

October 13th, from 3:30pm

Zoom link:

<https://anu.zoom.us/j/88429997314?pwd=TWY4eC8rdm5zTjZoa2FQcUF3R0ZUZz09>

Passcode: 522552

A Story in Stone:

An archaeological study of the cultural landscape of West Futuna, Vanuatu

This presentation is a synthesis of my PhD research undertaken on West Futuna, southern Vanuatu. The most easterly island in the Vanuatu archipelago, Futuna is a small, high, and rocky island. The language of Futuna is more closely related to those of Polynesia than the island's immediate neighbours. This qualifies Futuna, as well as its sister island Aniwa, as belonging to a group of island societies called "Polynesian Outliers". From 1000 A.D., Futuna was subject to important cultural transformations that led to the genesis of ancestral Futunese society. During this period, the island was settled by Polynesian speakers who introduced language and cultural phenomena to the region. At the same time, these new migrants were also incorporating endogenous cultural traditions and materials.

In this seminar, I will take a close look at the previous 1000 years of Futuna's history and consider the implications for archaeologically investigating migrant populations in Oceania. This will be discussed in light of new evidence for Futuna's position in inter-regional networks as shown by the presence of novel artefact types. Additionally, I present excavation and mapping data from two field seasons, as well as radiocarbon dates for some of Futuna's agricultural systems. The results have shown that monumental landscape modification in the form terrace and village construction began ca. 1000 A.D., and progressively intensified throughout the island. This new information will be assessed against orthodox models concerning environmental adaptations and socio-political complexity in Oceanic societies.



Rob Williams

Rob is a Walgalu (Ngambri) and Ngunnawal Traditional Owner of Canberra and surrounds and has ancestral links to the Wiradjuri nation of NSW. He is an Academic Associate at the ANU where he is currently writing his PhD which is part of an ARC funded archaeology survey of Southern Vanuatu. Rob's professional experiences include Indigenous cultural heritage management, native title, repatriation, and he is pursuing avenues to provide education opportunities for First Nation groups relating to heritage management. Academically, Rob has worked several times in Vanuatu which has provided him with an excellent foundation in archaeological field methods. Additionally, Rob has completed and published research in collaboration with the people of Mabuyag Island, Torres Strait, which identified Australia's earliest example of banana cultivation.

Recently, Rob founded an Aboriginal owned and run heritage consulting firm, Murrumbidgee Archaeology and Heritage (MAH). Through MAH, Rob aims to help build and nurture the next generation of First Nations archaeologists by mentoring individuals and providing training in communities. It is hoped that with exposure to heritage management that more First Nations will pursue a career in archaeology.

In 2017, Rob was awarded the ANU's Young Indigenous Alumni, and he has previously held roles at AIATSIS and the ANU.

We acknowledge and celebrate the First Australians on whose traditional lands we meet, and pay our respect to the elders' past, present and emerging.