-19:** Photography: Wendy Christie, July 2014.

**Figures 20:** Photography: Professor Phil Harris (Troppo Architects): University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.



**Figure 36:** Plan drawing of the Taloa Farea.

**Figures 21-25:** Photography: Wendy Christie: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.

**Figure 26:** Image from: Roe, D., Galipaud J-C., Yoringmal F. and Komas P. 1993. *The Vanuatu Cultural and Historic Sites Survey*.

**Figure 27:** Image from: Sketches made during a site visit at the Taloa Farea in the journal of David O'Brien: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.

**Figures 28-30:** Image from: Sketches made during a site visit at the Taloa Farea in the journal of Vu Nguyen Le: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.

**Figures 31-33:** Image from: Sketches made during a site visit at the Taloa Farea in the journal of David O'Brien: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.

**Figure 34:** Measured drawing: Wendy Christie, July 2014.

**Figure 35:** Sketch: Wendy Christie, July 2016.

**Figure 36:** Measured drawing: Wendy Christie, July 2014.

## TALOA FAREA NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1** Quotation: Chief Manemena at a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014.
- 2** Quotation: Chief Manemena at a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.
- 3** Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*.
- 4** Quotation: Guiart, J, 1970. 'Nouveilles-Hébrides', Paris, Archée Ed. P. 22, in Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*: P. 137.
- 5** Nguna Farea. 1887. Photograph of a photograph provided to the author by Chief Manamena in July 2016. The caption reads: "Farea – Ile Nguna – 1887 (Archives Centre Culturel)". Original photographer unknown.
- 6** Roe, D., Galipaud J-C., Yoringmal F. and Komas P. 1993. *The Vanuatu Cultural and Historic Sites Survey*.
- 7** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014.
- 8** Quotation: Chief Manemena at a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.
- 9** Chief Manemena pointed out that the rebuild in 2010 was part of a concerted effort to teach the younger generations how to build the farea, as recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea in the journal of Nivedita Bhowmik: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*. Dates corrected during the field trip on July 12, 2016 and reconfirmed on July 24, 2016 via a skype conversation with Chief Manamema.
- 10** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.
- 11** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014.
- 12** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Nivedita Bhowmik: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.
- 13** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.
- 14** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014.
- 15** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Nivedita Bhowmik: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.
- 16** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014.
- 17** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Nivedita Bhowmik: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.
- 18** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014 and from the journal of Nivedita Bhowmik: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.
- 19** Quotation: Chief Manemena at a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014.
- 20** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Nivedita Bhowmik: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*. Coiffier also notes: "A bird with outstretched wings, carved out of wood and painted, was placed at the end of the ridgepole above the thatch, symbolising the spirit of the chief watching over the village." See: Coiffier, 1996. "Traditional Housing and Architecture of Vanuatu." P: 223.
- 21** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, July 31, 2014.
- 22** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie: University of Adelaide. September 20 – 27, 2015. *Overseas experiential studio: Vanuatu study and studio*.
- 23** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.
- 24** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.
- 25** Details recorded from a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea with Chief Manamena in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.
- 26** Quotation: Chief Manemena at a site visit/interview at the Taloa Farea in the journal of Wendy Christie, October 17, 2015.

# EUTA NAKAMAL

Euta Village, Tongoa Island

“Houses like this need special kastom songs that help us transport the timbers to the site... We need these songs that we sing to be able to carry the materials.”<sup>1</sup>

## NAME OF NAKAMAL

Euta Nakamal

## NAME OF GUIDE

Assistant Chief Sani Pakoa on behalf of Chief Nambonimanomata, the Paramount Chief of Tongoa Island.

## LOCATION

### Address

Euta Village, Tongoa Island, Shepherd Islands, Shefa Province, Vanuatu.



Figure 1: Map locating the Euta Nakamal on Tongoa Island.

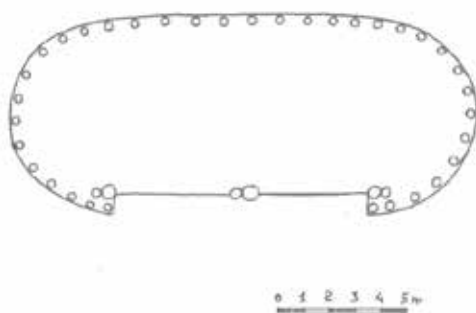


Figure 2: Plan of the Euta Nakamal showing the closely spaced column grid to the perimeter walls.

## Significance of location

The nakamal is located central to Euta village.

## HERITAGE LISTING/STATUS

Nil

## EXISTING VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

There is very little existing graphic and illustrative documentation of the Euta Nakamal. While nakamals and architecture in Tongoa are referenced in Coiffier's *Architecture in Vanuatu*,<sup>2</sup> no specific reference is made to one in Euta Village. No images of the nakamal were found on the Internet, nor did the Vanuatu Cultural Centre have any images of it in its database.

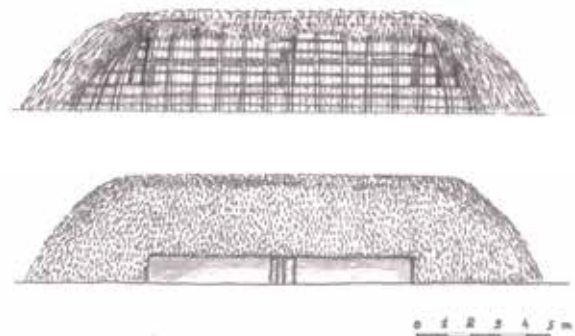


Figure 3: Elevation drawings of the side of Euta Nakamal. Note the damaged natangura thatch post-Tropical Cyclone Pam on the rear elevation.

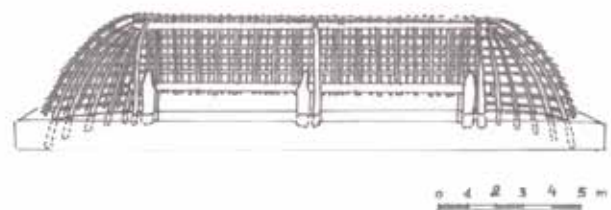


Figure 4: Section drawings of the Euta Nakamal showing the structural composition of the building.





**Figure 5:** The exterior of the Euta Nakamal pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 6:** The interior of the Euta Nakamal pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAKAMAL

Euta Nakamal was built especially for the ordination of the new Paramount Chief Nambonimanomata. All of the Chiefs across Tongoa decided that it was very important that it be built prior to the ordination.

*“Just like a Paramount Chief in a kastom nasara, he must have a traditional house that represents our kastom, within a kastom village. We built this nakamal especially for the purpose of ordaining our new Paramount Chief.”<sup>3</sup>*

## BUILDING USAGE

Euta Nakamal is a built physical place that represents kastom. It is primarily used by the Paramount Chief of Tongoa and the community as a place that accommodates kastom governance.

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE BUILDING

### Construction type

The Euta Nakamal is built from local materials and traditional techniques.

### Building form

The plan form of the building is an elongated oval shape. There are no interior walls. The perimeter column grid forms the envelope of the building, where closely spaced columns support the framework for the natangura roof and wall thatching.

### Openings

The entrance to the nakamal is located at the front in the form of a large double opening demarcated by a break in the column grid. Other than this, there are no other openings in the building.

### Sectional form

The sectional form of the building is arc shaped, where the posts bend to form the rafter members supporting the roof.

### Material palette

The building is predominantly constructed from hardwood timber structural members, natangura thatching and fibrous rope connections.

### Structural members

The primary structural members are hardwood ‘bush’ posts that bend to also form the wall/

roof framing members. A layering of smaller purlins/battens over the top of the posts/rafters supports the natangura roof and wall thatching.

### Flooring

The floor is made from earth and is at ground level. At the time of the fieldwork, weeds could be seen growing throughout the interior of the nakamal through the floor.

### Roof and wall cladding

The wall and roof cladding is made from natangura thatch that is woven prior to being fixed to the hardwood battens. There are no separate interior wall linings or ceilings.



**Figure 7:** The curved structural posts form both the walls and the roof (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 8:** Light enters the nakamal from a lo side opening (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 9:** Post- Tropical Cyclone Pam, illustrating the interior of the nakamal and the damaged natangura roof.



**Figure 10:** The interior of the nakamal and the damaged natangura roof post- Tropical Cyclone Pam. Note the weeds growing though the earth floor





**Figure 11:** Holes were made in the natangura thatched roof during Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 12:** Sunlight streams through the holes in the natangura thatched roof post- Tropical Cyclone Pam. Without protection from the rain, the timber structural members are likely to deteriorate.

## Connections

The structure is tied together by traditional fibrous rope connections.

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects

Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects of the Euta Nakamal include the knowledge retained within the community of how to build it and procure the local materials sourced from across the island. Kastom singing is also an extremely important part of the building process, as are the kastom ceremonies, including kastom payments, that relate to the building. The building itself accommodates several activities related to kastom that take place on a daily basis. The nakamal signifies kastom through a built visual form and materiality.

### Intangible Cultural Heritage significance

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Euta Nakamal is extremely important given its central role in the maintenance of kastom in Tongoa.

### Process of building

The building of the Euta Nakamal required significant effort from the community, both

in its planning and building. Four men were chosen, including Assistant Chief Sani Pakoa, to coordinate the building process and to lead the build; however, others in the village assisted as required. It took fifty days for the Euta Nakamal to be built from start to finish. The structural timber members are extremely heavy, and in some cases it required up to 10 men to carry one structural member to the site. Some large timber members had to be carried up to one kilometre across the island.<sup>4</sup>

***“The planning for the preparation to cut the wood was also really hard work.”<sup>5</sup>***

### Kastom songs related to the build

The builders sang kastom songs to assist them in carrying the heavy structural members to the nakamal building site. The songs informed the builders about how to cut down the timber, as well as how to transport it across the island.

***“...if we feel that the wood is too heavy, the song leads us in shifting it... When we feel that the wood is light enough, following kastom, we stop singing.”<sup>6</sup>***

The entire community also joined in with the kastom singing to support the builders in transporting the heavy structural members.

**“And another thing, they all came to help us when we were shifting the wood. So while we were working and singing, everyone else joined in the singing to help us move the wood. This made the wood feel lighter and helped us to carry it.”**

**Kastom payments related to building**

It was very expensive to build the Euta Nakamal. If a community member provided materials, such as a large length of timber sourced from their land, that person was compensated through kastom payment in the form of local food or produce. During the building process,

several pigs, cows and chickens were sacrificed as kastom payments. Since the nakamal has been completed, many more animals have been sacrificed as kastom payments. For example, at certain times when it has been closed due to some kind of dispute, Chiefs from the district would come to the nakamal to assist with sorting out the issue. Pigs, cows and chickens were killed as kastom payments to the visiting Chiefs at these times.

**“They say that it is very expensive through kastom for us. Many pigs, cows and chickens have been spent on this nakamal.”**

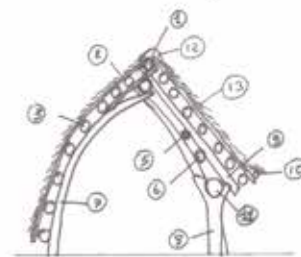


**Figure 13:** Image showing the complexity of the structural connections at the rounded end of the nakamal (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 14:** The large structural members at a post / beam junction (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

Local name blong ol matireal



- 1 Masumik
- 2 Paneror
- 3 Pakion
- 4 Mata-abat
- 5 Pa ilig sudum
- 6 Pa ilig alam
- 7 Pa toka
- 8 Pa hag
- 9 Pa toka alik
- 10 Pa silatar
- 11 Pa kilikalik
- 12 Pa alat
- 13 Pa nilin

Euta Tarea

**Figure 15:** Section drawing that includes the names of all of the materials used in the Euta nakamal in the local language.



## TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM AND THE EUTA NAKAMAL

### Use during Cyclone

Unknown

### Damage sustained from Tropical Cyclone Pam

The main damage caused by the cyclone was to the natangura wall and roof thatching, particularly on the rear side. The main structural elements, including the hardwood posts/rafters, remained intact and in reasonable condition; however, they are no longer protected from the rain and will get soaked on a regular basis if not covered. If the wood is not protected, the continual soaking will exacerbate the deterioration of the structural members.

### Plans to reconstruct

The community at Euta wanted to repair the nakamal in 2015, but they did not have the resources to make the roof and wall thatching because Tropical Cyclone Pam destroyed all of their natangura palms. As a result, they will not be able to repair it until the natangura stocks are replenished. This is expected to take about 3-5 years.

*“Maybe we will wait until the natangura has been regrown, and after this we will replace the thatching. It looks as though the natangura is already coming back, so perhaps we will have to wait for 3, 4 or 5 years for the leaves to be suitable, indicating that we can replace them.”<sup>9</sup>*

They will also need to replace some of the hardwood structural members that are no longer in good condition due to exposure to the elements.

*“We think we should rebuild the nakamal because it presents an image of a kastom village to those who visit. A kastom village with a kastom chief, whose people live according to kastom,”<sup>10</sup>*

### Reconstruction funding

Nil.

### Potential threat / damage to Intangible Cultural Heritage values

Without the Euta Nakamal, there would be no place for kastom governance to be accommodated in Euta, which is particularly significant given that this is the nakamal for the Paramount Chief who oversees the whole of Tongoa. For this reason the repairs of the Euta Nakamal are critical. The eventual renovation of the Euta Nakamal by the community will provide the opportunity for younger generations to learn from master-builders how to repair and rebuild it according to kastom.

### NOTE

1. The above information was gained through consultation with Assistant Chief Sani Pakoa from Euta, as referenced below. The above commentary has also been based on interpretation of the photographs and drawings made by the author of this report.
2. All names of people and places have been spelled phonetically and need to be confirmed at a later date.

### DATE OF FIELDWORK

November 19, 2015.

### FIELDWORKER

Artist, photographer and story collector

Siri Seoule: Vanuatu Cultural Centre Illustrator.

## EUTA NAKAMAL FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figures 2-4:** Drawing: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

**Figures 5-8:** Photography: Christopher Ballard, November 2011 (Original photos cropped and highlighted.)

**Figures 9-14:** Photography: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

**Figure 15:** Drawing: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

## EUTA NAKAMAL NOTES AND REFERENCES

**1** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**2** Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*.

**3** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**4** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**5** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**6** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**7** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**8** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**9** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**10** Quotation: Chief Sani Pakoa: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 19, 2015. "Interview with Chief Sani Pakoa by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

# MANGARISU NAKAKAMAL

Mangarisu Village, Tongoa Island

“We cut the wood in the bush, and then we carry it with a rope. We fasten it, and then everyone pulls. And then we sing through the bush until we get to the site.”<sup>1</sup>

## NAME OF NAKAMAL

Mangarisu Nakamal

## NAME OF GUIDE

Respected elder Grandpa Charlie on behalf of the four Chiefs of Mangarisu. Charlie is a master-builder who worked on the construction and ongoing maintenance of the nakamal. Another respected elder<sup>2</sup> was also present, who sang the kastom songs with Grandpa Charlie.

## LOCATION

### Address

Mangarisu Village, Tongoa Island, Shepherd Islands, Shefa Province, Vanuatu.

### Significance of location

The nakamal is located central to Mangarisu village.

## HERITAGE LISTING/STATUS

Nil



Figure 1: Map locating the Mangarisu Nakamal on Tongoa Island.



Figure 3: The exterior of the Mangarisu Nakamal (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



Figure 2: The front of the Mangarisu Nakamal (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

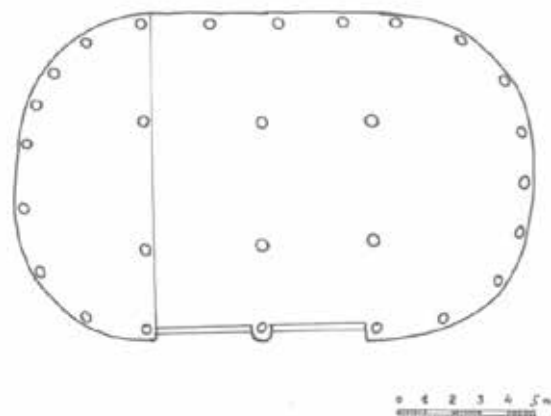


Figure 4: Plan drawing of the Mangarisu Nakamal.





**Figure 5:** The interior of the Mangarisu Nakamal (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 6:** The large edge beam of the Mangarisu Nakamal (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).

## EXISTING VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

There is very little existing graphic or illustrative documentation of the Mangarisu Nakamal; however, a few existing photographs were located that show its condition prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam<sup>3</sup>. While nakamals and architecture in Tongoa are referenced in Coiffier's *Architecture in Vanuatu*,<sup>4</sup> no specific reference is made to one in Mangarisu Village.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAKAMAL

It is a large and significant example of a nakamal typical to the Shepherd Islands.

## BUILDING USAGE

Mangarisu Nakamal is a built physical place that represents kastom. It is primarily used by the four Chiefs and the community of Mangarisu as a place that accommodates kastom governance.

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE BUILDING

### Construction type

The Mangarisu Nakamal is primarily traditional in both form and materials; however, it does include a concrete slab floor and roof thatch tie downs made from chicken wire, both of which are made from imported building materials and techniques.

### Plan form

The plan form of the building is an oval shape, made up of a rectangular central section flanked by semicircular end bays. The nakamal is open along all sides to a height of about 1500 millimetres. A half-height wall approximately 400 millimetres high follows the line of the perimeter columns. Six large posts are located within the interior space along a regular column grid. There are no interior walls.

### Openings

The entrance to the nakamal is located on one of the long sides of the plan in the form of a large double opening demarcated by the column grid and a break in the half-height perimeter wall.

### Sectional form

The sectional form of the building sees a large roof rising steeply from the edge beams located along the perimeter line of columns to the ridge-beam. The roof shape mirrors the column grid around the semicircular end bays. Similar to other nakamals across Vanuatu, the natangura thatched eaves project down slightly lower than an average person's head height.

## Material palette

The building is mainly constructed from hardwood timber structural members and natangura thatching tied together by plaited fibrous ropes. The material palette also includes a concrete slab floor.

## Structural members

The primary structural members are large hardwood 'bush' posts that form the perimeter to the nakamal. Heavy timbers supported in the forks of these posts create an edge beam that in turn supports a sequence of rafters. A layering of smaller purlins/battens over the rafters supports the natangura roof thatching.



**Figure 7:** The interior and roof structure of the Mangarisu Nakamal (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 8:** The tam tam located to the side of the nakamal (pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

## Flooring

The floor is made from concrete and is slightly higher than the natural ground level. The concrete posts are set into individual footings that sit outside the interior floor slab. The entry threshold includes two steps that traverse the change in level.

## Roof cladding

The roof cladding is made from natangura thatch that is woven prior to being fixed to the hardwood battens. There are no separate interior ceiling linings.



**Figure 9:** Picture showing the Mangarisu Nakamal under construction.



**Figure 10:** What remains of the Mangarisu Nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam. Note that the structural members to the end bay have been completely destroyed.



**Figure 11:** A tarpaulin covers the damaged roof of the Mangarisu Nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 12:** The Mangarisu Nakamal is barely recognisable after Tropical Cyclone Pam.

## Walls

Low walls that are slightly higher than the slab follow the line of the perimeter columns. In some sections woven split bamboo screens demarcate the interior space from the exterior, possibly providing a level of privacy and shelter. There are no separate interior wall linings.

## Connections

The structure is tied together using traditional fibrous ropes. Images of the nakamal taken prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam show that the natangura roof thatching was additionally tied-down with chicken wire.

## Decoration

A tall timber tam tam that includes a carving of a face, a leaf and a pattern banded around its middle and lower sections stands beside the nakamal. The tam tam is set in a concrete slab. A collection of small stones encircles the edge of the slab.

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects

Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects of the Mangarisu Nakamal include the knowledge retained within the community of how to build it and procure the local materials

sourced from across the island. Kastom singing is also an extremely important part of the building process, as are the kastom ceremonies, including kastom payments, that relate to the building. The building itself accommodates several activities related to kastom that take place on a daily basis. The nakamal also signifies kastom through a built visual form and materiality.

### Intangible Cultural Heritage Significance

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Mangarisu Nakamal is extremely important given its central role in the maintenance of kastom in Mangarisu.

### Process of building

On the first day of construction the men went into the bush to cut down the timber required for the posts of the nakamal. Once the first tree was cut down, they tied ropes around it so that they could pull it back to the building site. This process was repeated until they had all of the forked post members that they needed to build the nakamal. After they had all the posts, they returned to the bush to get the other required timber lengths, such as the beams. When sourcing timber, it is always cut down by hand and chainsaws are never used.<sup>5</sup>



***“We don’t carry them, we don’t carry them anymore. We pull them with a rope.”<sup>6</sup>***

After the men had gathered all of the structural members, they started to dig the footings for the posts. Once the footings were completed they put the posts into the holes. Each post extends into the ground about two metres, and they are ‘turned’, or ‘screwed’ deep into the bottom of each hole. Once the structural elements were completed, the natangura was fixed to the roof.<sup>7</sup>

Kastom songs related to the build

***“We went to find them in the bush, we fastened a rope around them, and all the while singing, we cut them down and brought them to the site.”<sup>8</sup>***

While pulling the posts back to the site, the builders sang kastom songs that related to the carrying of each post. Each time they returned to the bush they sang a song related to the carrying or cutting of each type of structural member. The songs informed the builders about how to cut down the timber, as well as how to transport it across the island.<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 13:** Some elements of the Mangarisu Nakamal were completely destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 15:** While the natangura roof was destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Pam, several structural members remain in tact.



**Figure 14:** A blue tarpaulin is fixed to the roof battens in place of the natangura roof thatching. All of the roof thatching on the Mangarisu Nakamal was destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 16:** Community members resting inside the Mangarisu Nakamal despite the damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 17:** The carved tam tam remains standing beside the nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.

***“Us two, we told them now to place the short timber beam. But it was heavy, too heavy to carry up to the top of the post. So we started to sing.”<sup>10</sup>***

### Kastom payments and ceremonies related to building

On the first day of construction, a pig was killed. Also on the second and third days, and so on and so forth until the nakamal was completed. At the end of the build, a pig and cow were killed and a meal was made for the builders. Once completed, all of the Chiefs and the community came to the opening of the nakamal. The two master-builders brought a big pig and cow, which were presented to the four Chiefs. They described to the Chiefs all of the work that they had done, and announced that the nakamal was now for the Chiefs. After this the Chiefs cut the ribbon that was tied to the nakamal.

***“At the beginning, we killed 3 pigs. Then we cooked them and gave them to the Chiefs, the four Chiefs here. Once this was completed we started to cut the wood for the nakamal.”<sup>11</sup>***

## TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM AND THE MANGARISU NAKAMAL

### Use during Cyclone

Unknown

### Damage sustained from Tropical Cyclone Pam

Tropical Cyclone Pam caused significant damage to the nakamal, particularly to the roof. All of the natangura roof thatch was destroyed, as well as some of the columns and roof structural members. At the time of the fieldwork, the concrete floor appeared to be in poor condition.

### Plans to reconstruct

The community at Mangarisu want to repair the nakamal; however, Tropical Cyclone Pam caused significant damage to the trees on Tongoa and as a result, the community at Mangarisu do not currently have available the timber resources required to build the structural members. They also do not have any natangura, as the natangura palms were also damaged by the cyclone. Once new timber and natangura resources have matured, they will start to rebuild the nakamal. This is likely to take a minimum of 3-5 years.<sup>12</sup>

***“But that’s how it is, the wood that we should cut down, the cyclone came, it came and destroyed every piece.”<sup>13</sup>***

### Reconstruction funding

Nil.

### Potential threat / damage to Intangible Cultural Heritage values

Without the Mangarisu Nakamal, there would be no place for kastom governance to be accommodated in Mangarisu Village. For this reason the repairs of the Mangarisu Nakamal are critical. The eventual renovation of the Mangarisu Nakamal by the community will provide the opportunity for younger generations to learn from master-builders how to repair and rebuild it according to kastom.



## NOTE

1. The above information was gained through consultation with Grandpa Charlie from Mangarisu, as referenced below. The above commentary has also been based on interpretation of the photographs and drawings made by the author of this report.
2. All names of people and places have been spelled phonetically and need to be confirmed at a later date.

## DATE OF FIELDWORK

November 18, 2015.

## FIELDWORKER

Artist, photographer and story collector

Siri Seoule: Vanuatu Cultural Centre Illustrator



**Figure 18:** The carved tam tam outside the Mangarisu Nakamal (post-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 19:** Detail of the carved band around the bottom of the tam tam (post-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 20:** Post/slab edge detail (post-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 21:** The damaged concrete slab (post-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 22:** The damaged concrete slab post-Tropical Cyclone Pam showing where a post would have once been located.





**Figure 23:** The damaged slab edge (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

## MANGARISU NAKAMAL FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figure 2:** Photograph supplied by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, photographer unknown, date unknown.

**Figure 3:** Photography: Christopher Ballard, November 2011.

**Figure 4:** Drawing: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

**Figures 5-6:** Photography: Christopher Ballard, November 2011.

**Figures 7-8:** Photograph supplied by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, photographer unknown, date unknown.

**Figure 9:** Photograph of a photograph taken by Vanuatu Cultural Centre Fieldworker in Mangarisu. Original photographer unknown, original date unknown.

**Figures 10-23:** Photography: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

## MANGARISU NAKAMAL NOTES AND REFERENCES

**1** Quotation: Grandpa Charlie: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**2** This person was not named in the audio recording made by the fieldworker from the Vanuatu Cultural Centre.

**3** A collection of photographs was found by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre staff; however, the photographer and date of these images are unknown. Christopher Ballard also provided images illustrating the nakamal's condition in November 2011.

**4** Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*.

**5** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**6** Quotation: Grandpa Charlie: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**7** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**8** Quotation: Grandpa Charlie: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**9** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**10** Quotation: Grandpa Charlie: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**11** Quotation: Grandpa Charlie: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**12** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**13** Quotation: Grandpa Charlie: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 18. 2015, "Interview with Grandpa Charlie by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

# NIKAURA NAKAMAL

Nikaura Village, Epi Island

“For the nakamal, we use the style of our ancestors. The people have retained this style until today.”<sup>1</sup>

## NAME OF NAKAMAL

Nikaura Nakamal

## NAME OF GUIDES

Chief Matu of Nikaura Village; respected elder Danny of Nikaura Village, a master-builder who worked on the ongoing renovations and maintenance of the nakamal; and, a boy named Eric who sang during the interview with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre Fieldworker in kastom language.

## LOCATION

### Address

Nikaura Village, Epi Island, Shepherd Islands, Shefa Province, Vanuatu.

### Significance of location

The nakamal is located central to Nikaura village.

## HERITAGE LISTING/STATUS

Nil



Figure 1: Map locating the Nikaura Nakamal on Epi Island.



Figure 3: The exterior of the nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.



Figure 2: The interior of Nikaura Nakamal prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam.

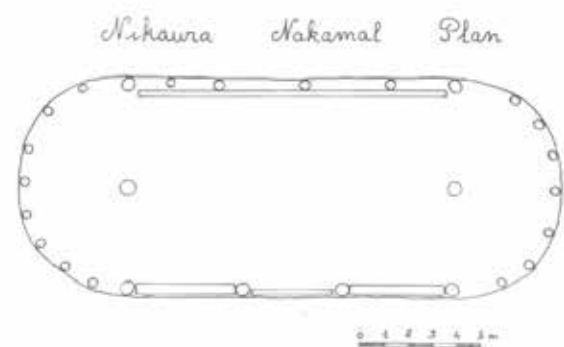
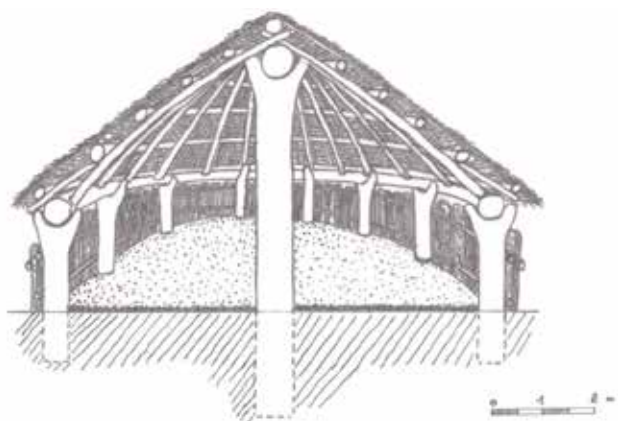
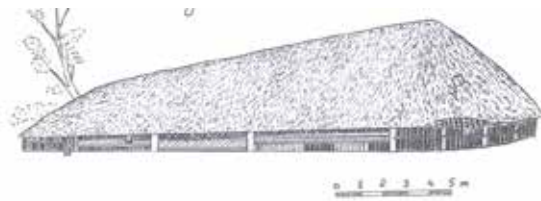


Figure 4: Plan of the Nikaura Nakamal.



**Figure 5:** Sectional perspective of the Nikaura Nakamal showing the main structural members.



**Figure 6:** Perspective view of the exterior showing the form of the nakamal.

## EXISTING VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

There is very little existing graphic or illustrative documentation of the Nikaura Nakamal. While nakamals and architecture in Epi are referenced in Coiffier's *Architecture in Vanuatu*,<sup>2</sup> no specific reference is made to one in Nikaura Village. Only two pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam images were found on the Internet within a personal blog.<sup>3</sup>

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAKAMAL

It is a large and significant example of a nakamal typical to the Shepherd Islands.

## BUILDING USAGE

Nikaura Nakamal is a built physical place that represents kastom. It is primarily used by the Chief and the community of Nikaura as a place that accommodates kastom governance. It is a very large nakamal that was built to accommodate the entire village. Community meetings are held inside.

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE BUILDING

### Construction type

The Nikaura Nakamal is traditional in form, building techniques and materials.

***"...the style used by our ancestors is the same as today, they made it just how we make it today."***<sup>4</sup>

## Plan form

The plan form of the building is an elongated oval shape formed by a central rectangular bay flanked by two semicircular end bays. Two large posts located at either end within the interior space support the ridge beam. There are no interior walls.

## Openings

The nakamal is open along all sides to a height of about 1000 millimetres. This space has been predominantly filled in with large black palm trunks that follow the perimeter and block access to the interior. The entrance is located centrally along the front wall and is demarcated by the column grid and a break in the black palms. This entrance is flanked by two large window openings.

## Sectional form

The sectional form of the building sees a large roof rising steeply from the edge beams to the ridge-beam. The roof shape mirrors the column grid around the semicircular end bays and angles up so that in elevation one end of the roof is higher than the other. Similar to other nakamals across Vanuatu, the natangura thatched eaves project down lower than an average persons head height.



### Material palette

The building is mainly constructed from hardwood timber structural members, black palm infill walls and natangura thatching. These are all tied together with plaited fibrous ropes.

### Structural members

The primary structural members are large hardwood ‘bush’ posts that form the perimeter to the nakamal. Heavy timbers supported in the forks of these posts create an edge beam. These in turn support a sequence of rafters that extend to a large ridge beam. A layering of smaller purlins/battens over the rafters supports the natangura roof thatching.



**Figure 7:** Section showing the names in the local language of the structural members of the Nikaura Nakamal.

### Flooring

The floor is made from crushed coral that is at the same height as the natural ground level. The posts are set straight into the natural ground.

### Roof cladding

The roof cladding is made from woven natangura thatch that is fixed to the hardwood purlins/battens. There are no separate interior ceiling linings.



**Figure 8:** The interior of the Nikaura Nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 9:** The interior roof structure post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 10:** The roof of the nakamal was damaged by Tropical Cyclone Pam.

## Walls

Low walls made from black palm trunks infill the space between the posts along the edge of the nakamal. These trunks demarcate the interior space from the exterior, possibly providing a level of privacy and shelter. The trunks would also provide a level of protection during high winds. There are no separate interior wall linings.

## Connections

The structure is tied together with traditional fibrous ropes.

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects

Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects of the Nikaura Nakamal include the knowledge retained within the community of how to build it and procure the local materials sourced from across the island. Kastom singing is also an extremely important part of the building process. The building itself accommodates several activities related to kastom that take place on a daily basis. The Nikaura Nakamal also signifies kastom through a built visual form and materiality.

### Intangible Cultural Heritage Significance

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Nikaura Nakamal is extremely important given its central role in the maintenance of kastom in Nikaura.



**Figure 11:** While the Nikaura Nakamal sustained very little damage during Tropical Cyclone Pam, there are now holes in the natangura thatch, which exposes the structural members to the elements.

## Process of building

Once the very large timber posts were cut down, the builders had to transport them back to the building site. Sometimes the timber that they had cut down would be close to a river or near the sea. In these instances, they would drag the timber through the river or along the edge of the sea to get it back to the building site. Very deep holes were dug for the footings. The posts were then lowered into the holes by a team of men using ropes. Once the posts were in place, the men used a system of ropes to put up the beams, rafters and the roof framing. Then, after the structure was completely erected, the natangura was fastened to the roof battens.

### Kastom songs related to the build

***“No, we lifted all of it. We sing them, we sing the wood to make it light.”<sup>5</sup>***

If while pulling the heavy timber members back to the site they became too heavy or stuck, the builders would sing kastom songs to assist them in transporting the timber.

***“You sing out to another kastom spirit. We use different songs for different spirits to help us out.”<sup>6</sup>***

## TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM AND THE NIKAURA NAKAMAL

### Use during Cyclone

***“We must build a big nakamal for when cyclones come, so that we can be safe inside the nakamal.”<sup>7</sup>***

The Nikaura Nakamal is very large and was designed to accommodate the entire population of the village. During a cyclone, the entire community can be sheltered inside the nakamal.

***“What everyone said to us is that when you build a nakamal like this, you should try to build it so that it can shelter people inside when a cyclone hits.”<sup>8</sup>***

The black palms that create the walls of the nakamal provide a barrier to the outside and block the wind, as well as flying objects, from coming inside during cyclonic conditions. While the black palms block the majority of the wind, the small spaces between the palm trunks allow fresh air to ventilate the nakamal. Sometimes when the community is sheltering inside during a cyclone, and the wind is too strong, they must try to block the openings.<sup>9</sup> The nakamal is an important part of Disaster Risk Management for the Nikaura community where the Chief relies on it as a place to shelter his community during cyclonic conditions.



**Figure 12:** Beam connection detail (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 14:** Post/beam connection detail (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 13:** The majority of the natangura roof thatching on the Nikaura Nakamal remains in reasonable condition post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 15:** Rafter/beam connection detail (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).





**Figure 16:** Detail of the black palms at the base of the walls of the Nikaura Nakamal (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

*“They (our ancestors) built it so the natangura thatch came down to the ground to block strong winds to keep everyone safe inside. But now, see how we have come up with a different style where the natangura thatch doesn’t come down to the ground...”<sup>10</sup>*

### Damage sustained from Tropical Cyclone Pam

The Nikaura Nakamal suffered little damage during Tropical Cyclone Pam. Some parts of the natangura roof thatch were damaged, and there are now holes in the roof. All of the primary structural members appear to be intact. It is possible that the rope connections have been weakened due to the forces exerted by the cyclone.

### Plans to reconstruct

Unknown.

### Reconstruction funding

Nil.

### Potential threat / damage to Intangible Cultural Heritage values

As the Nikaura Nakamal remained primarily intact during Tropical Cyclone Pam, there is a minimised threat to its Intangible Cultural Heritage values. However, ongoing maintenance will be an issue for the community at Nikaura

given that Tropical Cyclone Pam significantly damaged local building material resources. Without adequate maintenance regimes and resources for the Nikaura Nakamal, the structure risks degradation over time. Maintenance will be critical as it accommodates kastom governance for the community at Nikaura Village. For this reason, serious consideration needs to be given into how future repairs will be carried out. The ongoing process of renovation of the Nikaura Nakamal by the community provides the opportunity for younger generations on the island of Epi to learn from master-builders about how to repair and rebuild it according to kastom.

### NOTE

14. The above information was gained through consultation with Chief Matu and Respected Elder Danny from Nikaura Village, as referenced below. The above commentary has also been based on interpretation of the photographs and drawings made by the author of this report.
15. All names of people and places have been spelled phonetically and need to be confirmed at a later date.

### DATE OF FIELDWORK

November 11, 2015.

### FIELDWORKER

Artist, photographer and story collector

Siri Seoule: Vanuatu Cultural Centre Illustrator

## NIKAURA NAKAMAL FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figure 2:** Photography: Siobhan McDonnell, October 2014.

**Figure 3:** Image from: Vanuatu Adventure. August 23, 2007. "The End."

**Figures 4-7:** Drawing: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

**Figures 8-16:** Photography: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

## NIKAURA NAKAMAL NOTES AND REFERENCES

**1** Quotation: Chief Matu: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 11 2015. "Interview with Chief Matu by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**2** Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*.

**3** Wain, Deb. April 8, 2009. "Nikaura Nakamal and Kava."

**4** Quotation: Chief Matu: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 11 2015. "Interview with Chief Matu by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**5** Quotation from: Wain, Deb. April 8, 2009. "Nikaura Nakamal and Kava." The quote is from a guide named Joshua in Nikaura village.

**6** Quotation: Chief Matu: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 11 2015. "Interview with Chief Matu by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**7** Quotation: Chief Matu: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 11 2015. "Interview with Chief Matu by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**8** Quotation: Chief Matu: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 11 2015. "Interview with Chief Matu by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**9** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 11 2015. "Interview with Chief Matu by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**10** Quotation: Chief Matu: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 11 2015. "Interview with Chief Matu by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

# MORIU NAKAMAL

Moriu Village, Epi Island

“We built it so that when a cyclone hit, the Chief could gather together the people in our community, and we would be safe inside the nakamal until the time when the cyclone passed.”<sup>1</sup>

## NAME OF NAKAMAL

Moriu Nakamal

## NAME OF GUIDE

Respected elder Chief Esau of Moriu, Epi. Chief Esau is a master-builder who worked on the construction of the nakamal, as well as on its ongoing maintenance.

## LOCATION

### Address

Moriu Village, Epi Island, Shepherd Islands, Shefa Province, Vanuatu.



Figure 1: Map locating the Moriu Nakamal on Epi Island.

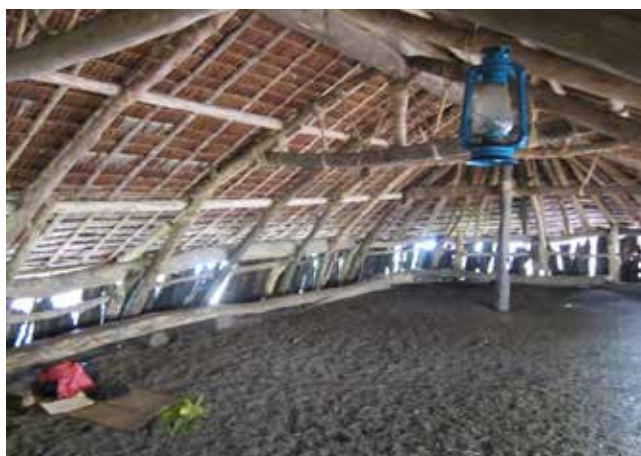


Figure 2: Pre- Tropical Cyclone Pam photograph of the interior found on a visitor's blog on the Internet.

## Significance of location

The nakamal is located central to Moriu village.

## HERITAGE LISTING/STATUS

Nil

## EXISTING VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

There is very little existing graphic or illustrative documentation of the Moriu Nakamal. One pre- cyclone image was found on the Internet within a social media post. While nakamals and architecture in Epi are referenced in Coiffier's *Architecture in Vanuatu*,<sup>2</sup> no specific reference is made to one in Moriu.

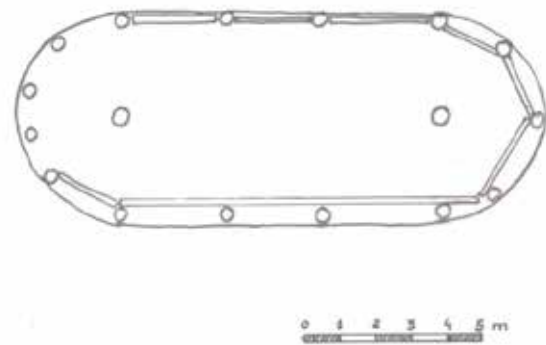


Figure 3: Plan drawing showing the size and layout of the Moriu Nakamal on Epi Island.



Figure 4: The Moriu Nakamal on Epi Island (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam) sustained minimal damage from the cyclone.





**Figure 5:** The exterior walls of the Moriu Nakamal, which are made from black palm trunks (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 6:** The side of the Moriu Nakamal on Epi Island (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAKAMAL

Moriu Nakamal was built in 2002. It is a large and significant example of a nakamal typical to the Shepherd Islands.

## BUILDING USAGE

Moriu Nakamal is a built physical place that represents kastom. It is primarily used by the Chief and community of Moriu, as a place that accommodates kastom governance.

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE BUILDING

### Construction type

The Moriu Nakamal is traditional in form, building technique and materials.

### Building form

The plan form of the building is an elongated oval shape. Two large posts located at either end of the interior space support the ridge beam. There are no interior walls.

### Openings

The entire nakamal is open along all sides to a height that varies between about 500 – 1500 millimetres. This space however, has been predominantly filled in with large black palm trunks that follow its perimeter and block access at the sides. The entrance is located on one of

the long sides in the form of a large opening demarcated by the column grid and a break in the half-height perimeter wall. This entrance is flanked by two large window openings.

### Sectional form

The sectional form of the building sees a large roof rising steeply from the edge beams located along the perimeter line of columns to the ridge-beam. The roof shape mirrors the column grid around the semicircular end bays. Similar to other nakamals across Vanuatu, the ridge beams and natangura thatched eaves project down lower than an average person's head height.

### Material palette

The building is mainly constructed from hardwood timber structural members and natangura thatching. These are all tied together with plaited fibrous ropes.

### Structural members

The primary structural members are large hardwood 'bush' posts that form the perimeter to the nakamal. Heavy timbers supported in the forks of these posts create an edge beam that in turn supports a sequence of rafters that extend to a large ridge beam. A layering of smaller purlins and battens over the rafters supports the natangura roof thatching.

## Flooring

The floor is made from earth that is at the height same as the natural ground level. The posts are set straight into the natural ground.

## Roof cladding

The roof cladding is made from natangura thatch that is woven prior to being fixed to the hardwood battens. There are no separate interior ceiling linings. Photos taken after Tropical Cyclone Pam show a metal ridge flashing fixed to milled timber battens over the top of the natangura, which is possibly an interim maintenance tactic.

## Walls

Low black palm trunk walls infill the space along the perimeter edges of the nakamal. These trunks demarcate the interior space from the exterior, possibly providing a level of privacy and shelter. A timber seat made from bush poles runs along the interior wall. There are no separate interior wall linings.

## Connections

The structure is tied together using fibrous ropes.



**Figure 7:** This picture suggests that some of the black palms trunks that infill the walls were weakened by Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 9:** The interior of the Moriu Nakamal showing the low ceiling height along the external wall (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 8:** The interior of the Moriu Nakamal (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam), illustrating the structural system made from local hardwood.



**Figure 10:** The main entry as seen from inside (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).





**Figure 11:** Post and beam connection detail (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 12:** The rafters at both ends of the nakamal splay to fit the oval shaped plan (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).

## Carving

A tall timber tam tam that includes a carving of a face stands nearby the nakamal. The tam tam is set straight into the ground.

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects

Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects of the Moriu Nakamal include the knowledge retained within the community of how to build it and procure the local materials sourced from across the island. Kastom singing is also an extremely important part of the building process. The building itself accommodates several activities related to kastom that take place on a daily basis. The Moriu Nakamal also signifies kastom through a built visual form and materiality.

### Intangible Cultural Heritage Significance

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Moriu Nakamal is extremely important given its central role in the maintenance of kastom in Moriu.

### Process of building

Planning started in 2002, when the community came up with the idea of building a nakamal. A planner (kastom architect) for the project was

appointed and made all the plans, including establishing its siting. After this, the main task was for the men to cut down all of the timber members for the nakamal, including the posts, cross-beams and rafters.<sup>3</sup>

### Kastom songs related to the build

While pulling the heavy timber members back to the site, the builders sang kastom songs together that relate to the carrying of the wood.

*“Perhaps all of the rafters, all the cross-beams that go along the top, some may have been a little bit big. We tried; we pulled them a long way to the top of the hill, and it made us sing, because we sing when we carry the wood down... The song that we sing when we haul the wood helps us to transport it.”<sup>4</sup>*

## TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM AND THE MORIU NAKAMAL

### Use during Cyclone

Several community members sheltered inside the Moriu Nakamal during Tropical Cyclone Pam. The community trusted that it was strong enough to shelter them and they had no concerns for its use as an evacuation centre.

***“Our belief when we built the nakamal was that we trusted that we could use the nakamal during a cyclone. We were sure that we would be safe.”<sup>5</sup>***

Just prior to the cyclone hitting, the community covered up the large open spaces of the nakamal (the door and window openings). This was to prevent the rain and wind from coming inside during the cyclone.

***“But otherwise, all around, the wind could blow the natangura as much as anything, but it couldn’t knock the nakamal down. The people made it strong with their knowledge.”<sup>6</sup>***

### Damage sustained from Tropical Cyclone Pam

Tropical Cyclone Pam caused little damage to the Moriu Nakamal. The natangura roof thatch appears ruffled, but all of primary structural members are intact. It is possible that the rope connections have been weakened due to the forces exerted by the cyclone.



**Figure 13:** The natangura thatching as seen from inside (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 15:** Roof/wall junction of the Moriu Nakamal (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 14:** Natangura thatch detail (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 16:** A break in the black palm wall might be evidence of damage made by Tropical Cyclone Pam.





**Figure 17:** A carved tam tam is situated nearby the nakamal (post-Tropical Cyclone Pam).

### Plans to reconstruct

The community at Moriu do not need to make significant repairs the nakamal, as it is in reasonably good shape after the cyclone. A structural assessment based on the tightness of the rope connections would be worthwhile, along with ongoing general maintenance regimes. It appears as if some of the black palm trunks that are used as infill to the lower walls may have shifted, and these should be replaced to their original locations if significant. Due to natangura palms in the region being decimated, future natangura thatching repairs and maintenance will be compromised.

### Reconstruction funding

None

### Potential threat / damage to Intangible Cultural Heritage values

As the Moriu Nakamal remained primarily intact during Tropical Cyclone Pam, there is a minimised threat to its Intangible Cultural Heritage values; however, ongoing maintenance will be an issue for the community at Moriu given that Tropical Cyclone Pam significantly damaged local building material resources. Without adequate maintenance regimes and resources,

the structure risks degradation over time. Maintenance will be critical as it accommodates Kastom Governance for the community at Moriu Village. For this reason, consideration into how future repairs will be carried out is essential. The ongoing process of renovation by the community will provide the opportunity for younger generations on the island of Epi to learn from master-builders methods of repairing and rebuilding according to kastom.

### NOTE

1. The above information was gained through consultation with Chief Esau from Moriu, as referenced below. The above commentary has also been based on interpretation of the photographs and drawings made by the author of this report.
2. All names of people and places have been spelled phonetically and need to be confirmed at a later date.

### DATE OF FIELDWORK

November 12, 2015.

### FIELDWORKER

Artist, photographer and story collector

Siri Seoule: Vanuatu Cultural Centre Illustrator

## MORIU NAKAMAL FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figure 2:** Image from: DanGer. December 28, 2011. "Pictures from Epi."

**Figure 3:** Drawing: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

**Figures 4-17:** Photography: Siri Seoule, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, November 2015.

## MORIU NAKAMAL NOTES AND REFERENCES

**1** Quotation: Chief Esau: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 12, 2015. "Interview with Chief Essau by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**2** Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*.

**3** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 12, 2015. "Interview with Chief Essau by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**4** Quotation: Chief Esau: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 12, 2015. "Interview with Chief Essau by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**5** Quotation: Chief Esau: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 12, 2015. "Interview with Chief Essau by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**6** Quotation: Chief Esau: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 12, 2015. "Interview with Chief Essau by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

# ERROMANGO NAKAMAL

Happy Land Village, Erromango

“That’s right. The nakamal represents that we  
are all human beings. We are all human.”<sup>1</sup>

## NAME OF NAKAMAL

Erromango Nakamal

## NAME OF GUIDE

Daniel Epsi of Ipota Village, Erromango. Daniel is a Fieldworker who works for the Vanuatu Cultural Centre.

## LOCATION

### Address

Happy Land Village, Erromango Island, Tafea Province, Vanuatu.

## Significance of location

The nakamal is located central to Happy Land village. While it is located in Happy Land, the nakamal belongs to all of the people of Erromango.<sup>2</sup>

## HERITAGE LISTING/STATUS

Nil



**Figure 1:** Map locating the Erromango Nakamal at Happy Land Village on Erromango Island.



**Figure 3:** A kastom activity is performed in Happy Land Village (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 2:** Context to the Erromango Nakamal at Happy Land Village where traditional buildings are set within a red coloured field (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 4:** The exterior of the Erromango Nakamal (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam). At this time a tin lean-to roof structure sheltered the entry to the nakamal.





**Figure 5:** The entry to the Erromango Nakamal (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).



**Figure 6:** A group of women posing in front of the Erromango Nakamal (pre-Tropical Cyclone Pam).

## EXISTING VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

There is very little existing graphic or illustrative documentation of the Erromango Nakamal. While nakamals and architecture in Erromango are referenced in Coiffier's *Architecture in Vanuatu*,<sup>3</sup> no specific reference is made to one in Happy Land Village. Only a few images of the nakamal were found on the Internet on social media sites.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAKAMAL

It is a large and significant example of a nakamal typical of the Tafea Province vernacular architecture.

## BUILDING USAGE

The Erromango Nakamal was built specifically for the Chiefs and the Paramount Chief. The most significant way the Chiefs used it in the past was as a place where kastom songs could be composed. Today it is used by the whole of the Erromango Community for kastom ceremonies such as weddings and funerals and as a place that accommodates kastom governance. Erromango Nakamal is a built physical place that represents kastom. It is also the evacuation centre for Unponkor, which is the largest village on Erromango.<sup>4</sup>

*“Before the gospel came to the people of Erromango, during the time of cannibalism, we used, all our descendants used the nakamal as a holy place for the village of Unponkor”<sup>5</sup>*

## TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF THE BUILDING

### Construction type

The Erromango Nakamal is traditional in form, building techniques and materials. Prior to Tropical Cyclone Pam, images of the nakamal show a lean-to verandah constructed from ‘bush’ posts and sheet metal roofing, which extended off the front entry.<sup>6</sup>

### Building form

The plan form of the building is rectangular in shape. Two large posts located at either end within the interior space support the ridge beam. There are no interior walls.

### Openings

The entire nakamal is enclosed along all sides except for the front where the main entrance is located, which is completely open.

## Sectional form

The sectional form of the building sees a large gable roof rising steeply from the edge beams located along the perimeter line of columns to the ridge-beam. Similar to other nakamals in Vanuatu, the wild cane thatched eaves project down lower than an average person's head height.

## Material palette

The building is mainly constructed from hardwood timber structural members, woven split bamboo and wild cane thatching. These are all tied together with fibrous ropes.

## Structural members

The primary structural members are hardwood 'bush' posts that form the perimeter to the nakamal. Timber lengths supported in the forks of these posts create an edge beam. These in turn support a sequence of rafters that extend to a central ridge beam. A layering of smaller purlins/battens over the rafters supports the wild cane roof thatching. The rafters project beyond the perimeter wall and extend to the ground line, possibly providing extra bracing to the structure. In some instances the rafters extend and cross over above the ridge line.



**Figure 7:** View of Happy Land Village post- Tropical Cyclone Pam in June 2015.

## Flooring

The floor is made from earth that is at the same height as the natural ground level. The posts are set straight into the natural ground, which acts as the footings.

## Roof cladding:

The roof cladding is made from wild cane thatch that is fixed to the hardwood battens. There are no separate interior ceiling linings.



**Figure 8:** The front of the Erromango Nakamal at Happy Land Village post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 9:** Interior view of the Erromango Nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam.



**Figure 10:** The underside of the roof thatching on the Erromango Nakamal (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam). Note that the natangura has remained in good shape.

## Walls

Low walls made from woven split bamboo infill the space along the perimeter of the nakamal. These screens demarcate the interior space from the exterior, providing complete privacy and shelter from the elements. There are no separate interior wall linings.

## Connections

The structure is tied together using fibrous ropes.

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects

Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage aspects of the Erromango Nakamal include the knowledge retained within the community of how to build it and procure the local materials sourced from across the island. There are many kastom songs that relate to the nakamal, which



**Figure 11:** The wall cladding to the interior of the Erromango Nakamal (post- Tropical Cyclone Pam), which has remained in good condition.

reinforce kastom and identity. The building itself accommodates several activities related to kastom that take place on a daily basis. The Erromango Nakamal also signifies kastom through a built visual form and materiality.

## Intangible Cultural Heritage Significance

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Erromango Nakamal is extremely important given its central role in the maintenance of kastom in Erromango.

## Symbolism within the nakamal

Every part and every element of the nakamal has a meaning behind it that can be named in the local language.

*“So each end of the nakamal, every house, every rafter, every building, every detail has a meaning, it has a meaning attached to it... If you look inside the nakamal... you can name every part of the nakamal just like you can name every part of your body.”<sup>7</sup>*

## Kastom songs related to the nakamal

There are kastom songs that relate directly to the Erromango Nakamal. One particular song is about the identification of a particular



Chief and speaks about his warriors, governing system and way of kastom. This kastom song reinforces the identification of land ownership, family groupings, governing systems and family histories.<sup>8</sup>

***“Now, the thing I want to explain to you is that all of us, especially from Erromango, we must hold on to something: our identity. Some hold on to it really tight, because if we don’t hold on tight, it will disappear.”<sup>9</sup>***

Kastom related to the nakamal

***“When we come here, we are part of this place. We cooperate, we enjoy this place with who ever is here to see the nakamal.”<sup>10</sup>***

Once inside the nakamal, one must behave in an appropriate manner. One must be at peace and have respect and sympathy when inside the nakamal. One must behave according to kastom.<sup>11</sup>

***“You never say anything that goes against kastom... Because if you do, you will have problems.”<sup>12</sup>***

The connection to kastom and the governing system is represented within the interior of the nakamal.<sup>13</sup>

***“But, like today, where we have all new technologies, the children want to live in a tin house. But we tell them that this is not safe because inside a tin house there is not your kastom, your spirit or your beliefs.”<sup>14</sup>***

There are no payments made to builders of the nakamal. Those who work on it do so on a voluntary basis. As per kastom, those who work on the nakamal must be cared for, looked after and sheltered by the community.<sup>15</sup>

## TROPICAL CYCLONE PAM AND THE ERROMANGO NAKAMAL

### Use during Tropical Cyclone Pam

Many people from Unpongkor Village sheltered in the Erromango Nakamal during Tropical Cyclone Pam. The total number of people is said to be 117, including men, women and children.<sup>16</sup> It is understood by the community at Unpongkor that the nakamal is their evacuation centre.<sup>17</sup>

***“And, at the time when we built the nakamal, we built it with the belief and idea that it is strong and that it could withstand a hazard or cyclone.”<sup>18</sup>***

The nakamal is an important part of Disaster Risk Management for the Unpongkor community that relies on it as a place to shelter during cyclonic conditions.

***“...during Cyclone Pam, many, many of us sheltered inside here. We were sheltered inside the nakamal which we use as an evacuation centre.”<sup>19</sup>***

### Damage sustained from Tropical Cyclone Pam

The Erromango Nakamal suffered little damage during Tropical Cyclone Pam. All of the primary structural members appear to be intact. It is possible that the rope connections have been weakened due to the forces exerted by the cyclone. The photographs taken post-Tropical Cyclone Pam<sup>20</sup> show that the sheet-metal lean-to verandah that had been located at the entry is no longer in place.

### Reconstruction funding

Nil.

### Potential threat / damage to Intangible Cultural Heritage values

As the Erromango Nakamal remained primarily intact during Tropical Cyclone Pam, there is a minimised threat to its Intangible Cultural Heritage values; however, ongoing maintenance will be an issue given that Tropical Cyclone Pam



significantly damaged local building material resources. Without adequate maintenance regimes and resources, the structure risks degradation over time. Maintenance of the Erromango Nakamal will be critical as it accommodates kastom governance for the community at Erromango. For this reason, consideration needs to be given into how future repairs of the nakamal will be carried out. The ongoing process of renovation of the Erromango Nakamal by the community provides the opportunity for younger generations on the island to learn from master-builders about how to repair and rebuild it according to kastom.

## NOTE

1. The above information was gained through consultation with Daniel Epsi from Ipota, as referenced below. The above commentary has also been based on interpretation of the photographs and drawings made by the author of this report.
2. All names of people and places have been spelled phonetically and need to be confirmed at a later date.

## DATE OF FIELDWORK

November 2015.

## FIELDWORKER

Artist, photographer and story collector

Siri Seoule: Vanuatu Cultural Centre Illustrator

## ERROMANGO NAKAMAL, HAPPY LAND, ERROMANGO, FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1:** Map created by Wendy Christie.

**Figure 2:** Image from: Osmoxylon. August 10, 2008. "Erromango Island."

**Figure 3:** Image from: Brigitte Laboukly Facebook photo album, "Erromango Island," August 2014.

**Figures 4–5:** Images from: Osmoxylon. August 10, 2008. "Erromango Island."

**Figure 6:** Image from: Brigitte Laboukly Facebook photo album, "Erromango Island," August 2014.

**Figures 7-11:** Images from: Stars End 2. June 19. 2015. "I Survived the Trek to Happy Land."

## ERROMANGO NAKAMAL NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.
- 2 Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)."
- 3 Coiffier, Christian. 1988, *Traditional Architecture in Vanuatu*.
- 4 Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)."
- 5 Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.
- 6 Osmoxylon. August 10, 2008. "Erromango Island."
- 7 Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.
- 8 Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)."
- 9 Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.
- 10 Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**11** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**12** Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**13** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**14** Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**15** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**16** Stars End 2. June 19. 2015. "I Survived the Trek to Happy Land."

**17** Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)."

**18** Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**19** Quotation: Daniel Epsi: Vanuatu Cultural Centre. November 2015. "Interview with Daniel Epsi by Siri Seoule (field worker)." Translated from Bilsama by the author.

**20** Stars End 2. June 19. 2015. "I Survived the Trek to Happy Land."

RECOMMENDED  
**BEST**  
SAFEGUARDING  
PRACTICES

WORLD  
COLLEGE  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
EDUCATION  
RESEARCH

## RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

The following set of best safeguarding practices for the inventoried nakamals is recommended for implementation at the village level by the communities themselves, at the national level by the Vanuatu Government and at the international level through UNESCO. It is hoped that these recommended best safeguarding practices encourage communities to repair or rebuild their nakamals, as well as instigate processes for further safeguarding mechanisms under the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and UNESCO.

The purpose of these best safeguarding recommendations is to encourage communities to safeguard both the tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) aspects of the nakamals to ensure that they are retained and maintained adequately for the benefit of current and future generations.

*Table 1: Overview of tangible damage / risk to viability of ICH element* provides a summary of each nakamal including: location; construction type; post- cyclone condition; role in Disaster Risk Reduction; renovation/reconstruction plans; as well as the state of, and perceived risk to, the viability of the ICH elements of each nakamal.

The state of the viability of the ICH elements relates to the threats to the continued building practices and, in particular, the transmission of building skills and knowledge within the communities. It also takes into account the current and/or lack of safeguarding measures already in place.

### Heritage listing/status at the national level

This report has identified a serious lack of documentation or acknowledgment of the nakamal at a national and international level. It is recommended that all of the nakamals in this report be immediately placed on the Vanuatu Cultural Centre Heritage Register. This project has started the process of an inventory of nakamals across Vanuatu, and it is recommended that it be

expanded and regularly updated by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Any nakamals that are judged to be significant at an appropriate level should be placed on the Heritage Register.

### International recognition and protection

As a means to seek better protection of the nakamal via broader international recognition, it is recommended that it be nominated to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity or the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.



**TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF TANGIBLE DAMAGE/RISK TO VIABILITY OF ICH ELEMENT**

No	Name of Nakamal/ Farea.	Community/ location	Description	Tangible condition post- TCP	Used as a shelter during TCP	Immediate renovation/ building plans	Funding to rebuild/ renovate	Heritage listing	State of the viability of ICH element	Perceived risk to the viability of ICH element
1	<b>Chiefs' Nakamal.</b>	Port Vila, Efate.	Traditional building with imported elements. Natangura thatching.	Poor. Significant damage to natangura thatching.	<b>Unknown.</b>	<b>Yes.</b> Currently being reconstructed	<b>Yes.</b>	<b>Nil.</b>	<b>Fair.</b>	<b>Medium</b> due to delay in rebuilding.
2	<b>Taloa Farea.</b>	Taloa Village, Nguna.	Traditional building. Wild cane thatching.	Fair. Some damage to wild cane thatching.	<b>Yes.</b>	<b>No.</b> Local building material resources decimated by TCP.	<b>No.</b>	<b>Nil.</b>	<b>Fair.</b>	<b>Medium</b> due to inability to renovate structure or wild cane thatching in the short/medium-term.
3	<b>Euta Nakamal.</b>	Euta Village, Tongoa.	Traditional building. Natangura thatching.	Poor. Significant damage to natangura thatching.	<b>Unknown.</b>	<b>No.</b> Local building material resources decimated by TCP.	<b>No.</b>	<b>Nil.</b>	<b>Poor.</b>	<b>High</b> due to inability to renovate structure or natangura thatching in the short term.
4	<b>Mangarisu Nakamal.</b>	Mangarisu Village, Tongoa.	Traditional building with imported elements. Natangura thatching.	Very poor. Some structural members and all natangura thatching destroyed.	<b>Unknown.</b>	<b>No.</b> Local building material resources decimated by TCP.	<b>No.</b>	<b>Nil.</b>	<b>Very Poor.</b>	<b>Very high</b> due to inability to rebuild structure or replace natangura thatching in the short/medium-term.
5	<b>Nikaura Nakamal.</b>	Nikaura Village, Epi.	Traditional building. Natangura thatching.	Fair. Some damage to natangura thatching.	<b>Yes.</b>	<b>No.</b> Local building material resources decimated by TCP.	<b>No.</b>	<b>Nil.</b>	<b>Fair.</b>	<b>Medium</b> due to inability to renovate structure or natangura thatching in the short/medium-term.
6	<b>Moriu Nakamal.</b>	Moriu Village, Epi.	Traditional building. Natangura thatching.	Fair. Some damage to the black palm wall infill.	<b>Yes.</b>	<b>No.</b> Local building material resources decimated by TCP.	<b>No.</b>	<b>Nil.</b>	<b>Fair.</b>	<b>Medium</b> due to inability to renovate structure or natangura thatching in the short/medium-term.
7	<b>Erromango Nakamal.</b>	Happy Land Village, Erromango.	Traditional building. Wild cane thatching.	Good. No noticeable damage.	<b>Yes.</b>	<b>No.</b> Ongoing maintenance compromised due to local building material resources decimated by TCP.	<b>No.</b>	<b>Nil.</b>	<b>Fair.</b>	<b>Medium</b> due to inability to renovate structure or wild cane thatching in the short/medium-term.

**Note:** TCP stands for Tropical Cyclone Pam

ICH stands for Intangible Cultural Heritage

## 1. CHIEFS' NAKAMAL, PORT VILA, EFATE: RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

### General interim maintenance

1. It was noted that the Malvatumauri had in place the following strategies for protecting the Chiefs' Nakamal post- Tropical Cyclone Pam and prior to reconstruction
  - The nakamal was fenced-off from public access;
  - The interior was cleaned of windblown debris;
  - The nakamal was easily observed and monitored by the staff of the Malvatumauri office, which is located adjacent to it; and,
  - A public awareness campaign was initiated to draw attention to the critical need to repair the Chiefs' Nakamal. This campaign was promoted via local media outlets, social media and fundraising campaigns.

### Reconstruction/renovation

2. Funding to repair the damage made by Tropical Cyclone Pam to the Chiefs' Nakamal was secured through multiple donors.
3. Technical drawings were prepared for the proposed renovations works.
4. While renovation/reconstruction works were initially delayed, they have now been completed.

### Building materials availability

5. As building materials for the Chiefs' Nakamal are sourced broadly from across Vanuatu, a general nationwide awareness campaign that encourages replanting trees and palms that support kastom building in Vanuatu is recommended.

### Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

6. It is noted that celebrations for Kastom Chiefs Day in 2016 were held outside the Chiefs' Nakamal despite the structure being in a state of disrepair. The using of the space around the nakamal for kastom related activities ensured that kastom traditions were upheld during the time that the nakamal was being rebuilt.
7. A record of the the building construction skills and the processes of procuring building materials required to renovate/build the Chiefs' Nakamal should be compiled.
8. It is noted that local ni-Vanuatu builders using both kastom and contemporary building techniques and methodologies completed the reconstruction.

### Disaster Risk Management

9. Further assessment of the role that the Chiefs' Nakamal played during Tropical Cyclone Pam would be worthwhile.
10. Hopefully, the Chiefs' Nakamal has been rebuilt to a standard where it can stand up to future cyclonic conditions.
11. If deemed viable, a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Chiefs' Nakamal should be devised that takes into consideration its possible use as an evacuation centre. This would only be possible if the building has been reconstructed to an adequate standard.
12. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Chiefs' Nakamal should include the processes that need to be followed prior to a cyclone to ensure better protection of the building, including securing any unfastened loose articles and managing openings.

## 2. TALOA FAREA, NGUNA ISLAND: RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

### General interim maintenance

1. Maintain the immediate current condition of the Taloa Farea, as follows:
  - Cover the exposed timber structural members with a tarpaulin or another similar waterproof material to minimise degradation of the timber. Seek funding to pay for this covering material if required;
  - Ensure that the interior of the farea is maintained to a reasonable standard. General maintenance routines should be applied to ensure that vines do not grow over the structure and that weeds do not cover the floor of the interior;
  - Continue maintaining and using the farea to ensure that it is not abandoned or vandalised; and,
  - Maintain kastom practices such as lighting fires inside the farea to keep termites and borers out of the structural timbers and remaining wild cane thatching.

### Reconstruction/renovation

2. Repair the existing wild cane thatching as soon as possible. Seek funding for new wild cane to be sourced from another island.
3. Conduct an assessment of the existing structural members. Replace or repair damage to any structural members as soon as possible.

### Building materials availability

4. Ensure that enough wild cane is replanted to be able to replace the wild cane thatching on the Taloa Farea as per usual renovation schedules and to support kastom building on the island in general.

5. Ensure trees are replanted as a resource for the timber structural members for future repairs/rebuilding of the farea, and to ensure the future viability of kastom building on the island.

### Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

6. Continue using the farea as far as practical to ensure that kastom governance and traditions are upheld.
7. Teach future generations of builders the traditions or ceremonies that relate to the building of the Taloa Farea.
8. Record the building construction skills and the processes of procuring building materials required to renovate/rebuild the Taloa Farea. This could be done via audiovisual recording/photo documentation as well as through technical drawings.
9. Encourage the training of youth through the establishment of 'master builder' apprenticeships.

### Disaster Risk Management

10. Formalise a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the community that includes the Taloa Farea as an evacuation centre for those who do not otherwise have adequate shelter. Ensure that the farea is in good condition and able to withstand cyclonic conditions prior to encouraging its use as an evacuation centre.
11. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Taloa Farea should include the processes that need to be followed prior to a cyclone to ensure better protection of the building, including securing any unfastened loose articles and managing openings.

### 3. EUTA NAKAMAL, TONGOA ISLAND: RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

#### General interim maintenance

1. Maintain the immediate current condition of the Euta Nakamal, as follows:
  - Cover the exposed timber structural members with a tarpaulin or another similar waterproof material to minimise degradation of the timber. Seek funding to pay for this covering material if required;
  - Ensure that the interior of the nakamal is maintained to a reasonable standard. General maintenance routines should be applied to ensure that vines do not grow over the structure and that weeds do not cover the floor of the interior;
  - Continue maintaining and using the nakamal to ensure that it is not abandoned or vandalised; and,
  - Maintain kastom practices such as lighting fires inside the nakamal to keep termites and borers out of the structural timbers and remaining natangura thatching.

#### Reconstruction/renovation

2. Repair the natangura thatching as soon as possible. Seek funding for new natangura to be sourced from another island.
3. Conduct an assessment of the existing structural members. Replace or repair damage to any structural members as soon as possible.

#### Building materials availability

4. Ensure that enough natangura palms are replanted to be able to replace the natangura thatching on the Euta Nakamal as per usual renovation schedules and to support kastom building on the island in general.

5. Ensure trees are replanted as a resource for the timber structural members for future repairs/rebuilding of the nakamal, and to ensure future viability of kastom building on the island.

#### Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

6. Continue using the nakamal as far as practical to ensure that kastom governance and traditions are upheld during the time that the nakamal is in a state of disrepair.
7. Teach future generations of builders the songs that relate to the building of the Euta Nakamal, as well as any other traditions or ceremonies that relate to the nakamal.
8. Record the building construction skills and the processes of procuring building materials required to renovate/build the Euta Nakamal. This could be done via audiovisual recording/photo documentation as well as through technical drawings.
9. Encourage the training of youth through the establishment of 'master builder' apprenticeships.

#### Disaster Risk Management

10. Formalise a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the community that includes the Euta Nakamal as an evacuation centre for those who do not otherwise have adequate shelter. Ensure that the nakamal is in good condition and able to withstand cyclonic conditions prior to encouraging its use as an evacuation centre.
11. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Euta Nakamal should include the processes that need to be followed prior to a cyclone to ensure better protection of the building, including securing any unfastened loose articles inside or outside the nakamal and managing openings.



## 4. MANGARISU NAKAMAL, TONGOA ISLAND: RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

### General interim maintenance

1. Maintain the immediate current condition of the Mangarisu Nakamal, as follows:
  - Continue to cover the exposed timber structural members with tarpaulins or other similar waterproof material to minimise degradation of the timber. Seek funding to pay for extra covering materials if required.
  - Ensure that the interior of the nakamal is maintained to a reasonable standard. General maintenance routines should be applied to ensure that vines do not grow over the structure and that weeds do not cover the floor of the interior.
  - Continue maintaining and using the nakamal (as far as possible in its current state) to ensure that it is not abandoned or vandalised.
  - Maintain kastom practices such as lighting fires inside the nakamal to keep termites and borers out of the remaining structural timbers.

### Reconstruction/renovation

2. The community at Mangarisu will need to significantly rebuild their nakamal. How much of the structure, if any, can be salvaged is not known, and will depend on how long it takes for the community to be able to rebuild. An assessment of the existing structural members needs to be conducted and damage to any structural members needs to be repaired as soon as possible.
3. Seek funding for new natangura to be sourced from another island and repair the thatching as soon as possible.

### Building materials availability

4. Ensure that enough natangura palms are replanted to be able to replace the thatching on the Mangarisu Nakamal as per usual renovation schedules and to support kastom building on the island in general.
5. Ensure trees are replanted as a resource for the timber structural members for future repairs/rebuilding of the nakamal, and to ensure future viability of kastom building on the island.

### Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

6. Continue using the nakamal as far as practical to ensure that kastom governance and traditions are upheld during the time that the nakamal is in a state of disrepair.
7. Teach future generations of builders the songs that relate to the building of the Mangarisu Nakamal, as well as any other traditions or ceremonies that relate to the nakamal.
8. Record the building construction skills and the processes of procuring building materials required to renovate/build the Mangarisu Nakamal. This could be done via audiovisual recording/photo documentation as well as through technical drawings.
9. Encourage the training of youth through the establishment of 'master builder' apprenticeships.

### Disaster Risk Management

10. Further assessment of the role that the Mangarisu Nakamal played during Tropical Cyclone Pam would be worthwhile.
11. Reconstruction of the Mangarisu Nakamal should ensure that the building is rebuilt to a standard where it can stand up to cyclonic conditions.

12. If deemed viable, a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Mangarisu Nakamal could be developed that takes into consideration its possible use as an evacuation centre. This would only be possible if the building were reconstructed to an adequate standard.
13. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Mangarisu Nakamal should include the processes that need to be followed prior to a cyclone to ensure better protection of the building, including securing any unfastened loose articles and managing openings.

## 5. NIKAURA NAKAMAL, EPI ISLAND: RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

### General interim maintenance

1. Maintain the immediate current condition of the Nikaura Nakamal, as follows:
  - Cover the exposed timber structural members with a tarpaulin or another similar waterproof material to minimise degradation of the timber. Seek funding to pay for this covering material if required;
  - Ensure that the interior of the nakamal is maintained to a reasonable standard. General maintenance routines should be applied to ensure that vines do not grow over the structure and that weeds do not cover the floor of the interior;
  - Continue maintaining and using the nakamal to ensure that it is not abandoned or vandalised; and,
  - Maintain kastom practices such as lighting fires inside the nakamal to keep termites and borers out of the structural timbers and remaining natangura thatching.

### Reconstruction/renovation

2. Repair the natangura thatching as soon as possible. Seek funding for new natangura to be sourced from another island.

3. Conduct an assessment of the existing structural members. Replace or repair damage to any structural members as soon as possible.

### Building materials availability

4. Ensure that enough natangura palms are replanted to be able to replace the thatching as per usual renovation schedules and to support kastom building on the island in general.
5. Ensure trees are replanted as a resource for the timber structural members for future repairs/rebuilding of the nakamal, and to ensure future viability of kastom building on the island.

### Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

6. Continue using the nakamal as far as practical to ensure that kastom governance and traditions are upheld during the time that the nakamal is in a state of disrepair.
7. Teach future generations of builders the songs that relate to the building of the Nikaura Nakamal, as well as any other traditions or ceremonies that relate to the nakamal.
8. Record the building construction skills and the processes of procuring building materials required to renovate/build the Nikaura Nakamal. This could be done via audiovisual recording/photo documentation as well as through technical drawings.
9. Encourage the training of youth through the establishment of 'master builder' apprenticeships.

### Disaster Risk Management

10. Formalise a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the community that includes the Nikaura Nakamal as an evacuation centre for those who do not otherwise have adequate shelter. Ensure that the nakamal is in good condition and able to withstand cyclonic conditions prior to encouraging the use of the nakamal as an evacuation centre.

11. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Nikaura Nakamal should include the processes that need to be followed prior to a cyclone to ensure better protection of the building, including securing any unfastened loose articles and managing openings.

## 6. MORIU NAKAMAL, EPI ISLAND: RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

### General interim maintenance

1. Maintain the immediate current condition of the Moriu Nakamal, as follows:
  - Reinstall the black palms trunks that infill the lower walls to their original location.
  - Ensure that the interior of the nakamal is maintained to a reasonable standard. General maintenance routines should be applied to ensure that vines do not grow over the structure and that weeds do not cover the floor of the interior;
  - Continue maintaining and using the nakamal to ensure that it is not abandoned or vandalised; and,
  - Maintain kastom practices such as lighting fires inside the nakamal to keep termites and borers out of the structural timbers and remaining natangura thatching.

### Reconstruction/renovation

2. Conduct an assessment of the existing structural members. Replace or repair damage to any structural members as soon as possible.

### Building materials availability

3. Ensure that enough natangura palms are replanted to be able to replace the natangura thatching on the Moriu Nakamal as per usual renovation schedules and to support kastom building on the island in general.

4. Ensure trees are replanted as a resource for the timber structural members for future repairs/rebuilding of the nakamal, and to ensure future viability of kastom building on the island.

### Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

5. Continue using the nakamal to ensure that kastom governance and traditions are upheld during the time that the nakamal is awaiting renovations.
6. Teach future generations of builders the songs that relate to the building of the Moriu Nakamal, as well as any other traditions or ceremonies that relate to the nakamal.
7. Record the building construction skills and the processes of procuring building materials required to renovate/build the Moriu Nakamal. This could be done via audiovisual recording/photo documentation as well as through technical drawings.
8. Encourage the training of youth through the establishment of 'master builder' apprenticeships.

### Disaster Risk Management

9. Develop a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the community that includes the Moriu Nakamal as an evacuation centre for those who do not otherwise have adequate shelter. Ensure that the nakamal is in good condition and able to withstand cyclonic conditions prior to encouraging the use of the nakamal as an evacuation centre.
10. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Moriu Nakamal should include the processes that need to be followed prior to a cyclone to ensure better protection of the building, including securing any unfastened loose articles and managing openings.

## 7. ERROMANGO NAKAMAL, HAPPY LAND: RECOMMENDED BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

### General interim maintenance

1. Maintain the immediate current condition of the Erromango Nakamal, as follows:
  - Ensure that the interior of the nakamal is maintained to a reasonable standard. General maintenance routines should be applied to ensure that vines do not grow over the structure and that weeds do not cover the floor of the interior;
  - Continue maintaining and using the nakamal to ensure that it is not abandoned or vandalised; and,
  - Maintain kastom practices such as lighting fires inside the nakamal to keep termites and borers out of the structural timbers and remaining wild cane thatching.

### Reconstruction/renovation

2. Conduct an assessment of the existing structural members. Replace or repair damage to any structural members as soon as possible.

### Building materials availability

3. Ensure that enough wild cane is replanted to be able to replace the wild cane thatching as per usual renovation schedules and to support kastom building on the island in general.
4. Ensure trees are replanted as a resource for the timber structural members for future repairs/rebuilding of the nakamal, and to ensure future viability of kastom building on the island.

### Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

5. Continue using the nakamal as far as practical to ensure that kastom governance and traditions are upheld while the nakamal awaits renovation.

6. Teach future generations of builders the traditions or ceremonies that relate to the building of the Erromango Nakamal.
7. Record the building construction skills and the processes of procuring building materials required to renovate/build the Erromango Nakamal. This could be done via audiovisual recording/photo documentation as well as through technical drawings.
8. Encourage the training of youth through the establishment of 'master builder' apprenticeships.

### Disaster Risk Management

9. Formalise a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the community that includes the Erromango Nakamal as an evacuation centre for those who do not otherwise have adequate shelter. Ensure that the nakamal is in good condition and able to withstand cyclonic conditions prior to encouraging the use of the nakamal as an evacuation centre.
10. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the Erromango Nakamal should include the processes that need to be followed prior to a cyclone to ensure better protection of the building, including securing any unfastened loose articles and managing openings.



# CONCLUSION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Intangible Cultural Heritage significance of the nakamal

The anecdotal evidence collected during the project fieldwork stage demonstrates the significant role that the nakamal plays in the maintenance of kastom in Vanuatu. It also highlights the importance of the nakamal beyond the built fabric where centuries old Intangible Cultural Heritage knowledge and skills related to procuring materials and building the nakamals are retained within the communities.

### Disaster Risk Reduction significance

The project results also show that even from a very small pool of precedents, the nakamal plays a significant role in Disaster Risk Reduction in Vanuatu, particularly in rural areas where people may not otherwise have access to adequate shelter.

### Recommendations

In terms of protecting and gaining recognition for the nakamal in Vanuatu, particularly as this relates to the maintenance of kastom and the essential role it plays in Disaster Risk Reduction, it is recommended that:

1. Each nakamal in this report be immediately placed on the Vanuatu Cultural Centre Heritage Register.
2. The inventory of nakamals that has been instigated by this project be expanded and regularly updated by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre.
3. The nakamal be nominated to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity or the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.
4. Those organisations working in Disaster Risk Management and Shelter Reconstruction in Vanuatu continue to consider the role that traditional architecture plays in rural

and remote areas, and in particular the functional role of the nakamal during cyclonic conditions.

5. Traditional buildings made from local materials and kastom building techniques are included and encouraged within any national or regional building codes/guidelines for Vanuatu.
6. The Department of Tourism Vanuatu and other tourism related organisations continue to encourage the use of local materials in tourist accommodation buildings across Vanuatu.
7. This report be translated into Bislama and made available to the communities who have generously shared their knowledge and stories with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, so that they have access to the best safeguarding recommendations.
8. This report be published and made accessible to the public for the dissemination of knowledge to the broader Vanuatu community, as well as those organisations working in the field of Disaster Risk Management and Shelter Reconstruction in Vanuatu.

### Expected outcomes of the project

It is expected that the knowledge captured in this report will encourage and trigger a new wave of indigenous traditional building in Vanuatu where the case study communities are encouraged to adopt the best safeguarding measures.

Should the nakamals be repaired or rebuilt as a result of the recommended safeguarding measures being acted upon by the communities, they will serve as examples to other communities of the benefit of preserving this type of indigenous knowledge.

This would hopefully create a multiplier effect where building skills are passed from person to person, particularly from elder to youth in the form of 'master builder' apprenticeships. This

would mitigate the risk of traditional knowledge being lost forever, as skills and knowledge would be transferred to more people interested in learning the traditional building skills.

### Potential outcomes of the recommendations

Should the nakamal be given proper recognition through national or international heritage status, communities may be encouraged to build nakamals in their island vernacular, using centuries old knowledge passed down from generation to generation. There would also be set in place the opportunity to better fund educational and research forums related to traditional building in Vanuatu.

This would be a preferable outcome to the alternative where communities adopt imported building materials and technologies, which would increase the loss of Intangible Cultural Heritage knowledge, skills and kastom. The importation of new building construction types also bears risks related to the potential for the construction of unsafe buildings, resulting from inadequate training in new building practices and from the use of heavier and potentially more lethal building materials if not secured properly.

From interest shown in the initial project description by various groups working in the field of Shelter Reconstruction in Vanuatu post-Tropical Cyclone Pam, it is hoped that the information in this report can also be used to continue to promote traditional construction techniques as part of a comprehensive Disaster Risk Strategy for Vanuatu, particularly in rural areas.



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