

debate and choose pious and companionate forms of intimate relationships while at the same time pursue personal growth, professional development and membership in the economically successful middle class.

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Were, Graeme. 2019. *How materials matter: design, innovation and materiality in the Pacific*. New York: Berghahn Books. 212 pp. Hb.: US\$120.00. ISBN: 9781789202014.

Recent new materialisms and nonhuman turns have brought materiality and materials to the centre of anthropological attention. *How materials matter* sets out to bridge a number of different trajectories in this body of literature. It draws from both sides of what is often presented as incompatible approaches to the material world. Graeme Were pays close attention to material properties, albeit without disregarding the relational fields where knowledge, experience, and natural and socio-political environments influence the selection and emergence of materials. Importantly, the book takes the study of materials innovation and design outside the prevalent focus on Western technoscience. Its focus on Pacific societies also raises the issue of digital return and, furthermore, digital technologies in the museum and heritage sector more broadly. In this connection, Were pushes beyond debates on authenticity and instead highlights digital technology's productive potentials.

The first part of the book demonstrates how affordances and constraints of plant materials inform human practices, social relations and modes of being

among the Nalik of Northern New Ireland. While the fibres of the *amot-mot* pandanus leaf's limited durability calls for renewed cycles of mat production and thus maintains clan-relations through ongoing exchange, the *awoiwoi* pandanus palm's durability means that it thrives on an individualised agency directed toward the consolidation of more distant social connections. As such, they are selected for different purposes and give different expressions to the social world; one maps an image of hierarchy and status, the other an extended network of individualised relations tapped into by craftswomen. Without overlooking the role of material recalcitrance, Were situates material resurgence and innovation in the broader contexts of revival activities, influx of new materials and the commoditisation of landscapes.

In the second part of the book, Were deploys a notion of material computation to get at the way materials are selected to do certain work in the construction of plank canoes in New Georgia and food troughs in the Western Solomon Islands, both found in the British Museum storage facilities in London. Whereas the canoe is constructed through the addition of planks and thus thrives on an outward notion of scale, the food trough is carved and draws on an inward notion of scale. An instrumental vehicle for the accumulation of *mana* from overseas, the scale of the canoe allows for the imagining of an expansive network of external, inter-island relations. In contrast, the food trough's subtractive technique establishes relations to ancestors and clans. It maintains relations in a known spatial domain where power is bound to land and place. The subsequent chapter returns to the Nalik, where the selection of particular plant materials, public demonstration of material knowledge and the invention of notions of an authentic past aim to connect to sources of power that lie beyond

the immediate locality. As such, they are projects of scale-making that construct and express male power.

The last part discusses digital return. The Mobile Museum Project set out to facilitate remote access to Queensland collections of ethnographic artefacts. By following the participatory process of selection, software design and the introduction of digital objects among the Nalik, Were recounts how digital heritage was perceived by his interlocutors to be able to help regulate social order by restoring an idealised past. Despite his own involvement in the project, the author remains attentive to how it becomes enfolded in local power structures and divisions over access. Were is nevertheless critical of museum curators who downplay the virtual. The digital return of the plank canoe, analysed earlier in the book, is not a straightforward process but entails certain transformations. For example, the possibility to perceive images from a distance alleviates potentially dangerous forces and allows for a new type of engagement. Attending

to local concerns about knowledge loss, digital technologies thus carry the capacity to rekindle certain knowledge and become conduits for material expression.

How materials matter offers ways of drawing from both sides of the materials–materiality debate in a generative way. It points to co-production of mind, action, social relations and material transformation, albeit without overlooking larger socio-political contexts and processes. As is to be expected from attempts at reconciliation, some differences nevertheless tend to be overlooked. Were never engages thoroughly with approaches that fall outside the polemic. This might also explain why it is sometimes difficult to tell for whom the materials are being expressive – interlocutor or anthropologist? What is the role of properties that fall outside the biophysical? And are materials always, everywhere and to everyone, emergent?

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