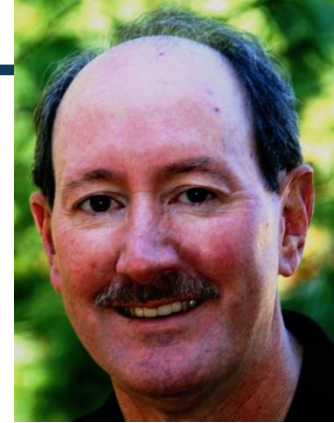

University of South Alabama
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
Mobile, Alabama, January 2017

The Elusive Female Chiefs of Vanuatu

Lew Toulmin, Ph.D., F.R.G.S.
The Explorers Club



Llewellyn “Lew” Toulmin, Ph.D.



**Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society
and Member of The Explorers Club**



**Worked in Vanuatu Prime Minister's Office
for three years**



**Led anthropological and archaeological
expeditions, and searched for missing
aircraft, persons, plantations and towns**



Ph.D. in public administration & economics



Traveled to 144 of the 196 countries on Earth

Topics:



Vanuatu - What's That?



Notari - Who's That?



Female Chiefs - Where Are They?



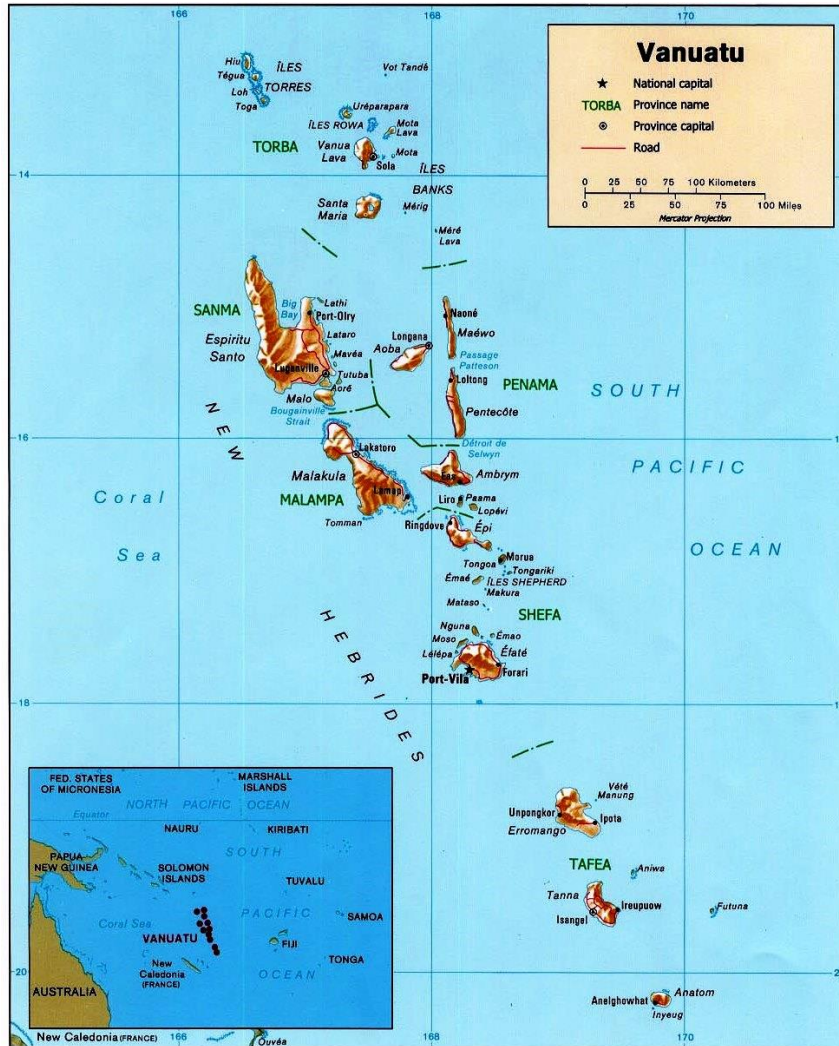
Huh?



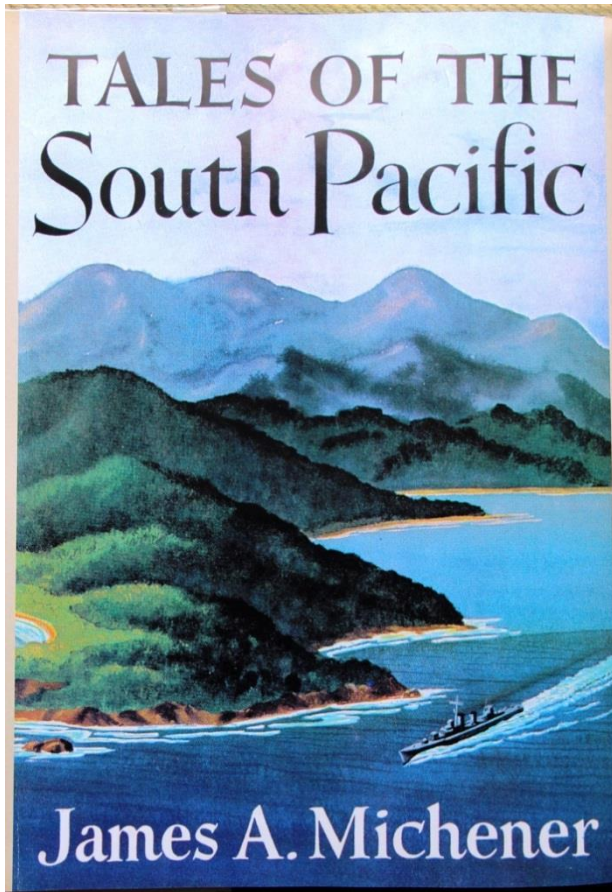
Vanuatu - What's That?



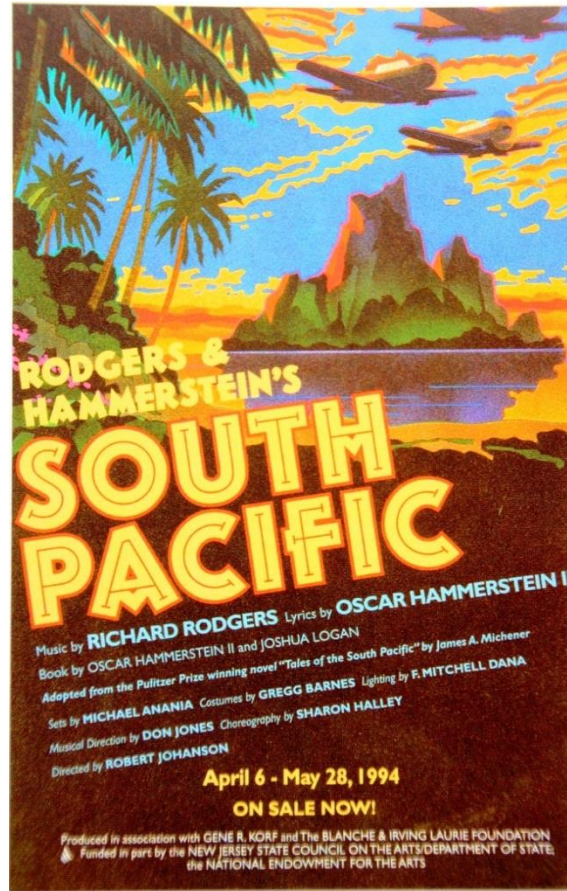
Vanuatu is a country in the SW Pacific, with 83 volcanic islands and 250,000 friendly people



Previously the New Hebrides, Vanuatu was the setting for *South Pacific*, and got independence in 1980 from Britain and France



BOOK

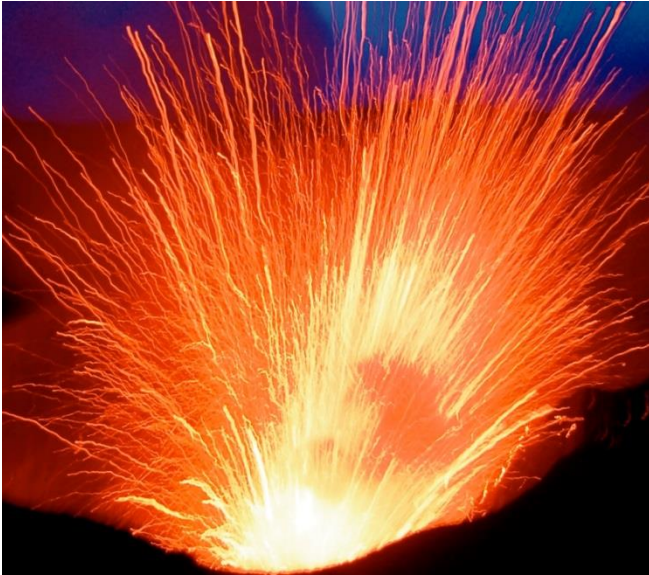


PLAY



MOVIE

Vanuatu is famous for volcanos, beaches, and especially land-diving...



The Female Chiefs of Vanuatu



...which inspired bungee jumping!



The best wreck dive in the world, beautiful people, and exciting culture



The Female Chiefs of Vanuatu

A tribe that worships Prince Philip as a god -- another that salutes the US and USMC flags

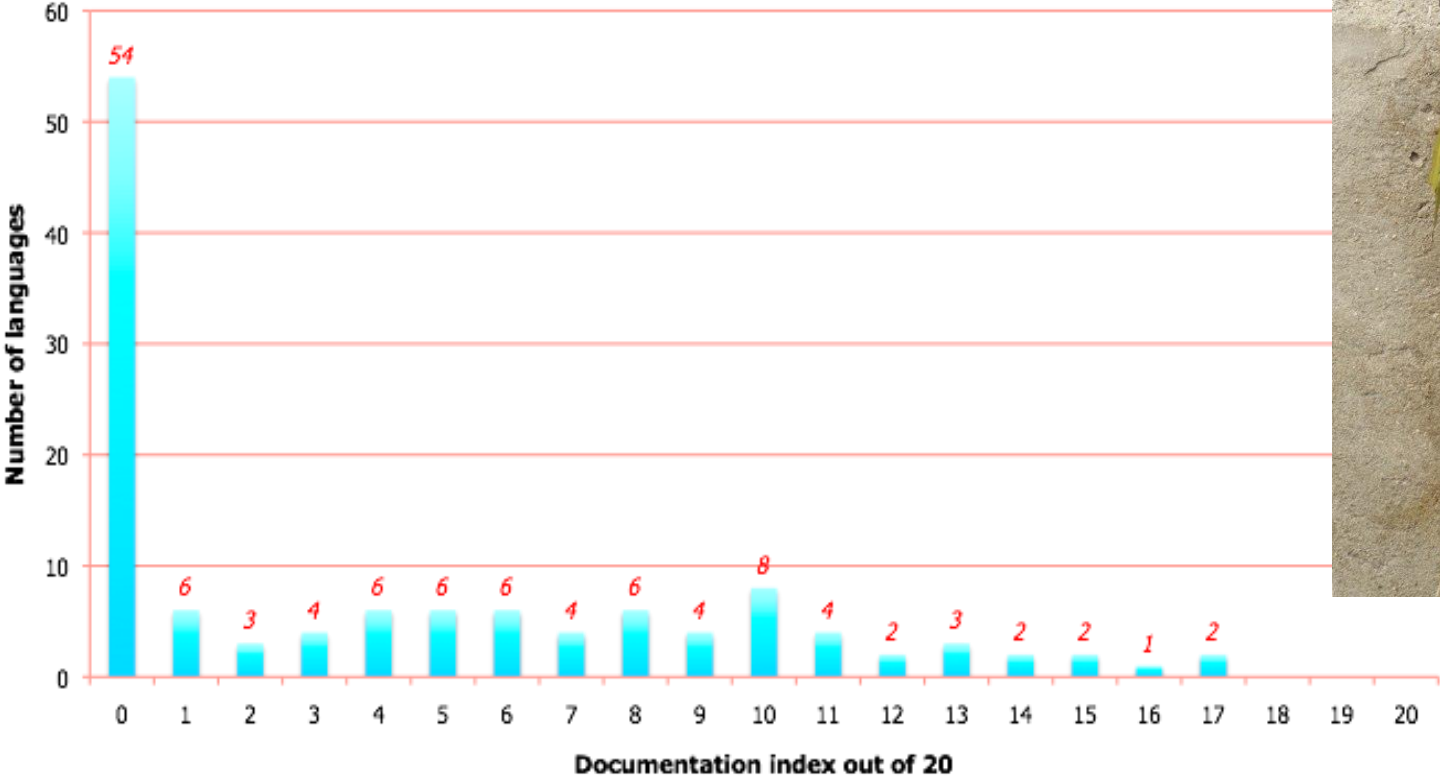


The Female Chiefs of Vanuatu

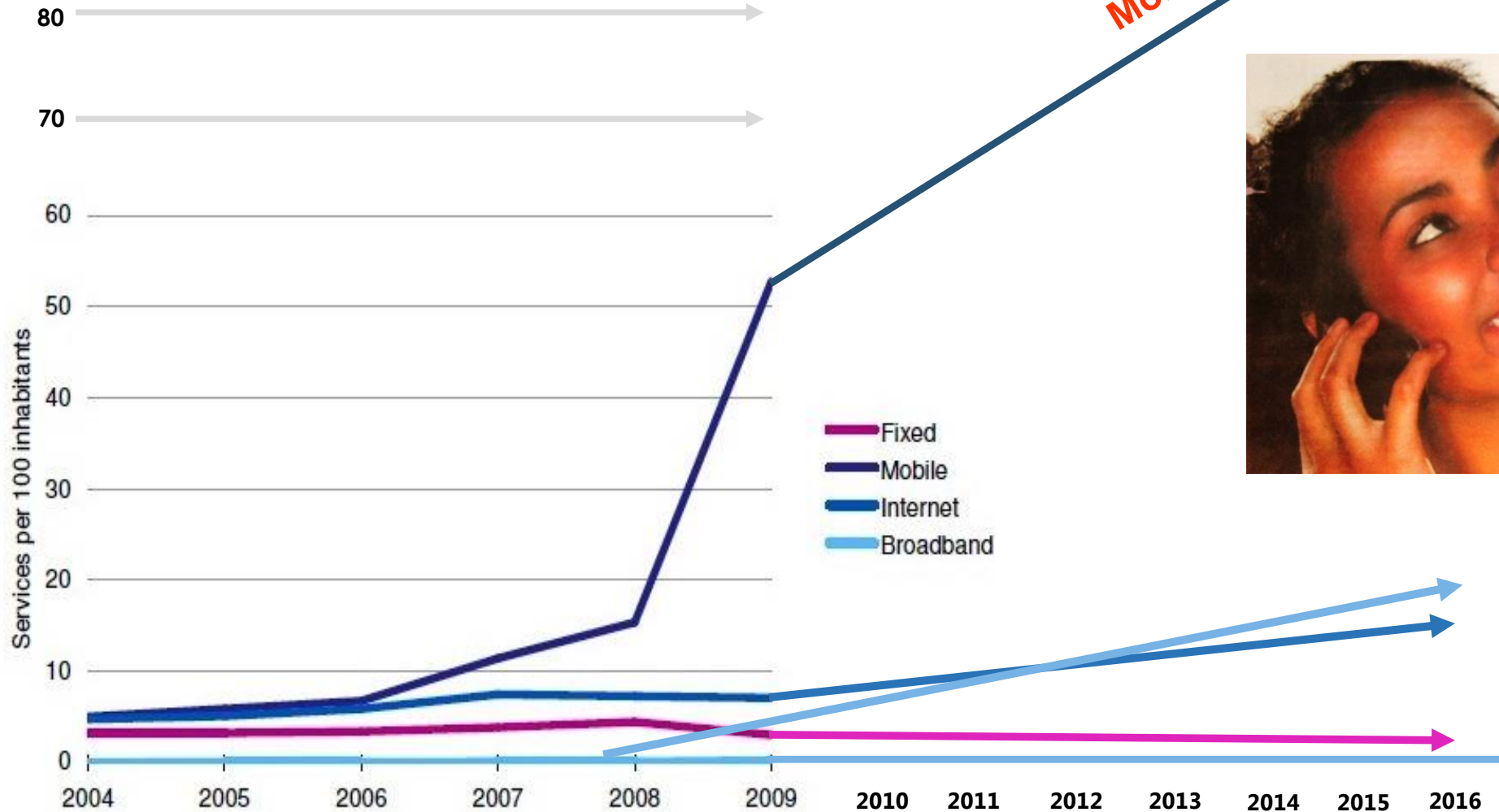


With 123 languages, this is the most linguistically dense country on Earth -- but only 3% are well documented

Documentation index, Vanuatu languages




Mobile household penetration has increased dramatically to 94%



Vanuatu is dominated by male chiefs, who rise in rank by killing sacred pigs with circular tusks



Domestic violence rates very high --
no female members of Parliament --
women's social status is low



VANUATU THE NEWS YOU TRUST
DAILY POST

News Opinion Sports Tourism Classifieds Advertise With Us

The Cost of Violence in the Home

July 18, 2016



Notari - Who's That?



For 103 years anthropologists have stated or assumed that there are no female chiefs in Vanuatu

The History
of Melanesian Society
VOLUME II

W. H. R. Rivers

Rivers in 1914:
“females on
Pentecost have
name prefixes
denoting rank,
but these are
not connected
with a chiefly
system”



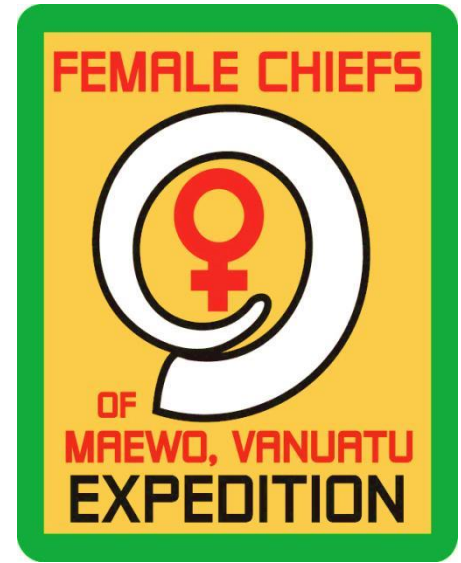
The Expedition started with a surprising lunch



+



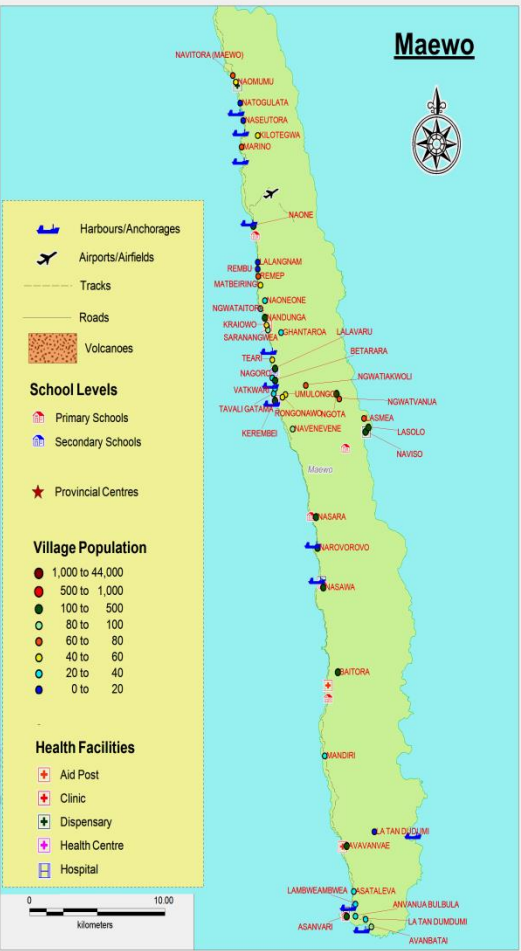
=



Dalsie Baniala, now the Telecom Regulator of Vanuatu, half-sister of Elvina (right)

Elvina Roling Baniala Toa,
A Female Chief (?) of Maewo
island

Our team showed up on Maewo in August 2016 to observe the Women's Festival and interview female chiefs



We documented the Maewo Women's Cultural Festival



Traditional water fights



Famous
"water music"



Bird dances

Learning dances



Sand
painting

The Festival emphasized traditions



Women in traditional pandanus leaf garments



Males opened and closed the Festival



Cooking
w/ hot rocks

Food prep.
w/ bamboo
knife



Singing, music and dance are vital to traditional life

[play short Festival video]



We learned new things about women's initiation



The initiation ceremony “Lengwasa” varies across the island



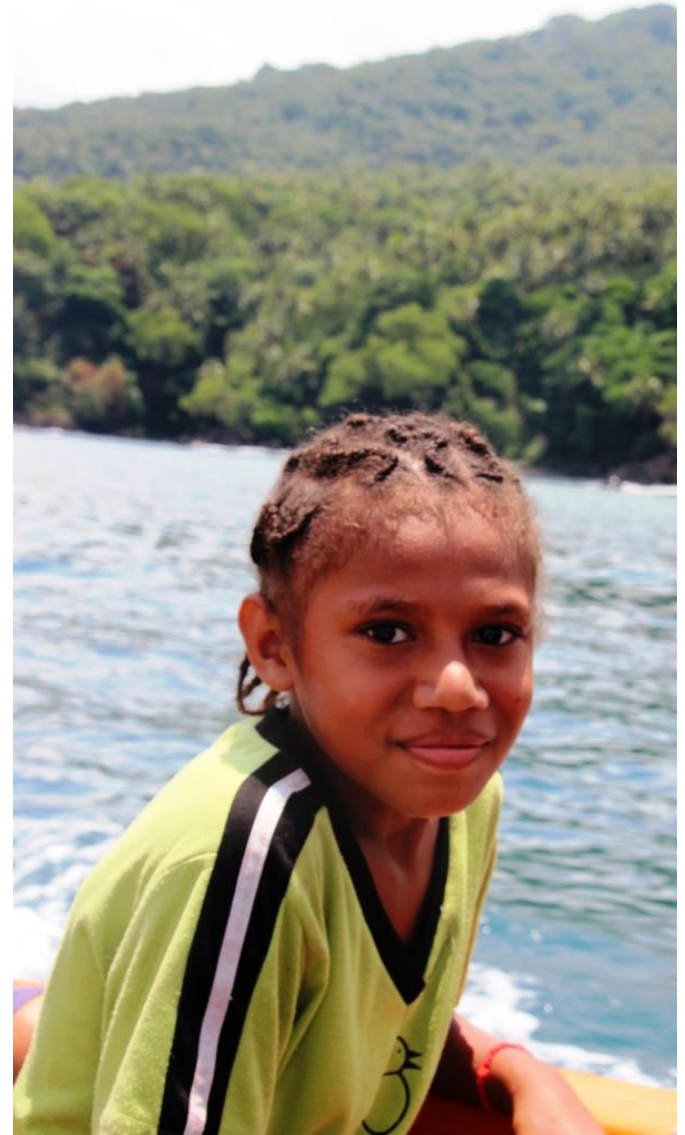
There are 3 grades of female leader, with 3 grades now lost



10-20% re-do Lengwasa later in life



Avoiding an evil spirit is not always the main reason for making Lengwasa

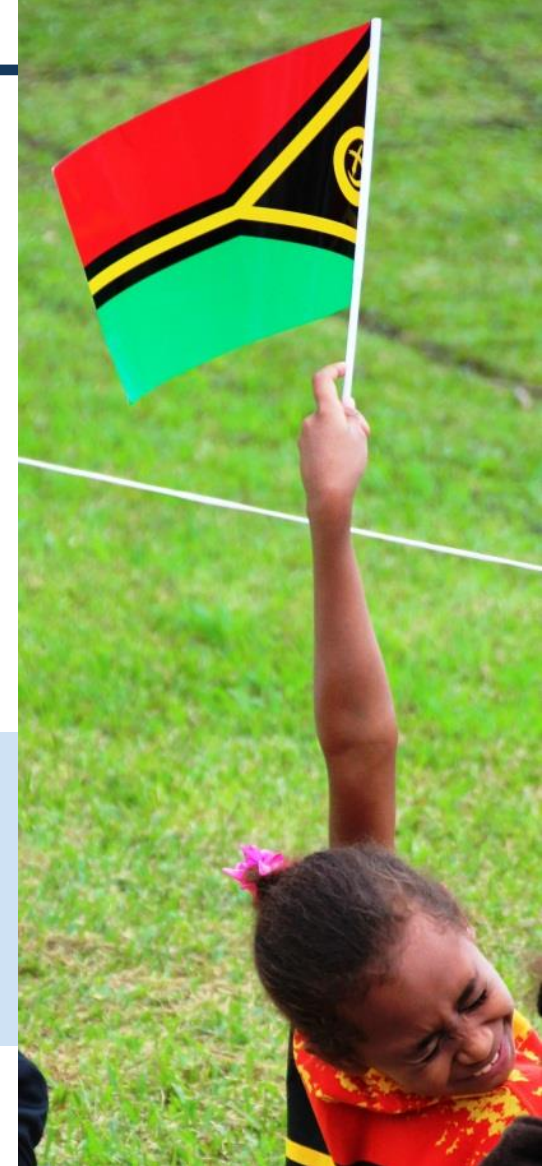


But there was a problem...



...the Maewo women refused to be called “chiefs” - they preferred “Notari”

Female Chiefs - Where are they?



Doreen Leona and her mother, from Pentecost island, ARE female chiefs



Phoebe John was a chief on Pele island for seven years...



...she had all the powers and rights of a male chief!

Hilda Lini: most senior female chief



Eleven chiefly titles



M.P. for 11 years, was Minister twice



Founded institute for the study of local barter economics and ethnology; sister of founder of Vanuatu



Won two international peace prizes



Recognized as a chief by male chiefs



Can speak in the chiefs' "nakamals"



Chief Lini said:



Killed ~25 sacred pigs in 15 ceremonies



Female chiefs have existed since pre-history



There is an "Association of Female Chiefs" in the Shepherd's Group



Six non-Christian villages in S Pentecost have female chiefs



N Pentecost has the most female chiefs

BE A HERO FOR A BETTER WORLD

MAKE A DIFFERENCE



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

"Indigenous Peoples have always believed that peace is central to human security and all life forms that exist in a community, a nation, Mother Earth and the universe..."
- Hilda Lini

BetterWorldHeroes.com

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Other key leaders agreed that female chiefs exist



P.M.'s office: "there are female chiefs, esp. in Pentecost and PENAMA province"



Women's Affairs Dept.: "there are women chiefs on Ambae, Pentecost and Santo"



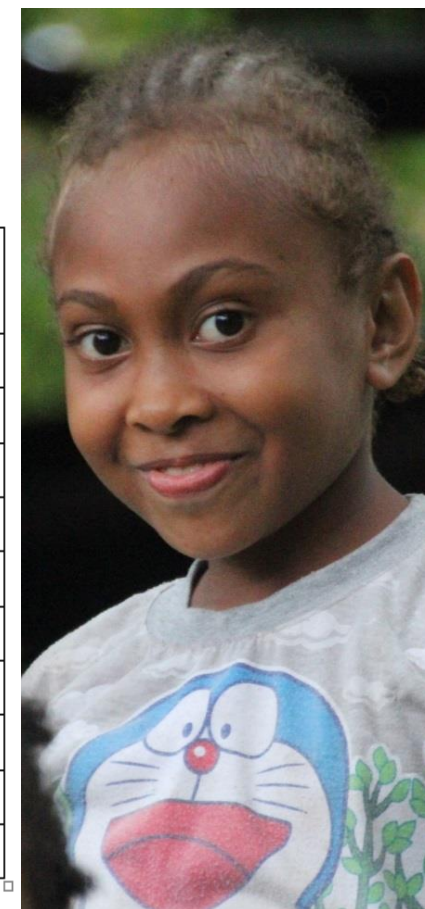
National Council of Chiefs: "No female chiefs on current list, but when updated there may be. Female chiefs on Ambae, with limited powers."



The Expedition estimated the total number of female chiefs...

Table 1: Location and Current Estimated Number of Female Chiefs of Vanuatu

Province/Island	Est. Number of Female Chiefs	Source of Estimate
PENAMA/Pentecost – North	250	Lini interview; D. Leona interview
PENAMA/Pentecost – South	14	Lini interview
PENAMA/Maewo	0	Notari interviews on Maewo
PENAMA/Ambae	20	Lini interview; Vuti interview
MALAMPA	0	Shing email; Lini interview
SANMA	10	Lini interview; Watson interview
SHEFA	24	John interview; Lini interview
TAFEA	0	Shing email
TORBA	0	Shing email
ESTIMATED TOTAL	318	



...at perhaps 7% of all chiefs

Conclusions:



There are female chiefs now in Vanuatu; and they may have existed since pre-historic times



This is a huge paradigm shift from previous thought



Even though “chief” is a Western-introduced term, it is vital to understand the word, since “chief” is used in the Constitution, law, regulations and programs



Huh?



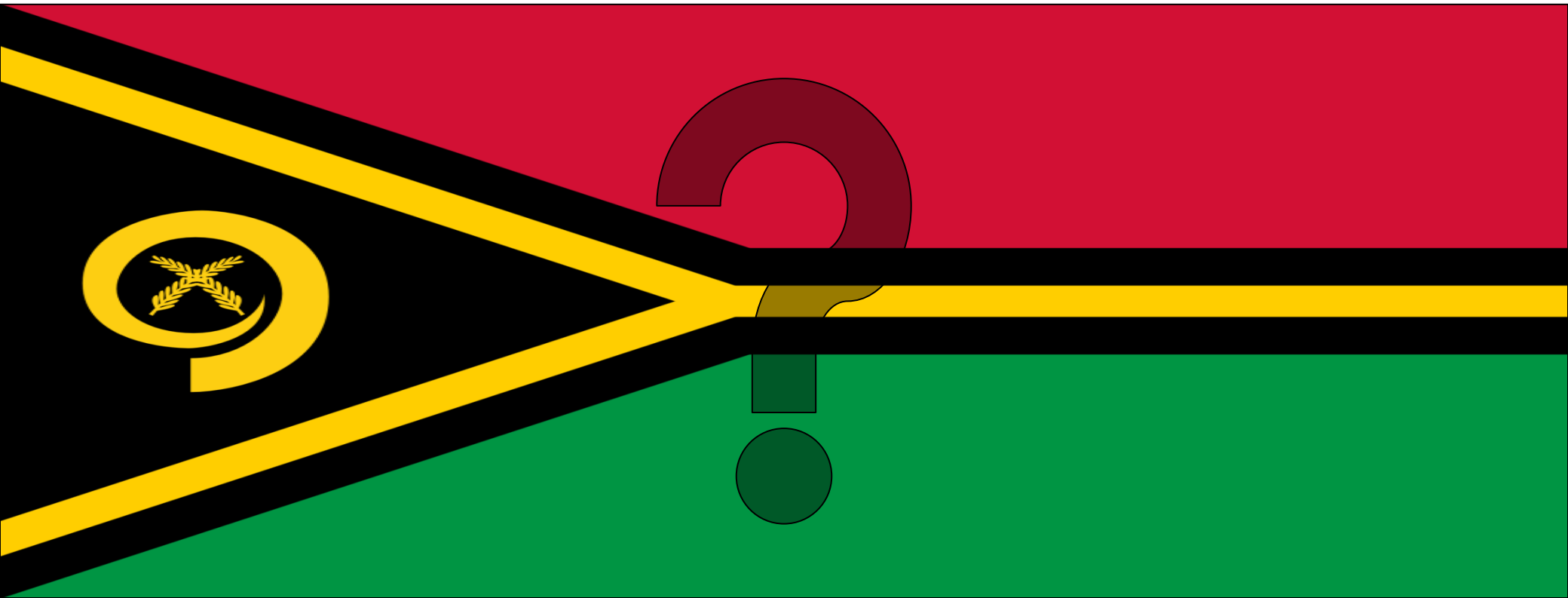
“Huh?” -- How were these female chiefs missed?

Female chiefs recently emerged?

Colonial and post-colonial info blinders prevented male researchers from noticing?

Lack of anthropological funding and research?

Blinders even on the female anthropologists and writers?



Tank Yu Tumas!



QUESTIONS?