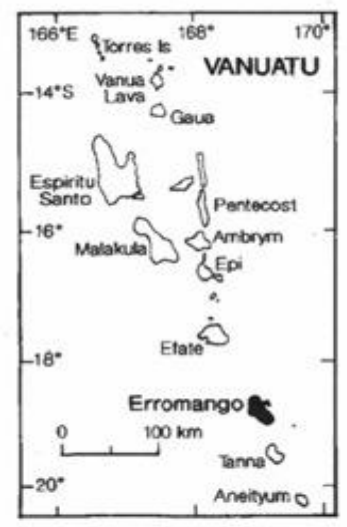
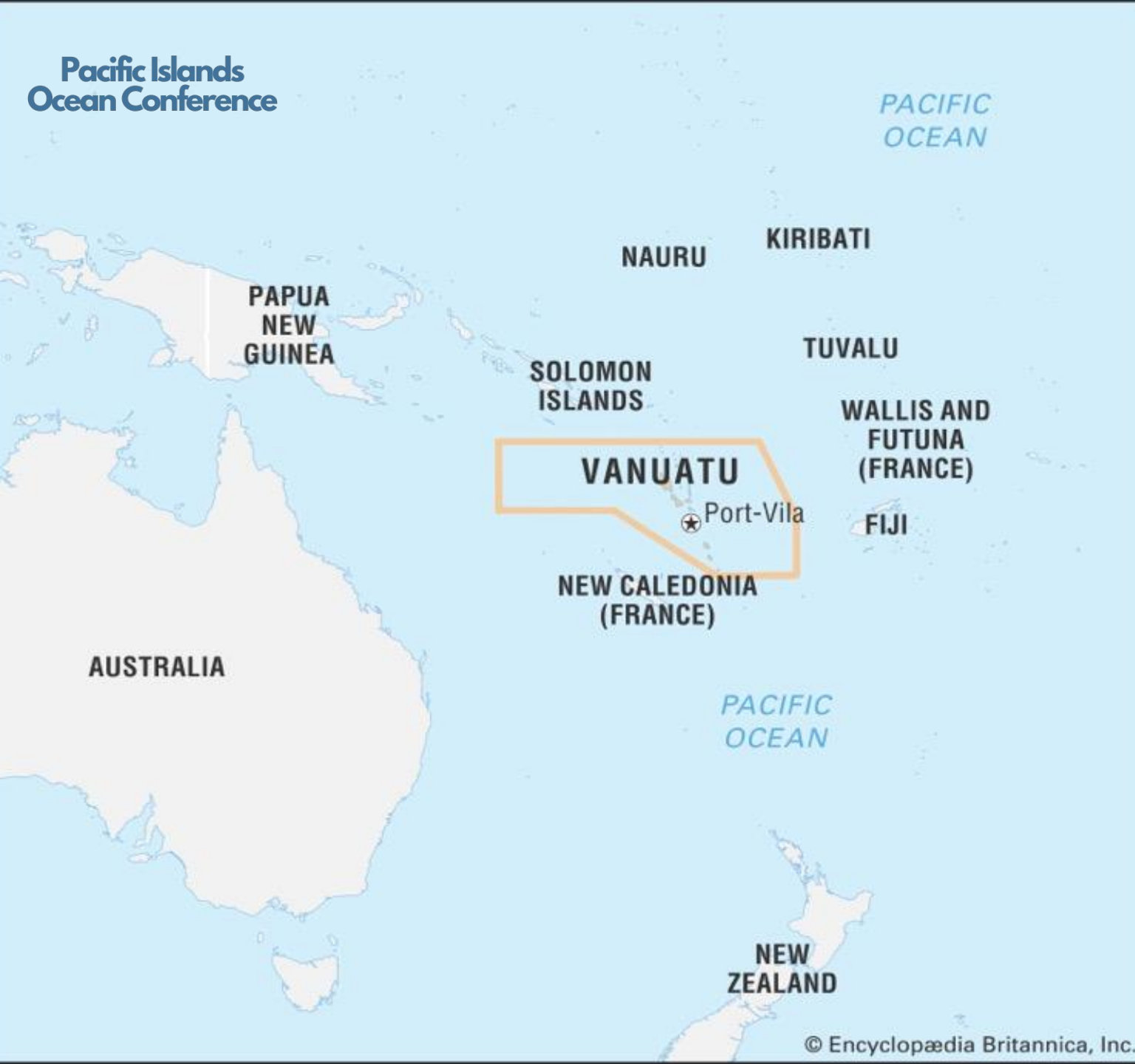


Capturing Traditional Ocean Knowledge on Erromango Island, Vanuatu

Netai en Namou Toc

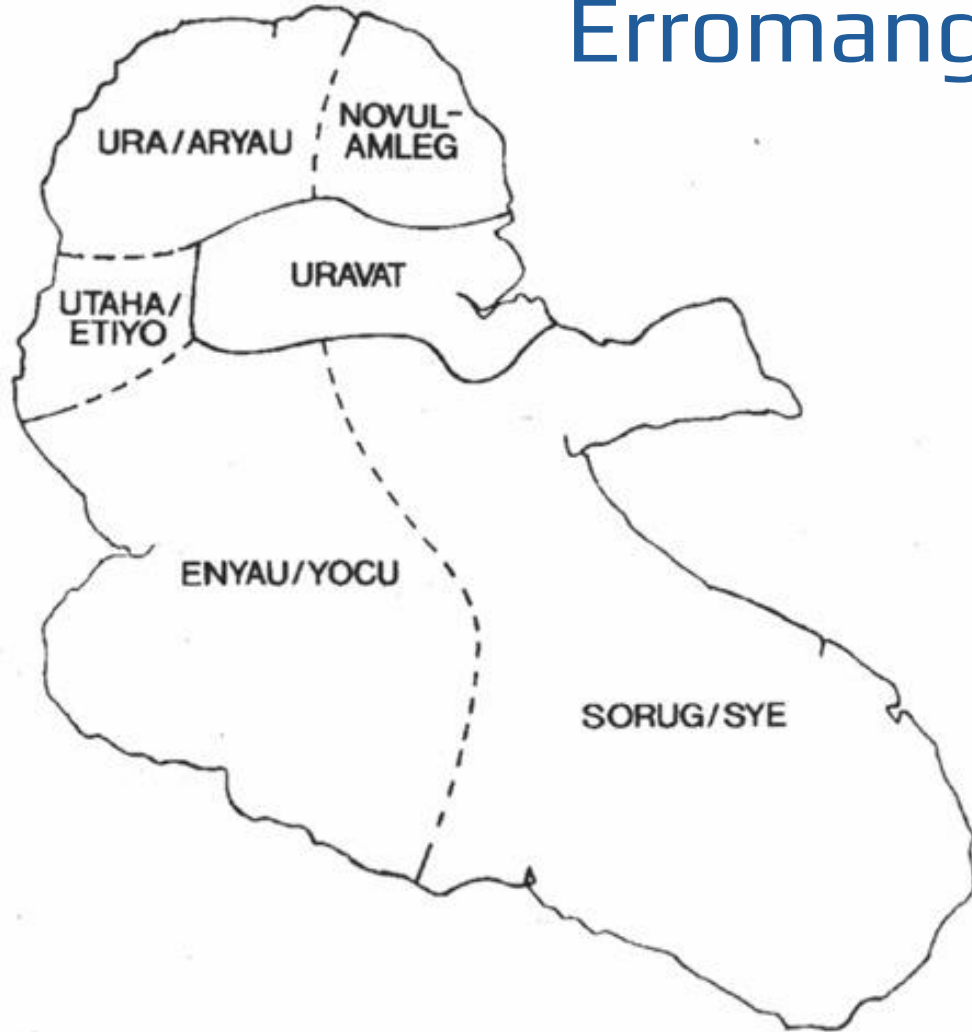


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Map 1: Erromango and its location within Vanuatu

Erromango: a unique history



- 1800s – mass depopulation as a result of epidemics introduced upon European contact
- Violent sandalwood trade
- Population estimated to drop from 10,000 to barely 800 between 1820s and 1920s
- 5 of 6 languages died out as a result

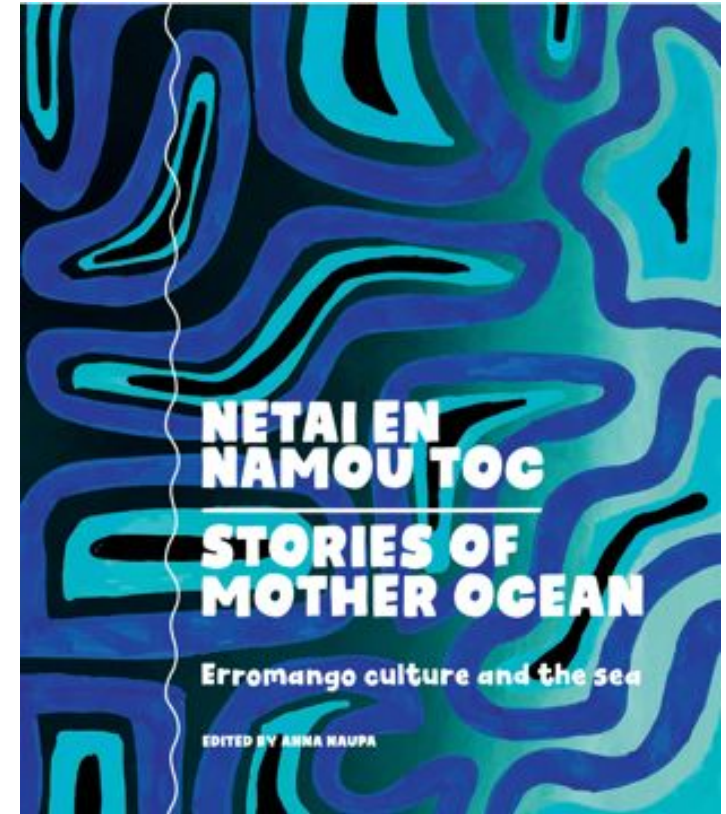
Source: Crowley 1997

Depopulation legacies 

climate stresses

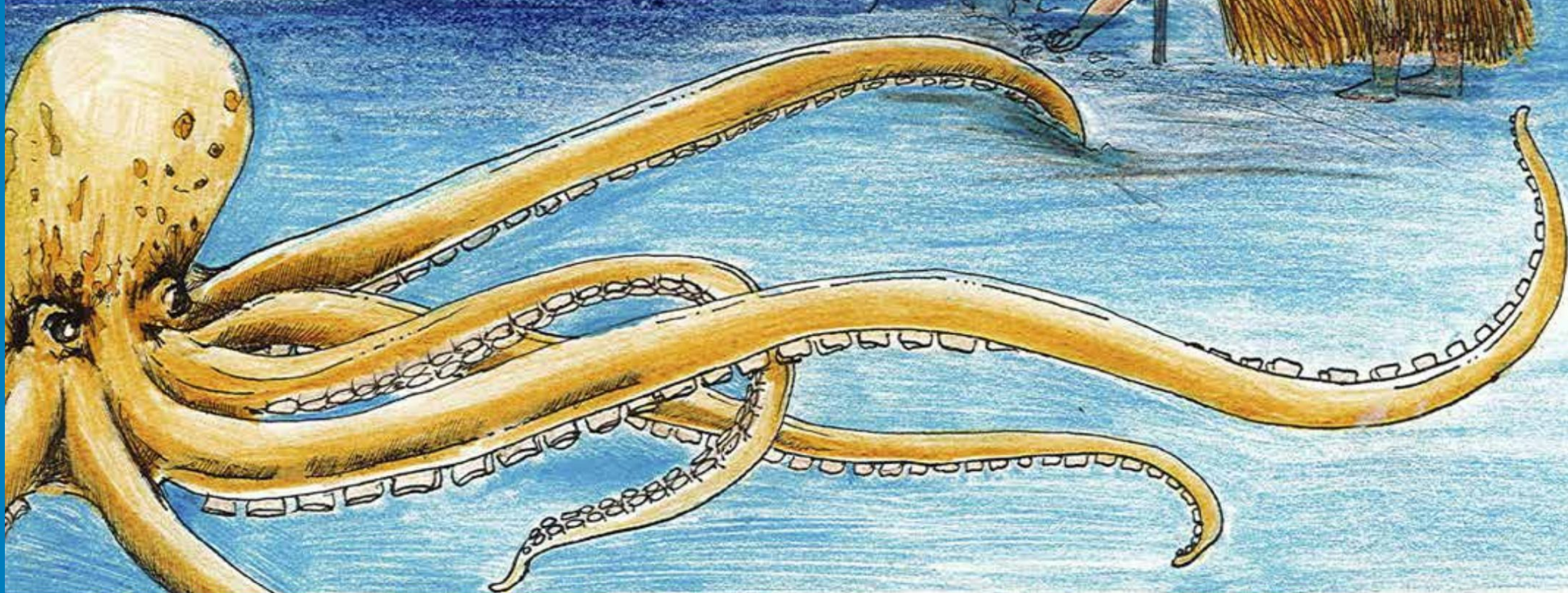
urgency in safeguarding
cultural heritage &
knowledge

preserving traditional sea-based origin stories



UVOI TELAU AND THE GIANT OCTOPUS

Artist: Simeon
Tovovur

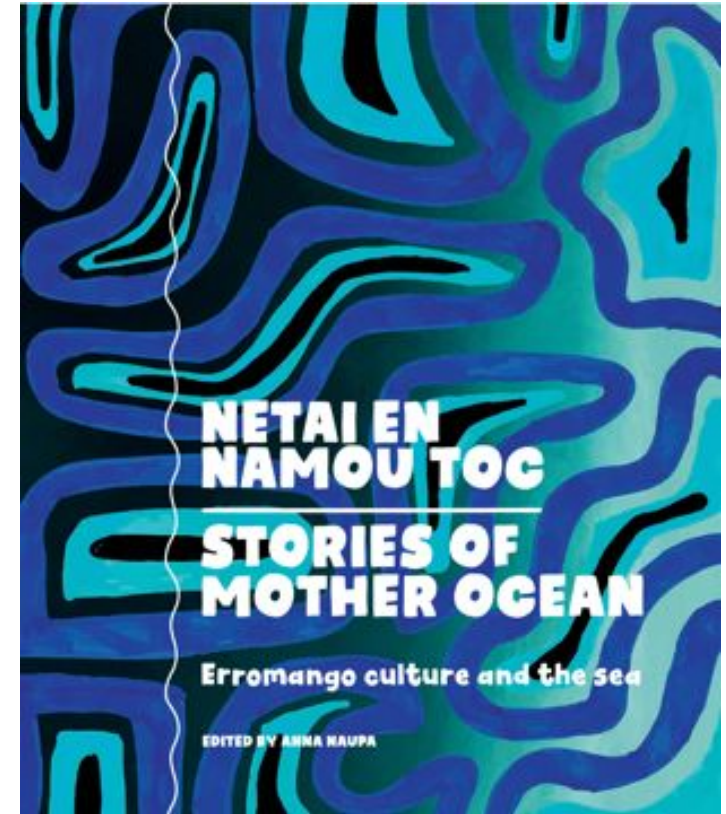


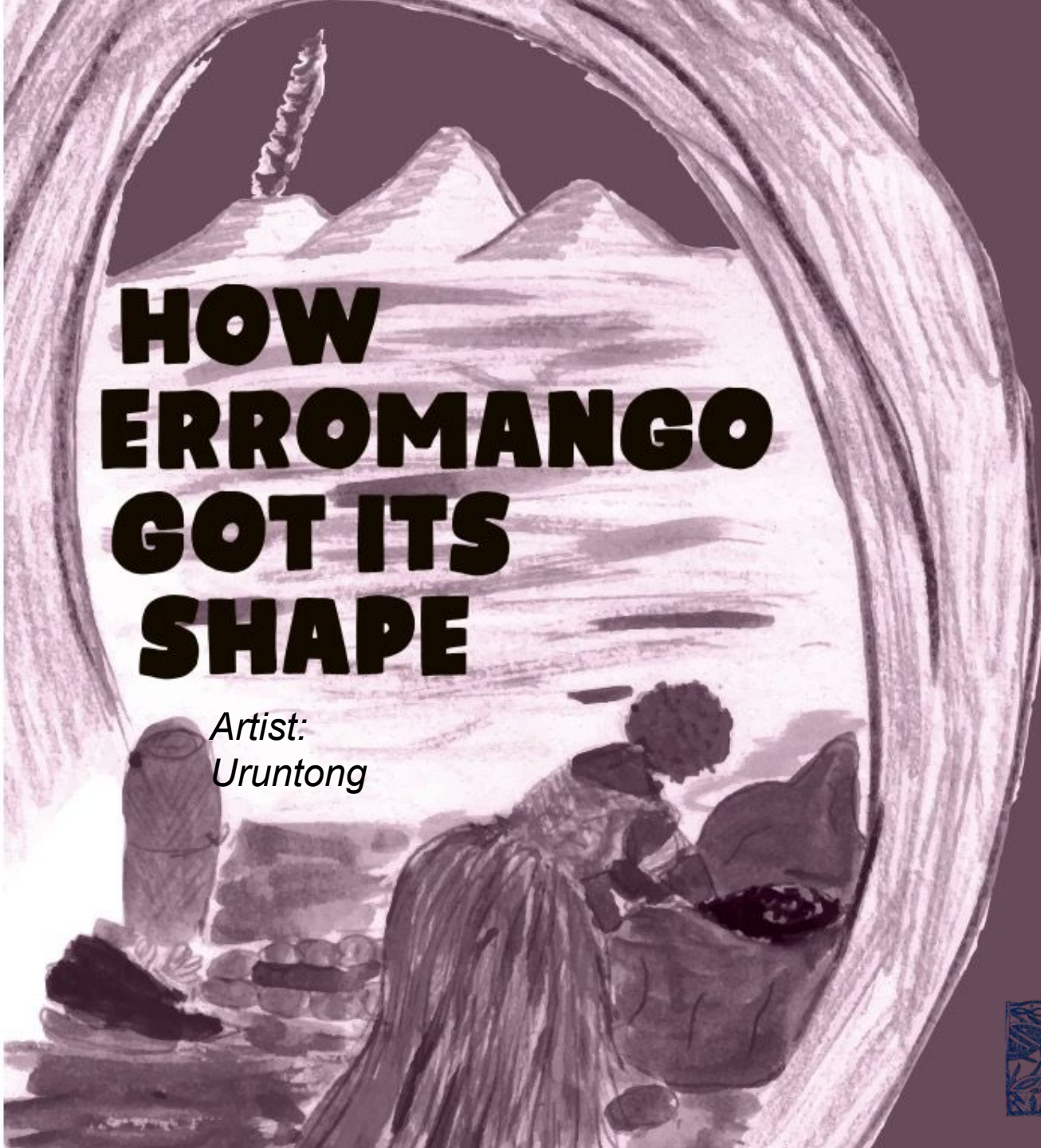
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Erromango
unique coastal
heritage, both
historical and
sacred





HOW ERROMANGO GOT ITS SHAPE

Artist:
Uruntong

Once upon a time, when Erromango was still very young, there was an Uyou* who lived alone with her granddaughter. The Uyou had a secret cave in which she hid a pool of seawater from her granddaughter.

Whenever the Uyou would make lapiap, she never let her granddaughter help her so as to hide her secret ingredient: seawater. The Uyou's lapiap was always so delicious because of this secret ingredient.

One day, her granddaughter asked, "Uyou, what do you put in the lapiap to make it so delicious?"

The Uyou would reply, "Mocpon** It is simply the way my hands prepare the food."

There came a time when the Uyou needed to harvest food from her garden and so she asked the granddaughter to watch the house. While she was away, her granddaughter decided to surprise her Uyou by preparing a lapiap herself. Secretly, she had been following her Uyou and had seen her go into a cave and draw a namtak (pusong) full of seawater. She had seen her Uyou add this to the lapiap and decided to do the same.

Later that afternoon, the Uyou returned home to the delicious smell of a freshly baked lapiap. "Taste this," the granddaughter said proudly offering the Uyou some lapiap.

The Uyou tasted it and knew at once that the granddaughter has used saltwater. "This tastes just like my lapiap!" the Uyou exclaimed.

"Yes, Uyou," the granddaughter said, "I used saltwater just like I have seen you do many times."

"Mocpon, you have cursed us!" said the Uyou, as the sea nearby began to swell and flood the coast.

"We must escape the sea," said the Uyou. "Mocpon, you are young so you can run further than me. Run south and then west and meet me at Potasipalp. I am slower and will go north up the east coast and meet you there!"

The young girl ran fast across the island, while the Uyou rolled herself towards Potasipalp. To this day, the south and western side of Erromango has many steep mountains, cliffs and ravines from where the granddaughter jumped across the terrain. Eastern Erromango has flatter, rolling hills made by the Uyou's rolling away from the sea.

—Told by Tepaye Louve, Ipeta, Erromango

*grandmother

**granddaughter



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Figure 6.5 The location of rock-art sites on Erromango

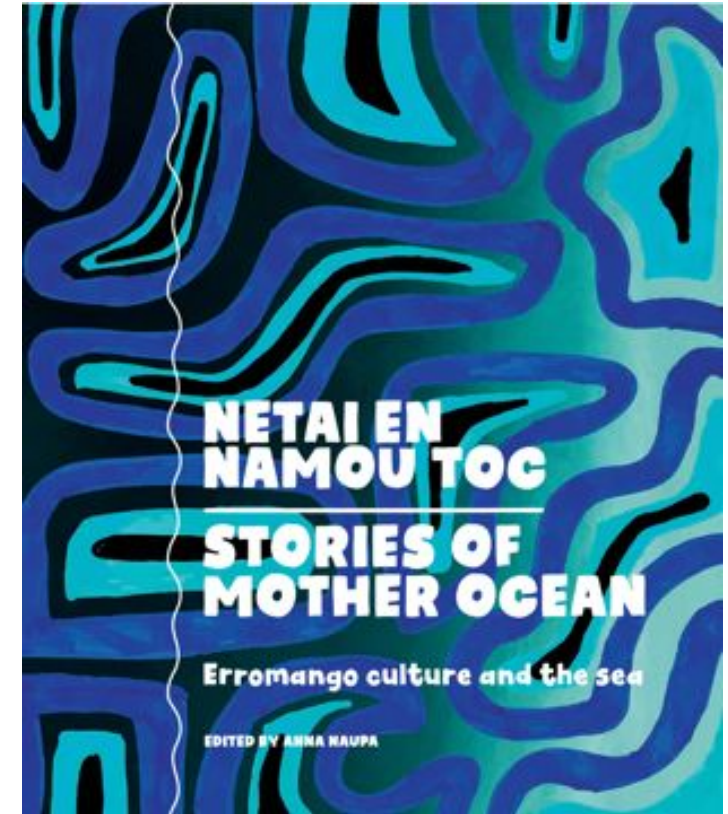




**Sea-level rise &
storm surge
affects coastal
heritage**

3. Documenting

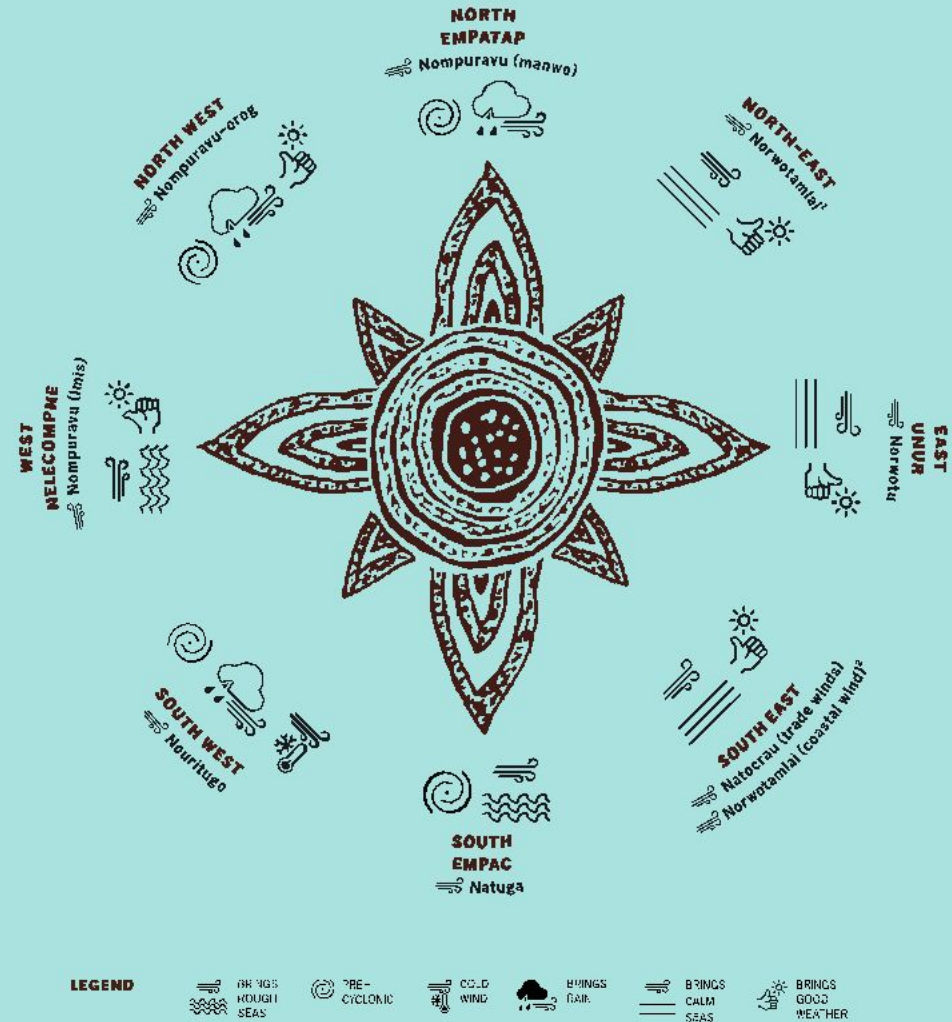
traditional
weather and
maritime
knowledge



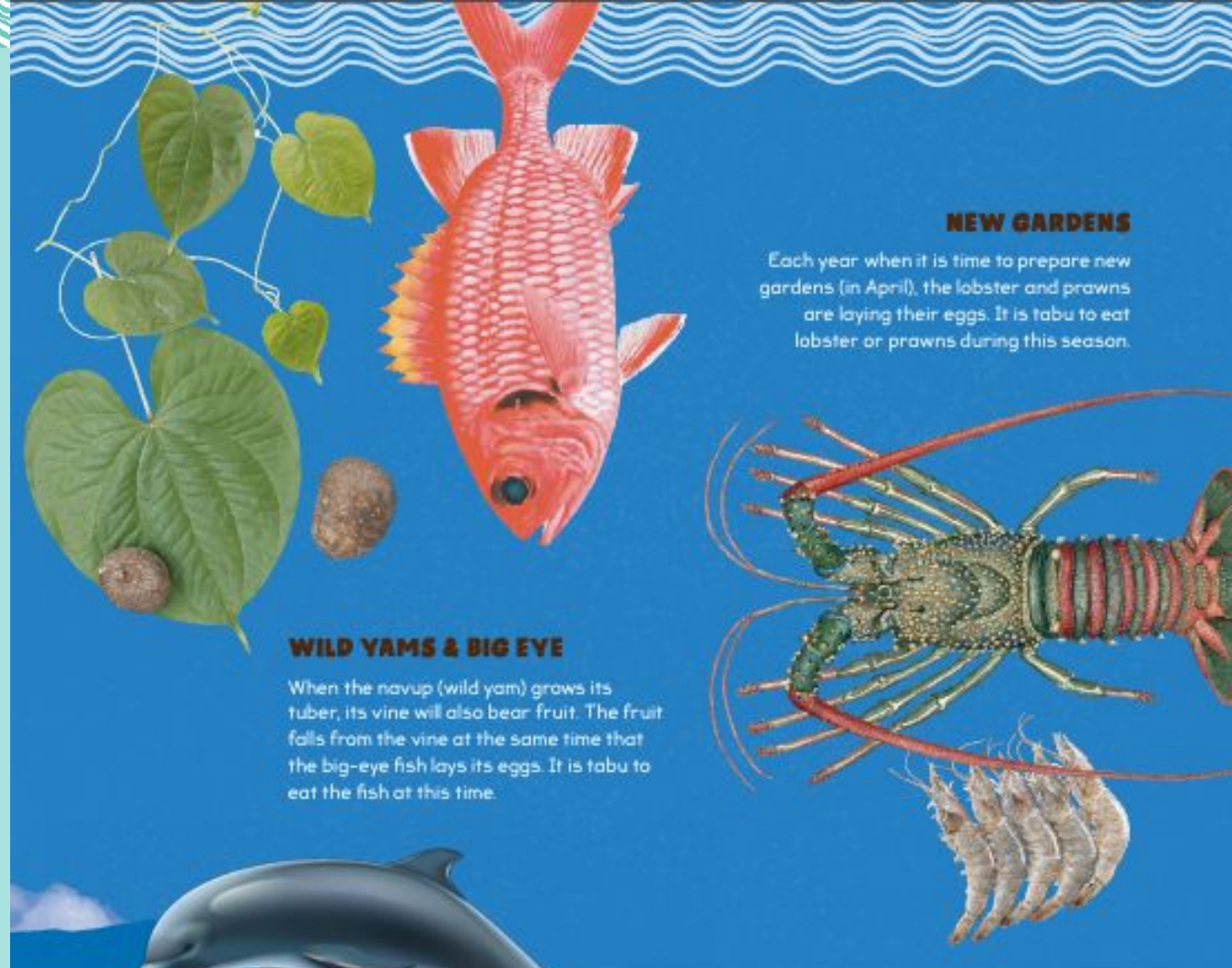
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WINDS



Six winds derived from Captain Andrew Halling (Patnarini), Major Harawai (Anochi), Dick (Iniki) (Ano/Antiochi) and Terry Crowley's Sic dictionary. Winds of west wind often Halling says Nompuravu-umis, while Crowley says Nourituga, which Halling says is more of a SW wind. * Means 'first Norwoti wind'. † Means 'first Norwoti wind'.



NEW GARDENS

Each year when it is time to prepare new gardens (in April), the lobster and prawns are laying their eggs. It is tabu to eat lobster or prawns during this season.

WILD YAMS & BIG EYE

When the navup (wild yam) grows its tuber, its vine will also bear fruit. The fruit falls from the vine at the same time that the big-eye fish lays its eggs. It is tabu to eat the fish at this time.



DOLPHINS

If you see dolphins when travelling on the water, many fish are nearby. This is a good time to fish (but it is tabu to catch a dolphin!).

"If we look after our land and forest, we will have a healthy sea" – Chief Daniel Dam Atnelo

Artist: Andrew Tovovur



Pacific Islands
Ocean Conference

Safeguarding
cultural
knowledge
of sea-land
relationships
and
resource
management



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Mrs Helen Uruknte Nompunesau Naupa and Mrs Kelma Uruknte Nompurisovi Naupa

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Nakave and the sea

A long time ago, when plants could walk and talk, the Nakave (kava) had an argument with the other plants and decided to leave the forest to live in the sea.

The forest plants held a meeting to discuss how to persuade the Nakave to return to the land.

Banana said, "I will convince Nakave to come back to the land. At one year of maturity I know how much humans enjoy my produce, this should convince Nakave of the same." The other plants agreed.

Banana went to the coast and saw Nakave who called out, "Eli, Banana what do you want with me here by the sea?"

Banana said, "I've come to bring you home. We are both of the ground, come on!"

But Nakave said, "I can't come with you. Go home!"

Banana returned sadly to the forest and told his friends, "I really tried but Nakave didn't want to come. I feel so sad."

The other plants murmured and agreed, "Nakave is being strong-headed, we will still win him over!"

Then, Manioc, Nesi (papaw) and Yam each tried, also failing to persuade Nakave to come home from the sea.

"Nakave told us he doesn't want to grow in our shade anymore!"

"It will be good Naki (coconut) who will be able to look after me in the deep sea!" Nakave said on seeing Naki, as his leaves were turning brown with salt.

Naki said, "You can share your worries with me. Out here in the deep sea you won't grow well and humans will not know or use you and support your continuity and survival. Look at me! I live on the land and humans use me a lot: my leaves are used for mats, to sleep, sweep, as trays for food and to start fires when cooking. My trunk is used to make huts, chairs. My nut is used for eating and drinking. The dry nut is used for coconut cream, oil for cooking and for the body."

"Humans need all of us plants. Why don't you come back to the land with me? With your roots and my shells and husks, humans can squeeze and drink their kava. Come on Nakave! Don't you pity the humans who will miss you? If you come with me your name will be known by everyone and people will come far and wide looking for you!"

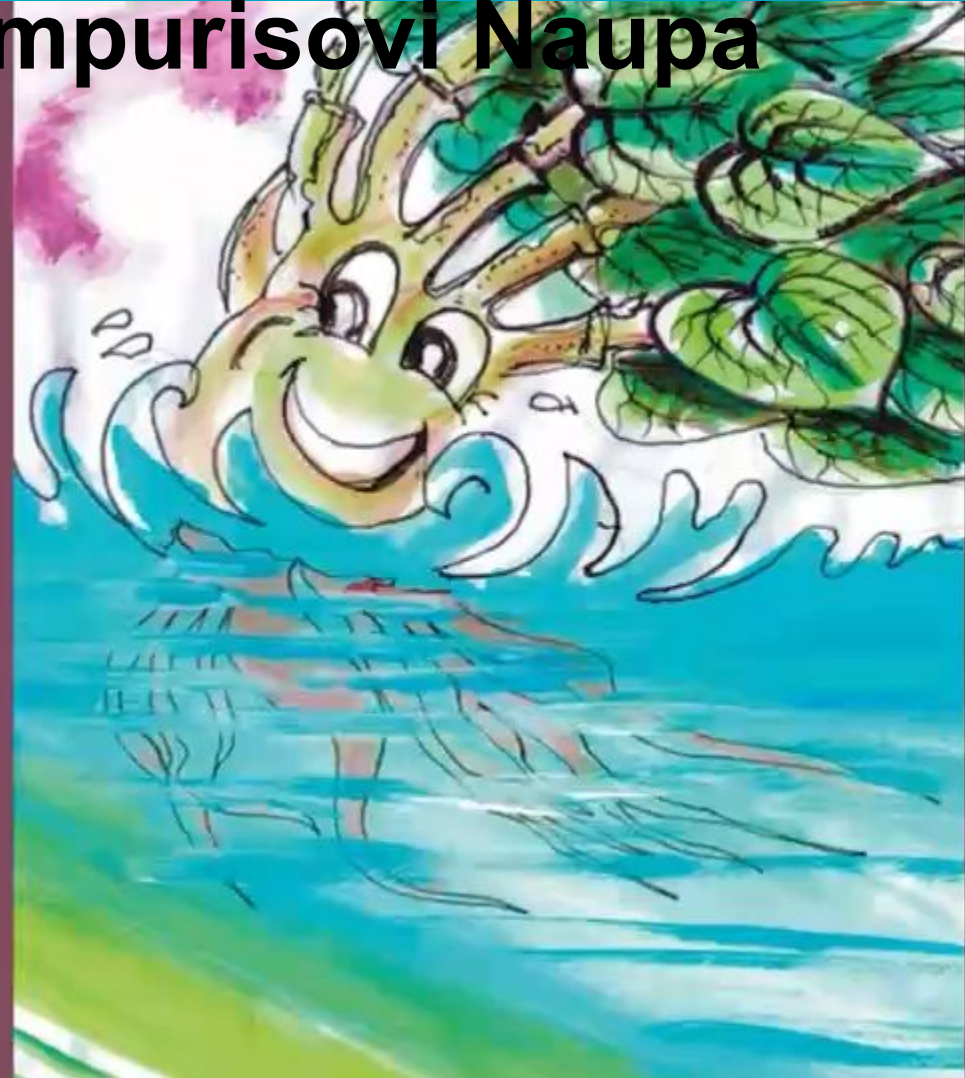
Nakave shouted, "OK, stop! It's true what you have said. I left the land for the sea because too many plants were jealous about how much the humans liked me and were gossiping. But you're right, I will be better back on the land."

"Good," said Naki. "Because if you stay in the sea, people will forget your name."

Naki took Nakave back to the land and Nakave's leaves turned green again.

Nakave continues to grow well today. Now, when people drink kava, they do not swim in the sea afterwards. It is tabu as it chases away the kava feeling and makes swimming hard.

— Told by Tim Wala



**Kompalogi
ntamah**

Tankiu tumas



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