

## Chief Roi Mata's Domain (Vanuatu)

No 1280

*Official name as proposed by the State Party:* Chief Roi Mata's Domain

*Location:* Shefa Province

### *Brief description:*

Three sites on Efate, Lelepa and Artok islands (three of the 83 islands of Vanuatu) are associated with the life and death of the last holder of the title paramount chief or Roi Mata of what is now central Vanuatu. Roi Mata, who lived in around 1600 AD, had a profound impact on society during his lifetime and continues to be revered today for the moral values he espoused, and for his social reforms which led to widespread conflict resolution. He is now the central figure in oral traditions, known throughout the Pacific, and his former domain, particularly the sites of his home, death and mass burial, provide material proof of his actions, give authority to his successor chiefs, and act as contemporary sources of power and inspiration for social practices and the way people relate to their land.

### *Category of property:*

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2 February 2005) paragraph 47 it is also nominated as a cultural landscape.

## 1. BASIC DATA

*Included in the Tentative List:* 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004

*International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination:* No

*Date received by the World Heritage Centre:* 23 January 2007

*Background:* It is a new nomination.

*Consultations:* ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes.

Comments on the assessment and management of the natural heritage values of this property were received from IUCN on 13 December 2007 and are related to the following issues:

- Typology of the property
- Marine environment
- Financing

This information was carefully considered by ICOMOS in reaching the final decision and recommendation in March 2008.

### *Literature consulted (selection):*

*Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific*, Thematic Study, ICOMOS, December 2007.

*Technical Evaluation Mission:* 22 to 28 September 2007

*Additional information requested and received from the State Party:* ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 18 December 2007 on the issue of the boundaries and the question of commercial leases.

The State Party provided supplementary information on 28 February 2008 and their response is included in this report.

*Date of ICOMOS approval of this report:* 11 March 2008

## 2. THE PROPERTY

### *Description*

The archipelago of Vanuatu, located some 1,750 km east of northern Australia, consists of 83 islands, many of which are volcanic in origin. The most populated is Efate where the capital, Port Vila, is situated.

The cultural landscape nominated comprises sites on Efate Island, and Lelepa Island, the whole of Artok Island and the sea between. Lelepa and Artok islands are two small islands off the north-west coast of Efate Island. These sites are part of the last Roi Mata's domain as paramount Chief of Efate and its outlying islands.

Sheltered by the central mountain range of Efate, the rich volcanic soils along this part of Efate's coastal plain combined with a diverse marine environment to provide the basis for a long history of relatively dense settlement.

Supplementary information states that the core zone is 888.31 ha.

The nominated property covers sites associated with the life and death of the last Roi Mata and his continuing legacy in terms of oral traditions and inspiration. These sites are known from collective memory and were substantiated through archaeological exploration. Specific dates for the life of Roi Mata are not known but a date around 1600 is now accepted from the archaeological evidence available.

Roi Mata's domain covered from Tukutuku in the southwest of Efate Island to Samoa Point to the northeast of the island and included the islands of Lelepa and Artok; the sites chosen for the nomination cover only a part of that domain.

The nominated property consists of:

*Sites associated with Roi Mata's life, death and burial:*

- *Roi Mata's residence, Mangaas, Efate Island*
- *The site of Roi Mata's death, Fels Cave, Lelepa Island*
- *Roi Mata's mass burial site, Artok Island*

*The intangible association between the three sites and Roi Mata:*

- *Roi Mata's legacy*

These are considered separately and then overall:

*Sites associated with Roi Mata's life, death and burial:*

- *Roi Mata's residence, Mangaas, Efate Island*

The site is located on the narrow fertile coastal plain, abutting in the south raised coral reefs and cliffs rising to 200 metres. Entrance to the site from the sea is through a thin passage between the raised reefs, headed by several massive, ancient trees, including three tamanu (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), said to have been planted by Roi Mata.

Immediately inland from the beach is a level area identified as a dancing ground (*mwalala*) and dominated by a large banyan tree, probably dating from Roi Mata's time. The *mwalala* includes the location for slit drums used to summon the community for dances. Further inland is the area identified as Roi Mata's residential yards and the site of his house. Many of the names of the yards have been linked from oral evidence to Chiefs' titles within Roi Mata's court.

The footings of stone walls, constructed dry of coral boulders, are in evidence across the site. Most are constructed parallel to the beach on a series of raised beach ridges. Walls around the dancing area form an irregular curved enclosure while those nearer the house site are more rectangular. Some wall stones have been plundered since 1927 for copra pits and no survey has yet been undertaken of under-ground evidence. The full significance of the overall wall network has therefore yet to be established.

Scattered across the site are 'sacred' boulders of exotic geological provenance treated with respect by the local community. Slab stones also mark burials in part of the site identified during excavations in 1967. Two other areas outside the nominated boundary contain burial features – mounds with upright slabs – possibly linked to earlier holders of the Roi Mata title. Some surface finds, such as pottery and grindstone, were identified in surveys carried out in 2005, as a preliminary to the nomination.

The abandonment of the site around 1600 AD is seen to coincide with the death of the last holder of the Roi Mata title.

- *The site of Roi Mata's death, Fels Cave, Lelepa Island*

Oral tradition relates how Roi Mata crossed from Mangaas to the island of Lelepa to attend a *naleoana* or feast; falling ill after the feast, he was taken to Fels Cave where he died.

The cave is a tall cavern some 35 metres high, 47 metres deep and 52 metres broad, with a comparatively low entrance 6 metres high which faces out to Artok Island.

Much of the inner walls of the cave are covered at head height with paintings, both red and black, and engravings. These present a wide range of images, such as birds, fish, human and anthropomorphic figures, non-figurative forms and engraved cupoles filled with black pigment. Radio-carbon dating of a black image suggests it was created in Roi Mata's time. Elders consider that one or more of the large images of armed men, in the vicinity of the dated painting, could depict Roi Mata.

- *Roi Mata's mass burial site, Artok Island*

The small island of Artok, the site of Roi Mata's mass burial, lies approximately 3,000 metres from Efate Island. It has a distinctive shape of a central cap of uplifted coral limestone 90 metres high, rising from a coral platform interspersed with sandy inlets.

Ever since the time of Roi Mata's burial, the island has been considered *fanua tapu*, or sacred, and grazing and gardening have been forbidden. As a result of 400 years without human intervention, the island's tree cover has increased and the vegetation now supports species rare elsewhere. The nominated burial site lies some 50 metres inland from the southern coast, facing the mainland. It is marked by two large and several smaller headstones and several large conch shells. The area was excavated in 1967 and as part of the consolidation work, the headstones were re-erected and the extent of the excavated site marked out by a line of coral boulders. Excavations revealed a large burial site with a single central figure with his head against the largest headstone, surrounded by 50 more burials of men, women and children – presumably of his family and court.

The burial site lies at the edge of a network of dry stone-walled fields. This field system covers most of the level areas on the island – the coastal platform as well as the raised plateau – and was originally bounded by a concentric series of perimeter sea walls, of which a few sections still survive. Only the foundations remain of most of the walls, with the coral boulders from the upper courses being spread across the landscape.

Analysis of the field patterns has suggested that the earliest enclosures were the smaller, more irregular ones, nearest the sea and that these could possibly have been used as residential yards. Behind these, the larger more rectilinear walls, extending to the central spine of the island, might have been garden enclosures. Above on the highest level, enclosures were perhaps associated with defensive measures.

The occupation of the island is thought to have considerable time depth, as evidenced by a scatter of Mangaas pottery (2400 -1500 BP) but as yet no detailed

surveys have been undertaken, of for instance identified rock shelters and burial sites.

Although the dossier states that the visible cultural heritage of Artok Island offers an exceptional perspective on the landscape of a 16<sup>th</sup> century chiefly domain, without the benefit of further exploration, many questions remain unanswered as to how the island was used and by whom, and thus its role as part of Roi Mata's domain is unclear.

*The intangible association between the three sites and Roi Mata:*

○ *Roi Mata's legacy*

The element that links all three sites together and to the present day is Roi Mata's life and achievements. He features in a common core of oral traditions across central Vanuatu as a source of power and inspiration for the impact of his social reforms based on *naflak* matricians, *Naflak* is a form of kinship reckoning through the matrilineal line. It probably already existed but Roi Mata extended it from a system of land tenure to the regulation of marriage and thus also of conflict, through providing people with allegiances that extended beyond the confines of their immediate settlements and narrow existing social groups. He encouraged clans not to wage war against members of the same matriline and also introduced *natamwate* peace feasts as a means of settling the long era of island-wide conflicts known as the Great Efate War.

*Buffer zone*

The three sites are joined together by a stretch of sea. A buffer zone encompasses further stretches of sea between Efate, Lelepa and Artok Islands and includes part of the shore. The rural landscape of the shore has very limited existing development with only a few villages and farming plots.

The buffer zone includes many of the named sites mentioned in the Roi Mata legends – apart from those already in the core zone – and is said to encompass a large part of Roi Mata's domain. The areas excluded are those with commercial leases: Tukutuku on mainland Efate, the eastern side of Lelepa Island, and the interior of Efate Island. While the vegetation may have changed from the time of Chief Roi Mata, the undisturbed quality of the area covered by the buffer zone adds strongly to the understanding and context of the three sites.

*History and development*

The earliest settlement so far documented is on Efate Island where pottery can be dated to around 3100 BP. It is presumed that similar communities were also present across what became Roi Mata's domain, although the earliest date is 2900 BP.

The end of pottery production around 1500 BP seems to have preceded the introduction between 1200 – 1000 BP from outside the area of a chiefly title system, related to similar systems in western Polynesia.

Life in Vanuatu experienced a catastrophic disruption in 1452 AD with the eruption of the Kuwae volcano in the Shepherd Islands to the north.

In about 1600 AD a long period of persistent warfare known as the Great Efate War appears to have come to an end, with the resolution of conflict being attributed to Roi Mata. One result was the exodus of chiefs from Efate to the Shepherd Islands, some suggesting that Roi Mata instigated a kind of social revolution.

After Roi Mata's death and burial on Artok Island, the settlement of Mangaas was abandoned and never re-settled. It is suggested that after his death, conflict could have resumed which proved fatal for his community who dispersed or moved elsewhere. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, descendants of the lesser chiefs were living on Lelepa Island.

European contact begun around 1840 and twenty years later there were numerous European settlements including missionaries. From the 1870s Fels Cave had become a tourist attraction with regular visits from British naval vessels.

By 1898 most people had been converted to Christianity. Epidemics subsequently decimated the population of Efate and surrounding islands forcing survivors into a few larger settlements, with European settlers acquiring the vacated land, which they held until independence in 1980. Since independence, 55% of the land on Efate has now been leased to foreign investors.

From 1957 research has been conducted into oral traditions of the area and into the archaeology of Mangaas, Fels Cave and the Artok burial site. In 2005 a brief reconnaissance survey of Artok island was undertaken.

*Chief Roi Mata's Domain values*

The values of the nominated property are related to the history and oral traditions associated with Roi Mata and their manifestations in the landscape.

### **3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY**

*Integrity and Authenticity*

*Integrity*

The nomination is of part of Roi Mata's domain. In terms of integrity the issue is whether sufficient has been nominated to understand the full values of the site.

It is clear that the three main sites of Roi Mata's residence, death site and grave are the key sites. However Roi Mata is credited with peaceful resolution of conflict and the context within which this happened could perhaps be better understood by evidence from sites in the hinterland where archaeological surveys have identified 189 additional National Register Historic sites along the coastline sites of potential importance.

More specifically further exploration is needed to determine the boundaries of the residence and whether remains adjacent could be associated with Roi Mata or his predecessors.

#### *Authenticity*

The authenticity of the nominated sites is not in doubt, including their strong associations with oral history.

ICOMOS considers that the condition of integrity has only been partly met and the condition of authenticity has been met.

#### *Comparative analysis*

This nomination is seen as one of the first two cultural nominations from independent Pacific Island States. The other cultural site from the Pacific, Rapa Nui National Park, is seen to belong to Chile rather than an independent Pacific Island nation. East Rennell in the Solomon Islands is a natural site.

The 2005 workshop on the Thematic Framework for World Cultural Heritage in the Pacific identified principal themes for the region including sites ‘in which intangible associations are important ...’. The Chief Roi Mata’s Domain fits this latter theme.

The comparative analysis considers chiefly title systems, mass burials, the convergence of archaeology and history, and the continuing oral traditions of Roi Mata.

Attention is drawn to the fact that chiefly title systems are widespread throughout the Pacific, but that the system in Vanuatu is unique in the way its elements reflect cognate systems and terms used in western Polynesia (although Vanuatu culture is not Polynesian), and in terms of the time depth extending to four centuries over which memory has been preserved.

Mass chiefly burials have been found in several sites across the Pacific, dating from around 1400 to 1800 AD. Roi Mata’s grave is distinguished by three factors: the large number of people buried with him apparently voluntarily, the high number in proportion to the assumed population at the time; and the oral tradition associated with the chief Roi Mata.

The oral tradition of the Pacific islands is rich with narratives naming chiefly ancestors for up to 50 or more successive holders of the title and details of migrations. The traditions associated with Roi Mata are particularly rich in their portrait of the man and stories of the flight to Efate after the eruption of Kuwae volcano.

Bringing together oral tradition and archaeology, the nominated sites present a unique convergence in the Pacific region.

Taking a global perspective, there are numerous recorded mass burials, and many societies that preserve long oral traditions, in sagas, family histories, narrative histories etc.

The significant qualities of the nominated sites relate to a convergence between oral history and archaeology, the profile of the man associated with them and the fact that they can be seen as exemplars for the wider Pacific culture.

IUCN states that “the nomination is particularly good in showing the living connection between Pacific people and their environment, and the natural values of this site that have been preserved because of the taboos associated with the area.”

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the inscription on the World Heritage List.

#### *Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value*

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

The sites of the residence, death and burial of the last paramount chief Roi Mata are:

- Exemplars of the exceptional living connections between Pacific people, their landscapes and their traditions.
- Reflect the convergence between oral tradition and archaeology.
- Are witness to the persistence of Roi Mata’s social reforms relating to kin group reckoning and conflict resolution which still inform disputes today.

#### *Criteria under which inscription is proposed*

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi). Criterion (v) is also considered by ICOMOS.

*Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the domain is a continuing cultural landscapes that reflects the way chiefs, who pay a major social role, derive their authority from previous title holders; and in particular how the *tapu* prohibitions on the use of Roi Mata’s residence and burial site have been observed for 400 years and continue to structure the local landscape and social practices.

ICOMOS supports this justification although considers that the attributes that carry this value extend beyond the nominated site.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified, although for a larger area than currently nominated.

*Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the landscape of Roi Mata's domain, as exemplified in the sites of his residence, death and burial, is an outstanding example of a Western Pacific landscape in the way it reflects chiefly systems of small scale societies which are seen to be a significant stage in human history.

ICOMOS considers that the evidence for Roi Mata's reign and social reforms, as exemplified in the landscape and as reflected in current social and cultural systems, do provide evidence of an exceptional link between oral and archaeological traditions and a persistent spiritual attachment to the landscape, and can be seen as an example of Pacific chiefly systems, but cannot be seen to illustrate a significant and specific stage in human history. ICOMOS considers criterion (v) to be more appropriate.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

*Criterion (v): be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.*

This criterion was not considered by the State Party.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified for the reasons set out by the State Party for criterion (iv). The landscape of Roi Mata's domain is an outstanding example of a settlement which is representative of Pacific chiefly system, particularly in the way people interact with their environment over time in respecting the tangible remains of the three key sites associated with Roi Mata and being guided by the spiritual and moral legacy of his social reforms.

ICOMOS considers that although this criterion was not proposed, it could be justified, provided some adjustment is made to the boundaries.

*Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the landscape of Roi Mata's domain memorialises his deeds in introducing *naflak* matricians as a means of conflict resolution, and its value for contemporary society through Central Vanuatu, tying people inextricably to the landscape.

ICOMOS considers that Chief Roi Mata still lives for many people in contemporary Vanuatu, as a source of power evident through the landscape, and as an inspiration for people negotiating their lives.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified for the landscape of Roi Mata's domain which extends beyond the nominated boundaries.

ICOMOS considers that the criteria (iii), (v) and (vi) and the Outstanding Universal Value have been demonstrated; however the attributes which carry outstanding universal value go beyond the current boundaries.

#### 4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

##### *Development Pressure*

Up to 50% of Efate Island has been leased to foreign investors, and some of this land is in the proposed buffer zone. The leasing is part of residential accommodation boom. A new zoning plan for the areas near the nominated site has been proposed and should be released in 2007.

The greatest recent threat is to Artok Island, the whole of which was leased to an Australian investor in 1994 to develop a tourist resort, in direct contravention of the taboo. Although this lease is said in the nomination dossier to have been technically revoked in 2006, the lessee still has not withdrawn rights and customary rights have not yet been reinstated. The government has stated that it intends to present legislation to 'void' this lease. No timetable was provided in the nomination, but in response to a request for further information, the State Party in its supplementary material has stated that the lease could be revoked by Parliament in March 2008, and legal issues surrounding the compensation for the Australian investor resolved at the same time.

The issue of commercial leases for aquaculture in the sea joining the nominated sites was mentioned in the nominating dossier and at the time of the mission. In response to a request from ICOMOS for clarification, the State Party has responded that an existing lease for harvesting fish for aquaria, which has attracted much criticism, has not been renewed for 2008. Further a Japanese funded project has been put in place to re-stock native fish species.

It is stated in the supplementary documentation that 'it is anticipated' that *tapu* restrictions, combined with World Heritage status and the benefits of marine tourism will 'finally close the door on commercial reef exploitation'.

##### *Visitors*

All the sites are vulnerable to visitors touching loose stones and other smaller components. Community guides are being trained – see below.

##### *Graffiti*

The dossier acknowledges a certain amount of graffiti on the walls of Fels Cave. Some is from the 19<sup>th</sup> century but others are recent, circa 2000. A campaign of awareness has been initiated within the Lelepa community to prevent further vandalism.

### *Impact of climate change*

This issue is not addressed in the dossier. Clearly any change in sea level would have a profound impact on two of the sites and their setting.

### *Risk preparedness*

No formal arrangements are in place for dealing with emergencies.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property is commercial leases, in particular the lease of the whole of Artok Island and the aquaculture lease, but also the threat of further commercial leases over land in Efate Island.

## **5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT**

### ***Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone***

As a cultural landscape consisting of sites on three islands separated by several kilometres of open water the delineated boundaries are particularly important. In the mapping presented in the original nomination, the nominated area is a triangle of water just touching the land at a single point on each of the three islands. Supplementary information provided by the State Party has confirmed that the whole of Artok Island is included, but has also confirmed the original tight boundaries for Mangaas and Fels Cave.

At Mangaas, the boundaries have been determined by surface and sub-surface archaeological investigations. However, an important consideration is a contiguous site west of the core area where archaeology experts have noted to be one of the few multi-period sites for the study of Pacific Island habitation. The Mangaas site is said to appear to be the periphery of a much larger settlement which extended further still along the coast towards Mangaliliu village. This adjacent layering of history needs recognition and protection. Protection within a buffer zone may not be enough as the plan indicates construction of traditional houses adjacent to the Mangaas site. The area to the south west of the delineated area of Mangaas is land area exchanged with the Alepa family for Artok Island so that Chief Roi Mata could be buried on that island. Consequently, consideration should be given to including this area as well since there is an associative value with Chief Roi Mata and it would provide protection for the larger area.

At Fels Cave the boundaries cover the interior of the cave with a simple rectangle from the edge of the entry to the cave to the water. Access to the cave appears to be outside of this drawn boundary as the steep area between the edge of the cave and the beach is not easily accessible. The boundaries need adjusting to cover the access and the immediate hinterland to the cave.

Currently excluded from the nominated area, but included in the buffer zones are many sites named in Roi Mata's legends. Particularly notable is the point of Nangus Katou, where the remains and followers of Chief Roi Mata crossed the sea from Efate Island to Artok

Island. Oral history relates that the sea parted to allow the people to walk to the island and no coral now grows within this alignment. This site is west of the village of Mangaliliu and not currently included within the "triangle" of water that defines the potential World Heritage area. The State Party has said that this site was excluded as there are no visible remains. ICOMOS considers that the strength of this nomination is the extent and present day relevance of oral tradition that links Roi Mata to many identified sites. It considers that the nomination would be much strengthened by the inclusion of more of these sites.

The buffer zone was defined in the nomination as the view shed from the Chief Roi Mata grave site on Artok Island. In reality the proposed buffer zone does not include this whole view shed. Excluded are an area of northwest Efate Island that includes the sea and the sloping hillside, and Lelepa Island to the top of the mountain ridge. Currently the buffer zone boundary line on northwest Efate is approximately half a kilometre below the ridge and does not include any of the western promontory of Efate Island near Tukutuku point. Both of these areas were omitted as they are under the jurisdiction of another Chief or under leases for cattle ranching. However, these areas are clearly within the view planes from the island and should be included within the buffer zone. The area within the buffer zone contains two small villages and very little existing development. Consequently, the visual field is remarkably intact.

In response to a request from ICOMOS on the boundaries, the State Party has indicated that it does not consider that the core area can be extended as it does not consider that the local community would accept restrictions on land currently in the buffer zone. Currently no restrictions are in place on buffer zone land- see below – and some of it is subject to commercial leases.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries around Mangaas and Fels Cave do not include even sufficient land to allow full understanding of the sites. ICOMOS further considers that the values for which the property have been nominated extend beyond the tight boundaries and particularly to the landscape that unites the nominated sites and carries further associations with Roi Mata, and which currently are vulnerable to development.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the core zone do not fully encompass the scope and extent of sites associated with Roi Mata or sites which have the potential to demonstrate time depth to Roi Mata's reign; or the immediate setting of the key sites; it further considers that the buffer zone of the nominated property needs to be extended to cover all of the view shed from Roi Mata's grave.

### ***Ownership***

Most of the land in the core and buffer zone is in customary ownership. Of particular concern is the issue of outstanding leases for the entire Artok Island, for aquarium fishing within the core zone, and for commercial development on Efate Island within the buffer zone.

The Artok Island was offered by Chief Meto Kalotiti, the customary owner for a 75 year rural commercial lease to an Australian investor in 1994. Despite strong objection of the Ministry of Justice, Culture and Women's Affairs, the National Council of Chiefs, and the Efate Council of Chiefs, the lease was registered by the Department of Lands in 1996. As no development occurred on this lease in a ten year period, a new 75 year lease was signed in 2004 with a 12 month development period. In the nomination it is said that when no development had occurred by October 2005, the lease was technically 'revoked'. However it appears that the lessee has been uncooperative, advertising the sale of this lease for development as recently as 2006 and negotiations with the lessee to return the land have proved to be ineffectual. Although the control or the cancelling of this lease is said to be a high priority of the government of Vanuatu, nothing has yet been agreed. Appropriate control of Artok Island by the local customary groups would be difficult with an uncooperative foreign investor. A large development in the middle of the island would negatively impact on the integrity of the historic resource.

The area of sea between the three islands (in the core zone) has been leased for aquarium farming. The State Party in its supplementary information said that this lease had not been renewed for 2008 and it was anticipated that further leases would not be given. It appears however there is no specific regulation currently in place to prohibit such leases in the core and buffer zones. – see above.

ICOMOS considers that resolution of the Artok lease and a commitment not to sign further commercial aquaculture leases must be achieved to allow protection of the core area.

Furthermore ICOMOS considers that part of the buffer zone along the coast should be included in the core zone and protected from commercial leases, and that overall the buffer zone needs protection for views.

## **Protection**

### *Legal Protection*

The land laws and ways of decision making within Vanuatu are complex yet complimentary. There are national laws governing land use as well as a traditional land tenure stewardship system. One issue is the land tenure system allows the land to be leased for seventy five year periods to foreign investors without adequate controls in place to protect cultural resources.

The preservation order for the property is under legislation entitled Preservation of Sites and Artefacts Act (Chapter 39 of the Laws of the Republic of Vanuatu). This current preservation legislation has a minimal penalty for violation of the Act. It is said that the penalties are to be increased at the next legislative session scheduled for November 2007. The new penalties should be 5,000,000 vatu or approximately \$500,000.

The core and buffer areas could be protected under the Environmental Management and Conservation Act No 12 of 2002. The nomination dossier states that the Vanuatu Cultural Council is currently working with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to secure a preservation order for the property. At the moment only Roi Mata's burial site has protection under a colonial law that is still in force. A protection order will shortly be gazetted for the entire island of Artok extending the existing protection for the site of Roi Mata's grave.

The law as currently written appears to be only for natural resources not cultural resources. While this Act governs "protected or proposed protected areas" all the definitions and types of controlled activities deal with natural resources. Consequently, a number of parallel additional definitions and divisions would need to be added for cultural conservation.

The buffer zone has been mapped for historic sites and 189 individual sites have been listed on the National Register within it. It is critical that buffer zone protection is developed. Currently the area within the buffer zone has very limited existing development but there is significant development pressure on Efate Island for tourism. Very specific use and design controls will be necessary to restrict commercial development, to maintain the view sheds across the buffer zone and to guide appropriate development. No guidelines are currently in place for the buffer zone. These are to be put in place as part of the revision of the Management Plan which should be completed by March 2009.

### *Traditional Protection*

The Republic of Vanuatu legislation acts as a compliment to the chiefly system. Land rights and customary ownership in Vanuatu follow other Pacific Island patterns of custodianship rather than ownership. The clan is the custodian and individuals are designated by the Chief certain areas for gardening for sustenance. The implication of this system is that land is not a commodity but sacred and held for future generations. The core area is under the control of several chiefs related by family that have agreed to this nomination. Prominent positions in the World Heritage Tourism Committee are held by family members. While this is a cooperative situation, it also creates a problem when part of area needing control is under the jurisdiction of another Chief.

Traditional *tabu* restrictions, although powerful have not been sufficient to stop commercial leases on Artok Island, on part of the sea in the core areas, on Tukutuku point, Efate Island, visible from Artok Island, or on the east of Lelepa Island, parts of which are visible from Roi Mata's grave on Artok Island.

ICOMOS considers that lack of legal protection for the core and buffer zone is a cause for concern, given the pressure for development and the uncertainty over the lease on Artok Island, and that necessary legal protection needs to be put in place as a matter of urgency to reinforce traditional protection.

## **Conservation**

### *Inventories, recording, research*

Research undertaken under the jurisdiction of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC) is quite comprehensive. Recent archaeological work has been done through the VCC by experts from the Australian National University. It is likely that this complimentary relationship will continue which is beneficial as there is research work that still needs to be done.

Additional archaeology needs to be undertaken both adjacent to the residence, to connect (or not) this site with the area designated as Chief Roi Mata's residence, or with earlier chiefs, and around the grave site, in order to confirm or otherwise the possibility of a substantially larger grave site. The 189 additional National Register Historic sites along the coastline should be analysed for the connections with Chief Roi Mata and their larger clan context.

### *Present state of conservation*

#### *Mangaas:*

The site is covered with scattered stones, the remains of stone walls and also sacred exotic stones carefully positioned on the site. Little active conservation of the site has taken place. In response to increase in visitors, a programme of monitoring has been initiated with a number of fixed monitoring points identified.

#### *Fels Cave:*

A monitoring programme was initiated in 2001 with 11 fixed monitoring points to record both natural and visitor issues.

#### *Artok Island:*

Little active work has been undertaken since the burial site was excavated and no work has been done to stabilise the remains of the stone walls. All the remains on the island are in need of adequate surveys and planned preventative conservation work.

### *Active Conservation measures*

Currently only passive conservation measures are in place to ensure that minimum damage is caused by visitors to the three main sites, but this is linked to monitoring arrangements.

ICOMOS considers that the basic conservation needs to be put on a more structured basis to cope with the anticipated increase in visitor numbers.
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## **Management**

### *Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes*

The preservation approach is one of *nafsan natoon*, or learned social rules respected by all in the community.

### *Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation*

The Management Plan designates two organizations to work hand in hand, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC) and the World Heritage Tourism Committee (WHTC). The VCC have taken the lead in organizing the research and developed a comprehensive database for the 189 sites within the buffer zone area. A system of trained VCC field workers from communities throughout Vanuatu has been set up to work on cultural issues at the community scale. These field workers are positioned within the community but return to the VCC for training and exchange with the other field workers.

The Management Plan was developed through consensus with members of communities. The Action Plan incorporates these values and details specific short and long range planning goals such as environmental resource protection, oral history recording and dissemination, guide training, community capacity building, and commercial activities including support for authentic craft production. Guides have been trained, safety strategies developed and a framework is in place for appropriate interpretation. It is a very ambitious plan and some of the timing is too short, but the intent and potential execution is commendable. It does however need extending to cover the buffer zone more specifically. There may be a need for additional expertise to allow action to be undertaken in a comprehensive and timely manner and there will certainly be a need for resources.

As IUCN points out that "as noted in the nomination document, the basis for financing the monitoring and management of the site is worrisome."

IUCN comments that "a major portion of the proposed core and buffer zones are located in the marine environment and yet there is relatively little description of the marine components or prescription for their monitoring and management."

IUCN further states that "Inscription of the property on the World Heritage List will most likely result in increased tourism and associated complications for management."

A Tourism Management Plan is also in its nascent stages. Guides have been trained, safety strategies developed and the framework is in place to effect appropriate interpretation. The resources of the community by themselves may not enough to accomplish all the required tasks and additional input from preservation and tourism professionals may be necessary to launch the process.

The sale of hand crafts is suggested by the Tourism Management Plan. It is highly desirable that the customs and cultural elements that are developed be authentic to local culture and place.

### *Involvement of the local communities*

Local communities are fully involved in the management of the site and will be involved in the implementation of the Management Plan.



*Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training*

The VCC has two fieldworkers for the Lelepa region and they have experience in cultural heritage matters, particularly oral history. They work with community volunteer ‘experts’. There is a need for this expertise to be supplemented by expertise in archaeological landscape management to safeguard the fragile core sites and those in the buffer zone.

Currently there are almost no resources to manage the property. Financial benefits from commercial leases to customary land owners have not, it is acknowledged in the nomination dossier, flowed back to manage or upgrade the property. Income generation is a high priority, particularly from tours for visitors. Seed money will be needed to implement both the Management and Tourism Plans.

ICOMOS commends the Management Plan as an aspirational document but considers that it needs to be extended to the buffer zone and the marine environment. ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property is adequate but is under-resourced. The resources of the community will need to be augmented in order to allow the Management and Tourism Plans to begin to be implemented. Expertise in archaeological landscape management will need to be provided.

## 6. MONITORING

There is a well thought out monitoring plan for change within the nominated sites on land. Designated monitoring sites will be visited on an annual basis by VCC staff and more regularly by tour guides and landowners. There is however a danger that monitoring is for safety rather than conservation concerns. For instance at Mangaas one of the monitoring stations is a Tamana trees along the shoreline. Rotten branches have been removed in a way that might damage the tree. There is no monitoring of the marine environment between the land sites.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system is adequate but should be strengthened to cover the marine environment.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The landscape and oral traditions associated with Roi Mata display a remarkable convergence. What has been nominated are three small parts of this landscape – the residence, death site and burial of Roi Mata, with boundaries tightly drawn around two of them. What draws together these three sites and gives them context is the wider landscape of hills, fields, shore and sea, which were Roi Mata’s domain. And this cultural landscape contains much evidence associated it seems, with Roi Mata and his predecessors, which could provide a wider picture of Roi Mata and his domain.

Currently, although the vegetation may have changed since Roi Mata’s day, the undisturbed quality of its rural landscape of a few villages and farming plots, adds strongly to the understanding and context of the three sites, framing as it does the views between them. This buffer zone has no protection and there are clear threats associated with development leases that could be applied in this area.

ICOMOS does not consider that the current boundaries fully reflect the full values of the site – excluding as they do the immediate setting of the sites, in the case of Mangaas associated archaeological remains, and more generally much of what constituted Roi Mata’s domain, within which there are an extensive network of sites associated with him. There is a need to put the nominated sites into this wider context and to provide protection not only for the specific sites but also for the landscape that links them together. ICOMOS considers that consideration needs to be given to extending the boundaries to cover sites along the shore associated with Roi Mata, and extending the buffer zone to include the full view shed from Artok Island.

ICOMOS also considers that the protection is needed for the nominated sites and also for the buffer zone, to sustain the setting of the known sites, and that this protection would need to preclude most commercial development.

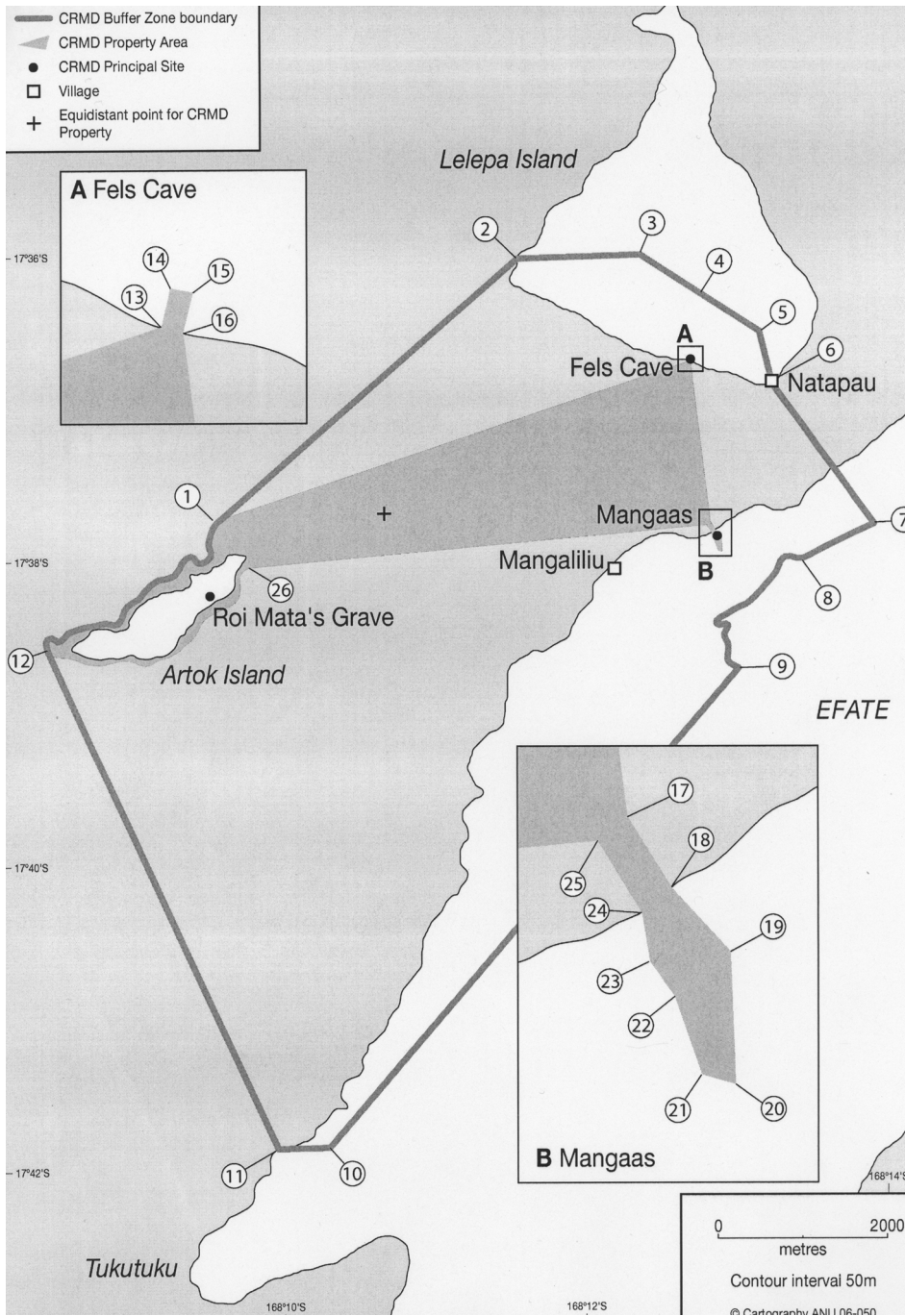
There is also a need to avert the main threat to the site from outstanding leases for development of Artok Island and for aquaculture in the sea between the three sites. It is essential that the Artok lease is revoked, that commitment is given that no further aquaculture leases will be issued, and that appropriate protection for the core and buffer zone including the marine areas will be put in place.

### *Recommendations with respect to inscription*

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of Roi Mata’s Domain, Vanuatu, to the World Heritage List be *deferred* in order to allow the State Party to:

- Put in place legal protection for all of the nominated areas.
- Put in place controls for development in the buffer zone, and extend monitoring and management to the marine areas.
- Complete the revocation of the lease for Artok Island.
- Gain agreement at both chiefly and legislative levels to limit further exploitation by commercial leases in the core and buffer zone, including aquaculture leases.
- Identify adequate resources to allow the implementation of the Management and Tourism Plans.

- Enlarge the boundaries to include more of the landscape of Roi Mata's domain, at a minimum the environs of the residence to encompass known remains, the setting and historic access to the cave, and the addition of Nangas Katou and the shore on Efate and Lelepa Islands, which includes sites associated with Roi Mata.
- Enlarge the buffer zone to include the full view shed from Artok Island including the ridge and peninsula near Tukutuku.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



**Artok Island**



**Roi Mata's magic stone**



**Possible black rock-art depiction of Roi Mata, Fels cave**



**Roi Mata's mass burial site, Artok Island**