SYNOPSIS:

Lon Marum is a TV-hour length documentary film depicting the relationship between language, culture, place, music, tradition, and magic – in the context of life on an active volcano.

Lon Marum means “the path of the volcano” and when applied to the people of Emyotungan it means the “people who live in the path of the volcano”. Such is the profound relationship that the people of Emyotungan and West Ambrym have with the volcano. It exists underneath them, the porous volcanic ash soft underfoot is a low-yielding soil. It towers over them, trapping clouds and billowing out poisonous sulphur dioxide in industrial proportions. And it falls down on them in the form of acid rain ruining crops and destroying gardens. It permeates every corner of their existence informing everything from creation mythology through to current land tenure and kinship systems.

But the phrase Lon Marum also serves as the metaphor describing the relationship between the people of West Ambrym and the physical environment - and this forms the rhizome of the film’s narrative. The volcano features in the film - but as a spirit form, something omnipresent but invisible. The treatment of the volcano as a part of the spirit world reflects the cosmology of greater Melanesia where there is little or no distinction or boundary between the spirit world and the physical world. Magic, music, tradition, and dance are a fundamental part of daily life - all distilled through story and often visually accompanied by intricate sanddrawings.

We follow a local community leader, and fieldworker for the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, as he takes us on a journey. This journey also reflects the metaphorical quality of “path” or “road” as it pertains to Lon Marum, the path of the volcano. We follow this man as he leads us through his community. It is a community that exists just as much as an abstract concept as it does in reality. It has some of the most complex kinship systems in the world, described by languages on the very brink of extinction, in one of the most linguistically diverse regions on the planet, within a traditional social and economic system which functions much as it did thousands of years ago.
More recently Western scientists have become interested in the volcano. From all over the world, researchers come and attempt to “know” the volcano. As a laboratory, Lon Marum is a challenging environment. We explore the different ways of knowing represented here by the local community and their complex traditional social systems, at once, fragile and resilient, and the modernist scientific fraternity, equally fragile and resilient. The fascinating dynamics between different cultures, and between people and the environment is portrayed in the affective domain, leaving the audience to ponder exactly what it means to “know” something.

This film is a journey. It is a journey through a physical community and through an abstract community. It is tied together not by drama and controversy, not by sensational representation, but by the quotidian experience of the volcano. The film is the story of life and how it expresses itself in the bosom of the volcano.

The film is made more significant by the fact that 2013 is the centennial anniversary of the biggest eruption of the Ambrym volcano. In 1913, the colonial settlement at Dip Point in West Ambrym was destroyed by a massive eruption. The entire settlement including the hospital and the church sank below sea level. The remains of these buildings now lie just metres below the surface of a briny lake.

**DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT**

This film is a community project. We filmed each scene in vernacular language as well as national language with a result of 7 languages featured by 7 communities. About 200 inhabitants took part in one way or another to make this project possible. This massive participation is the result of the village to village work done by Soraya & Chief Filip. Together they motivated people to tell their stories and involved them in the production process as well as in the filming trainings. A film committee was set in Emyotungan attributing the roles as important as organizing catering, preparing accessories, sending messages to other communities, cleaning filming locations, music production, transportation...

The film was prepared in the context of Ambrym yet without mobile phone so messages were sent through other people or through written message to remote communities.
CO-WRITER/ CO-DIRECTOR

SORAYA HOSNI

Soraya Hosni is a visual anthropologist and cultural diplomat who dreams in eight languages. She uses stories, video and photography as a mean to transmit intergenerational knowledge and empower isolated communities with a specific emphasis on children and youth. She specialized in cultural documentation and knowledge preservation. The result of her visual work is on display as an installation curated for the Humboldt-Box Berlin, on the DoBes archive website as well as on the online short films project sciencemovies.de

Lon Marum people of the volcano is the result of 2 years of ethnographic work based on the collaboration with Chief Filip Talevu and west Ambrym communities.

CO-WRITER/ CO-DIRECTOR

CHIEF FILIP TALEVU

Chief Filip Talevu is a community leader & ethnographer from Emyotungan village in West Ambrym, Vanuatu.

With over 10 years of experience as a fieldworker for the Vanuatu Cultural Center, his numerous contributions spans from cultural consultant, community awarenesses, traditional curriculum building for educators, knowledge preservation & visiting scholars assistance. He is a traditional sculptor & dancer as well as a living archive of sanddrawings, tradionnal games & stories. In addition to bislama & english, he speaks actively 4 of Ambrym languages. Although, he has assisted film crews in several productions, Lon Marum is his first feature documentary. This film is the result of the 2 years collaborative work with his adopted daughter Soraya Hosni.
CREW

Written and directed by
Chief Filip Talevu and Soraya Hosni

Producer
Thomas Dick

Executive Producers
Furtherarts Vanuatu - Fond Pacifique

Co-producers
Benedict Foley - Tim Schultz

Director of Photography
Benedict Foley

Editor
Lindi Harrison

Music
Marcel Melthorong

Sound and Color grading
krabistudios

Production Assistant
Etul Bong

Translations
Caroline Nalo

SPECs

Running Time: 42 mins 40 secs

Final Format: ProRes 422 HD 1920 x 1080

Deliverable Format: All HD and SD formats available

Trailer: www.lonmarum.com