

## The Naha'ai of Vanuatu



representative photo

Eighty-two islands, strung like pearls across 800 miles of the south Pacific, comprise Vanuatu. Most of the atolls of this nation, located 1,100 miles east of Australia, are volcanic, with high mountains and rich soil.

Two legends demonstrate how traditional religion weaves together the basic worldview in this part of Vanuatu. In one, on the Banks Islands of Vanuatu, Qat, a creator god, hero and the first being, formed the islands and filled them with trees, animals and plants. Then, carving dolls from wood and dancing and singing them into life, he made humans and created day and night so they could work and then sleep.

In another legend, a creator god sprinkled the ground with his own blood and made twin brothers, To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu, in the islands of Vanuatu and New Britain. Becoming a creator hero, To-Kabinana produced many good things, while his brother brought evil and troubles to the world.

Most Naha'ai, or Malfaxal as they are also called, revere many deities and adhere to strict rituals to maintain life's balance. Christians show their faith through church attendance. Anyone inactive in church risks being accused of sorcery.

Between volcanic mountains, farmers raise livestock and cultivate enough vegetables and fruit to feed their families. In addition to farming, many fish and others make a livelihood in tourism.

**Primary Religion:**

Christianity

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

44%

**Churches:**

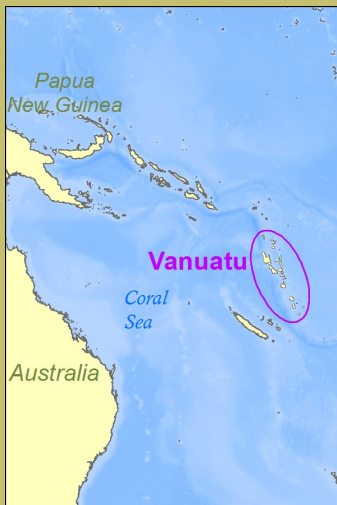
Many

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

Scripture storytelling

**Population (date):**

600 (1983)



## The Malfaxal of Vanuatu

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### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Is the Word of God Translated?

Bible portions in 1919.

Other Forms of Presentation

Audio recordings.

## **The Malfaxal of Vanuatu**

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### **Status of Christianity**

#### **Religion and Response**

##### **Need for Translation**

Through accurate Scripture storytelling, project personnel hope to address the worldview confusion among Malfaxal believers. People will begin to understand the power of God and His unchanging love for them as individuals. This could give them courage to lay aside traditional practices and fully embrace the living, personal relationship Christ offers. Oral Bible stories will also stir enthusiasm for Scripture in the mother tongue, both among church leaders and among their parishioners.

#### **Churches**

Churches sprang up in Vanuatu starting in the early 19th century. Today most clergy are local men. Despite a long history of indigenous Christianity, most people have little understanding of the faith they claim. Traditional beliefs still hold strong sway. This project will introduce oral Bible storytelling, offering resources for personal understanding and potentially motivating further Scripture translation into the many languages of these islands.