



Introduction

Art and Commodity in Vanuatu

On arrival in a small boat at the village of Fona, in North Ambrym, for the first time in August 2009, I was immediately confronted with a black sand beach piled up with the typical North Ambrymese slit-drums and *bwerang*, or tree fern figures, to be shipped off, in that case to Paris, France. Such a scene sums up quite accurately what I came to study in Vanuatu. So, was it really going to be this easy, or was I just very lucky to have come at this particular moment? As it turned out, it was going to be both easy and difficult at the same time. North Ambrym is indeed very much still piled up with slit-drums (the easy part), but, as I later learned, most of them do not get sold so easily as was the case that one evening when I arrived for the first time (the not so easy part). In turn, this provided opportunities to investigate why local people in North Ambrym today still produce slit-drums and what really happens to them if they are not shipped off to the West after some time.

I say “after some time” because, ideally, drums stand in North Ambrym villages or on beaches of yacht anchorages such as that of Nobul, just north of Fona, or sometimes in their rightful place, on a *har* or ritual ground away from the villages, because they need to age, or at least look old, before they are sold and shipped off to Australia, Europe, or the United States. Buyers who come in do not really have to stress this anymore. Local people know as well as anyone that their drums, in North Ambrym language called *atingting*, need to look old if they want to get a good price for their frozen-in-time “masterpieces of tribal art.”

Years before my arrival on the island of Ambrym, as a student in art history, my interest in the arts of Vanuatu was sparked by the collections of Vanuatu materials in European museums and by one tree fern figure specifically, which was attributed to Southeast Ambrym and kept in the ethnographic collections of my home university, the University of Ghent,

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Belgium.¹ The Ghent *bwerang* is a significant piece for the collection. According to the inventory, it was donated to the university by a certain Mr. Hayois in 1936. Whether it is from Southeast Ambrym is questionable, considering that this part of the island was Christianized from early on (Tonkinson 1968, 1981). Also, in terms of formal components, the position of arms and hands, worked out figuratively, would be considered atypical for Ambrymese sculpture.

According to Marcellin Abong, former director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, who visited the collections in Ghent in 2008, it more probably originates from North Ambrym, although he also admitted not having seen this type of figure before. When I showed a photograph of the figure in North Ambrym during fieldwork, people agreed that it is “probably a very old one” and that it is of a kind “not seen before.” Traditional art history refers to it as a piece in the glabella style (e.g., Demoor-Van den Bossche 1978, 1983; Bruyninx and Van Damme 1997), after the pointed pronunciation of the eyebrows in the glabella, giving the “face” of the statue a moon-shaped appearance with pursed lips. In the left eye cavity, some of the clay remains on which the paint was attached with which such figures were originally decorated.



Figure 0.1. *Bwerang* in the Ethnographic Collections of the University of Ghent, Belgium. 180–46.5 cm, tree fern and clay, Inv. GE 69, donated 1936 (published in Demoor-Van den Bossche 1983: 167, figure 1; Dewolf 1992: 20; Bruyninx and van Damme 1997: 58–59; © Ghent University Museum).

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Figure 0.2. *Atingting* and *bwerang* awaiting shipment to France on Fona beach, North Ambrym, Vanuatu, 2009 (photograph by the author).



Figure 0.3. *Atingting* and *bwerang* (detail) as in figures 0.1 and 0.2, Fona beach, North Ambrym, Vanuatu, 2009 (photograph by the author).

This book is concerned with the meaning and value of material culture in Vanuatu, Southwest Pacific. In this book, I add to discussions on intellectual cultural property rights and the reproduction of knowledge and, more specifically, its material component, the reproduction, use, and sale of what we call art and what local people in Vanuatu today refer to as *artifak* (artifact). I do this in a context often described as cultural revival or revitalization and relevant to the area as well as larger parts of the Pacific and elsewhere. Adrienne Kaeppler proposed the term “recycling” instead of “revival” for such movements (2004, 2005), arguing that the latter implies that cultures and *kastoms* (customs) were “dead” before they were revived. This specific recycling of *kastom* is rooted in the period prior to independence, in 1980, when the Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides became the Republic of Vanuatu, and the years following, when *kastom* discourse accelerated and became a vehicle for unification of the nation-state.

While it is still something being played out in the national arena, most if not all authors writing on the politics of *kastom* as a nationalist discourse have seen it as a fluid concept, with an emergence in most areas of creole practices rather than a unitary *kastom*.² In Vanuatu, probably more unifying than the troubled concept of *kastom* itself is people’s commitment to it.

The research for this book is based on research that I undertook between 2008 and 2013 as a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Melbourne and in 2015 as postdoctoral fellow at Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main. For my research, I revisited those “islands of art history” that formerly produced the objects now globally recognized as art and held in collections of museums of what was usually called “primitive,” “tribal,” or “ethnic arts” in France, since the opening of the Pavillon des Sessions at the Musée du Louvre in 2000—*arts premiers* (first arts), which is yet another problematic term. Famous locations in that history, as seen from the West via major collections made by, among others, A. B. Lewis, Felix Speiser, and Jean Guiart, are Ambrym, Malakula, South Pentecost, and the Banks and Torres Islands (cf. Bühler 1969: 222; Stöhr 1972: 187).

Ambrym, Malakula, and South Pentecost share many origin stories and mythological ancestors, such as those of the Ambrym *rom* and the South Pentecost *nagol*, which are interconnected. Well-known objects from the region include the slit-drums and tree fern figures that I mention above but also many different mask forms and puppets made from fragile materials and used in “secret societies.” On Ambrym and in South Pentecost, heavy wooden masks occurred, but Malakulan masks predominate in collections (Huffman 1996c: 24–25). For example, Felix Speiser collected a huge variety of things in the islands of the archipelago between 1910

and 1912, some of which were ritual artifacts (Speiser 1923: 36). He collected four slit-drums, eight tree fern figures, two *rambaramp*, or funerary effigies, of Southeast Malakula, and 21 Malakulan masks out of a total of 2,480 objects (personal communication, Flavia Abele, Museum der Kulturen Basel, 12 July 2011).

The historical frame of collecting and collectors is a reference point for the contemporary setting of revival, reproduction, and commoditization that I discuss throughout the book. There are two periods that stand out in this setting. The first is that of the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, when a so-called curio trade was flourishing in the wider Melanesia region, with ethnologists such as A. B. Lewis and Felix Speiser collecting thousands of objects (or specimens, as they were called at the time). The second, more recent, is that of the late colonial period of the 1960s–1970s, just prior to independence.

This is a period that was marked by an increase in supply as well as demand and an increase in travel and tourism, known as the global tourism boom of that era, which created a whole new market segment. From the local perspective, this was a period that was marked by heightened tensions regarding copyright and ownership. The 1960s–1970s are known as the time when the last of the Big Men who had achieved their position in the traditional sphere were still active in the islands, primarily in the north-central region of the archipelago. It was a time, local people now agree, that saw “the last of the real.” Today, within ongoing revivalist movements in which ritual is reenacted and its objects reproduced, what constitutes “the real” is still very present in Vanuatu; it is discussed and negotiated by all involved, locals as well as outsiders. Perceptions of “the real,” “the authentic,” are central to this book and framed by questions of how authenticity is negotiable in different contexts.

In anthropological literature, the study of authenticity is inextricably linked to culture, to what is often designated as authentic culture (e.g., Lindholm 2008). Authenticity and the authentication of things, however, are complex and multilayered processes that do not always progress in a linear fashion. As Nelson Graburn has noted, the cultural construction of authenticity became clear only when it was shown “that authenticity is always a variable” and that it was not necessarily ever “really there,” “like an elusive Holy Grail” (1999: 351).

Moreover, authenticity is enacted on different levels. Local people in Vanuatu who revive their former art forms do this by using genealogical links to important ancestors, often utilizing anthropological literature and photographs in the process in order to legitimize their claims to authenticity. There is also the authenticity of the outsider, the consumer or the tourist, visiting on her or his own or as one of the happy few, in remote places

that are hard to reach. At the intersection between the two is the encounter and the transaction, where notions of authenticity are once more negotiated. The purchase of an object preferably happens in an authenticated setting by an authentic “native” and by visitors who like to see themselves as authentic on their own terms. In this setting, the native is often reduced to a frozen-in-time native, one who offers his artifacts for sale in contexts of what in the literature is often referred to as staged authenticity (MacCannell 1976). Last, forces of authenticity also work on the global level, once the object is in the West, in the auction room or gallery or, after it was sold, in the museum or private living room.

During my long-term fieldwork in Vanuatu, I recorded one story that particularly illustrates some of the complex issues in relation to the manifestation of different levels of authenticity and to one specific category of objects, that of the *rambaramp* funerary effigies from Southwest Malakula that I briefly touched upon above and that had become prized commodities by the 1960s–1970s. It is a story of supply and demand of art objects that somewhat resembles that of my arrival scene on Ambrym in 2009 forty or fifty years earlier. It is also a story that brings these kinds of objects into the museums in “the West” that keep them. This is another aspect of the book, as it illustrates the trajectories of objects and their differing states of value and meaning while traveling. It is an issue I will return to later, when I treat museology.

My interest in *rambaramp* was sparked by an image in a book during my time as an exchange student in anthropology at UC Berkeley. That image shows a “recently bought funerary effigy,” or *rambaramp*, from South Malakula. It is in *Contesting Art: Art, Politics and Identity in the Modern World* (MacClancy 1997b). Not long before, in Belgium, I had been writing up my dissertation in art history, which had a specialization in so-called ethnic art, on Austronesian architecture with a focus on Sulawesi, Indonesia. It is there that I was first confronted with questions of the ethics of collecting (see Crystal 1989): empty Toraja cliffs with *tautau* (effigies of the dead) ending up on the tribal art market and Tana Toraja or the Toraja homelands being increasingly flooded with tourists.

These kinds of questions, however, did not fit in an art history thesis that, as a rule, asks questions about how an object is made or about its beauty and aesthetics. What remained unanswered, then, was what these things might mean in their places of origin or in the world: in transit, in transition, on the market. It is what is often lacking on museum labels accompanying such objects, where only information on their histories in Western museum collections and their pedigrees is provided, with perhaps the addition of a cultural group and, in the best case scenario, the name of a village in a colony and a date of collection.

What the image of the *rambaramp* in *Contesting Art*, edited by Jeremy MacClancy, shows is its departure from its local place, being loaded onto a motorboat in Southwest Bay Malakula and sent to the global art market. It is in the introduction to the volume, titled “Anthropology, Art and Contest” (p. 20). The same author has another such image in another edited volume, *Exotic No More* (MacClancy 2002b: pl. 1). The caption to this image reads, “Entering the global market: a recently bought artifact is laid on a canoe before being paddled to the main island and, ultimately, sold in either Europe or America (Vao islet, Malakula Island, Vanuatu, February 1980).”

What both these images lack, however, is explanatory text. Nowhere does the author explain the circumstances of collection. My questions remained, particularly in the case of the *rambaramp* effigy that, as I had learned in my art history courses, traditionally contains the skull of a deceased ancestor. Were these things really for sale? Or was this a clandestine transaction, the people concerned ignorant of it? After all, I had also learned that *rambaramp* were traditionally from the Lamap area of Southeast Malakula and not from Southwest Bay, across mountainous, rugged South Malakula. It was later, during my Ph.D. research, that I contacted Jeremy MacClancy and asked him about his powerful image in *Contesting Art*. He replied that it was Tessa Fowler, at the time traveling with him, who was the collector of the *rambaramp* in that specific photograph. During a trip to Vanuatu in 2010–2011, I met Tessa, who still lives in Vanuatu, in the capital town Port Vila on Efate Island.

Tessa and I met for the first time for an interview in a seaside bar in Port Vila in December 2010. By then, I knew from different sources that she had been one of the main figures of the flourishing art trade of the 1960s–1970s. As she told me, she originally came to the then New Hebrides in 1958 to work as an economist for the British government. Traveling around in the archipelago, she soon became an agent for men in the islands, selling their objects to museums worldwide. She primarily worked with men on Malakula and Ambrym, “islands of art” in the history of collecting for Vanuatu. She developed contacts with museums in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and particularly with the Museum der Kulturen in Basel, Switzerland (the keeper of Felix Speiser’s historical collections of Vanuatu materials).

Tessa and I talked about the last Big Men with links to the “graded societies” of that time, such as Tain Mal and Tofor of Fanla for North Ambrym (see also Guiart 1951; Patterson 1976, 1981, 1996, 2002a, 2002b), Bong of Bunlap for South Pentecost (Jolly 1979, 1982, 1991b), and Kali and Virembat of Amok for North Malakula, the “last of the *big nambas*” and the “last man-eaters” (Harrisson 1937; Guiart 1952). Tessa primarily bought from people of the villages of Yapgetas and Lendombwey in Middle-Bush

Malakula. Her main intermediary was a certain Wallit, a man lame from polio and as she put it, not a Big Man at all. When she was on Malakula, she stayed in Lawa, in Southwest Bay, where the inland people had a shed on the beach in which they stored *rambaramp* for sale. Tessa and I also discussed her shift of career, as she herself called it, “from artifacts to real estate,” in the late 1970s: the run toward independence, which is when major areas of land were bought up by foreign investors (a situation that continues today). By then, the previously flourishing art trade had collapsed.

Nearing the end of the interview, an interesting fact surfaced, rather by accident. While wrapping up our conversation, I mentioned the ongoing request by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre for the repatriation of human remains, such as the ancestor skulls modeled into *rambaramp* effigies held in museum collections all over the world. To this, Tessa replied that *rambaramp* should not be repatriated to Vanuatu, “but to Vietnam instead.” As I could guess what she meant but was not sure, I asked for explanation. And indeed, as she told me, the demand by museums for more and more *rambaramp* effigies in those years was so high that, at a certain point, there was a shortage of skulls.

Because using the skull of a local Christian was taboo and “the heathens,” as they were called in those days, “were not dying fast enough,” they asked her to find more skulls. “Vietnamese skulls,” she said, “were the easiest to get in those days” (not very surprisingly: it was the 1960s–1970s). However, this initial trade never became an industry. These specific skulls came to Vanuatu through an American friend of Tessa. They had belonged to a Vietnam veteran who had picked them up on the battlefield but who no longer wanted his macabre souvenirs. They were posted to Tessa by her friend, and she took them to Malakula in her bag, together with her food and her camping equipment. She did not have to pay duty on the skulls because they were declared for customs as “used skulls,” and anything “used” was exempt from duty. Before she had access to these skulls, she added, her *small nambas* connections went fossicking on burial grounds on Malakula for skulls to use in art.

The actual request for repatriation of human remains by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre has, as far as I know, resulted in only two responses worldwide. By November 2010, one overmodeled skull was prepared for repatriation by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., as were two *rambaramp* effigies in the Musée d’Arts Africains, Océaniens, et Amérindiens in Marseille, France. By July 2011, the overmodeled skull previously held at the Smithsonian, collected during World War II, was back in Vanuatu. It is now safely stored in the tabu room (storeroom) of the National Museum and Cultural Centre in Port Vila.

In Paris, the permanent exhibition at the Musée du Quai Branly has eight *rambaramp* effigies exhibited together in a dark “glass box” (cf. Ames



Figure 0.4. Group of *rambaramp* effigies in the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, dramatically approaching the viewer from the dark (photograph by the author).

1992), dramatically approaching the viewer, with reflections in the glass purposefully adding to the evocation of a mysterious, spirit-like atmosphere. As their labels say, some were collected in the early twentieth century, and some in the middle of the century. During a trip to Paris in 2011 in order to trace the Ambrymese slit-drums and tree fern figures I started this book with, I saw one more *rambaramp*; it was for sale at the Parcours des Mondes. The Parcours is a tribal art fair taking place annually in Paris (from 7 to 11 September in 2011). That specific *rambaramp* effigy, formerly part of the known Fowler Collection (not connected to Tessa) and known to have been in the United States since the 1950s–1960s, was for sale at Galerie Ivana de Gavardie, rue des Beaux-Arts, Paris, through Brussels-based tribal art dealer Kevin Conru. Its price in Paris in 2011 was set at 45,000 euros (personal communication, Kevin Conru, 7 September 2011).

Commodities, Value, and Authenticity

The frame for this book is one of commodities and the valuation of things, entwined with notions of authenticity negotiated on different levels of interaction and set in contexts of cultural revival and tourism. As the story

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of the production and sale of *rambaramp* effigies in the 1960s–1970s highlights, the concept of authenticity entails many different aspects. There is not just the authenticity of the native and, at the other end of the range, the authenticity of engaging with that native, in local contexts and in museums in the West. There is also something like the guise of authenticity, as the example of the Vietnamese and Malakulan skulls illustrates, and even something like the authenticity of repatriation.

As the *rambaramp* story also highlights, authenticity and the authentication of things strongly relate to commoditization and valuation. Of these three themes, commoditization is the most concrete one: things have monetary value. They move around within an increasingly global market economy, gaining value while they circulate and are circulated by people. Other sets of value engage with cash value, often implicit, invisible. These have to do with aesthetic value, or emotional value, with previous ownership, and with the history of things. Entwined with commodity exchange, there also exists a wide range of values around things usually exchanged as gifts in gift economies (Mauss 1965 [1923–1924]; Strathern 1988; Munn 1986; Weiner 1992).

Commoditization is the transformation of all sorts of things that have use value (things that were initially not intended for the market) into commodities (things that have market value). In Marxist theory, the term “commodification” is used to refer to such processes. In the case of Vanuatu, relevant examples are the slit-drums, tree fern figures, and the variety of masks, puppets, and *rambaramp* effigies that were collected over time. An important aspect in the commodification of such things is their circulation: they change hands; their ownership changes. Mauss (1965 [1923–1924]) saw this kind of alienation as something that happens when all rights in what is considered to be someone’s property are detached from one owner and vested in another (in Graeber 2001: 162).

The circulation of things was most notably examined by Arjun Appadurai in his work *The Social Life of Things* (1986b). Appadurai investigated things-in-motion, allowing questions to be asked about collecting, tourism, and trade or, in his own words, about “the role of objects of the ‘other’ in creating the souvenir, the collection, the exhibition and the trophy in the modern West” (1986b: 48). He built his argument on Simmel’s earlier work *The Philosophy of Money* (1978 [1907]) in which value “is never an inherent property of objects, but . . . a judgement made about them by subjects” (in Appadurai 1986b: 3), saying that “we call those objects valuable that resist our desire to possess them” (ibid.). We have to “follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations

that enliven things” and “it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context” (ibid.: 5). It is in these spheres of interaction that objects gain monetary value, changing hands and accumulating a further history.

Drawing on Nelson Graburn (1976), who uses Maquet’s original terminology, Appadurai repeated that, for aesthetic productions, there are four types of commodities: those by destination (intended for exchange), those by metamorphosis (intended for other uses but placed into the commodity state), those by diversion (objects placed into a commodity state although originally specifically protected from it) and, lastly, ex-commodities (things retrieved, either temporarily or permanently, from the commodity state and placed in some other state; 1986b: 16).

In the same volume, Igor Kopytoff focused on the cultural biographies of things, asking questions “similar to those one asks about people,” about the biographical possibilities in the thing’s status and in the period and culture, about its career, about the recognized ages or periods in its life, and about the cultural markers within which it is embedded in differing contexts (Kopytoff 1986: 66). This view was revolutionized by Alfred Gell (1998), who focused on objects as indexes. Kopytoff distinguished two kinds of object values: the value of an object as commodity (of which he said it can be compared to other objects) and the value of unique objects (those that cannot be compared). This is done by a process he calls “singularization,” or the singling out of things, in order to make them special, more valuable (1986: 83). “Most of the time, when the commodity is effectively out of the commodity sphere, its status is inevitably ambiguous and open to the push and pull of events and desires, and it is shuffled about in the flux of social life” (ibid.). It is in singularization that the thing takes on meaning. Singularizations of various kinds are an accompaniment of commoditization; they make things meaningful and valuable on different levels.

The research for this book was influenced by how objects in some parts of Vanuatu have come to be produced and transacted and by the various ways in which such processes of commoditization have been analyzed. As a consequence, it is about transactions and about people, galleries, and museums: local people, art collectors, tourists, and dealers and connoisseurs. In later chapters, the book is informed by the literature on museum anthropology and the roles of objects (e.g., Steiner 1994; Phillips and Steiner 1999a) and not so much by Gell and the ontological school that grew out of the agency of art (e.g., Pinney and Thomas 2001; Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2006; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017).

In this book, I attribute agency to people who actively participate in the market economy. What I take from Appadurai is his objects-in-motion

frame, and from Kopytoff his singularization scheme. When it is circulated and singularized, the object accumulates a history in the form of a pedigree of former sellers, buyers, and owners, which enhances its monetary value. In the Vanuatu case, this can be in the form of a statue traveling from Ambrym Island to Paris, to the so-called tribal art gallery scene: the statue was separated, singularized. Most valuable are things that appear as unique. They can be (almost) impossible to buy. Singularization can take place on the local level by usage and authentication, and on the global level by exposure in galleries and museums or private living rooms. When such objects change hands, they become even more valuable: they accumulate further pedigree, history. Dealers and connoisseurs will refer to such things as masterpieces: rare things, or unique, worth incalculable sums of money. To single out objects makes them into highly desired commodities, even though they might have been originally specifically protected from this state (cf. Appadurai 1986: 16).

People in Vanuatu have been aware of the commoditization of their culture and material culture items for a long time. Some actively participated in it. Others did not. For Melanesia, we know of trade-on-the-beach contexts from the early nineteenth century onward. Later, traders and planters visited and settled more systematically in the region and exchanges of art for industrially produced goods such as metal tools and weapons became common. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, what was called a “curio trade” flourished in the region. Drawing on Appadurai, Nicolas Thomas used the term “recontextualization” instead of “circulation” to refer to such processes and focused on the active involvement of colonial relations rather than excluding them as external to the question of precolonial gift economies and their transformations (Thomas 1991; see also Myers 2001 for transformative economies; see particularly Sahlins 2000 [1988]).

In current settings, commodities, or things placed in the commodity state, range from tourist arts and customary arts made and used in contexts of cultural revival and tourism (Skinner and Bolton 2012: 467) to what in the West is often designated a fake or a forgery, remade “after the old” but not used in local contexts, made “just for sale.” Older things can also be sold, often by people who are not the customary owners. While, on the local level, things have been exchanged for a very long time, in a context of globalized commercialization, problems include a decrease in monetary value when buyers become aware that something was made “just for sale,” or, on the local level, disagreement and dispute when much valued things are sold. This once more relates to the authentication of things, which is achieved by local people for themselves to give meaning and value to their objects in the context of cultural revitalization, but au-

thentication is also done on other levels, for art collectors and tourists, in order to sell the objects.

Focusing on production and producers rather than on the products themselves, Pierre Bourdieu, in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *The Rules of Art* (1996), outlined the concepts of economic and symbolic or cultural capital and power relations between producers and consumers. Thinking in terms of dominants (those who adhere to the economic pole) and dominated (the cultural pole), he focused on the relationships between people and things. His field of power is formed by an economic and a cultural pole, with economic capital being the root of all forms of capital: cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital as a form of power as well as his notion of field is useful in developing an understanding of the circulation and valuation of objects in Vanuatu. He defines a field as

a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by the present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97)

In contemporary Vanuatu, the market principle is being increasingly appropriated by local people, with the artifact trade increasingly becoming a field of power, where actors compete for control over resources. As David Swartz has noted, Bourdieu's fields "denote arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize these different kinds of capital" (1997: 117). Fields are sites of struggle and resistance for control over valued sources (*ibid.*: 121–22), where relationships between people and between people and things are being constantly renegotiated.

David Graeber (2001) has argued that economic value is determined by money, by price mechanisms, and by the market economy. Values, in the plural, he added, are determined by sets of often invisible valuation mechanisms, such as aesthetic or emotional value or, in this case, the authenticity of the people and the things involved. "Where there is no single system of values," he writes, "one is left with a whole series of heterogeneous, disparate ones" (*ibid.*: 56). He sees the market as the basic organizing principle of social life in the industrial West, the ultimate determinant, the mediator of value (*ibid.*: 158). In the market, the rules of transfer are

implicitly always there, but they can vary according to the specific conditions and to specific sets of meaning and value.

Like authenticity, value is a difficult to grasp and multilayered concept. While commoditization is primarily about markets and prices and pricing, valuation plays on all kinds of different levels, in people's minds. Value is related to production, exchange, and consumption of goods. Marx's influential thinking centered on production, arguing that the value of commodities was derived from the workforce, from the human labor that went into producing them and saying that this fact is all too often forgotten when a thing is bought and sold on the market; so it seems that its value arises somewhat naturally from the qualities of the thing itself (Marx 1964 [1859] in Graeber 2001: 26; see also Appadurai 1986: 13).

The study of commodity exchange was more concerned with establishing a quantitative equivalence of value between objects (e.g., Gregory 1982) and with giving and reciprocity (Sahlins 1965) or keeping (Weiner 1992, 1994). Graeber used Clyde Kluckhohn's work of 1951 in which value was described as conceptions of the desirable (in Graeber 2001: 78). Money, Graeber wrote, is only one token of value, the most concrete one (ibid.: 67). "It might be better, then, to think of the word 'value' as meaning something more like 'importance'" (ibid.: 55). "The desirable," a key term, "refers not simply to what people actually want—in practice, people want all sorts of things. Values are ideas about what they *ought* to want" (ibid.: 3, emphasis in original). This then translates into a certain notion of pleasure once something is owned (ibid.: 9).

Pricing and prices measure value, by comparison, by distinction. In Bourdieu's work *Distinction* (1984), value revolves around the game of dominance, around the attempt by one party to accumulate symbolic capital (or symbolic tokens) and gain advantage over the other party. According to Bourdieu, the one who has symbolic capital is the victor, not the economic capitalist. But symbolic capital can also add to the monetary value of a thing when it is sold. There is a paradox in this, in the sense that certain things that can and should be sold, because it is their purpose, decrease in monetary value when this aspect comes to light, while something that has intrinsic value to the people who created it increases in monetary value once this aspect of it surfaces. It is not because an object is made for sale, or not made for sale but sold anyway, that it cannot have other sets of values attached to it, outside of the realm of the commercial, such as a family history, pride in one's culture and artifacts, artistry and craftsmanship, acknowledgment of indigenous ownership, or as token of the right to make and sell a certain kind of item.

Importantly, in Graeber's thinking as well as Bourdieu's, it is the actions of creative individuals that make things into valued items. Graeber's

theory is a theory of action. This is an idea that I relate to, particularly in my discussion of what I will later refer to as “making authenticity.” As I will argue, it is not objects that produce authenticity, but people. It is local people as well as art connoisseurs who manipulate objects to turn them into authentic tokens of culture. It is people who are related to things who determine the value sets.

Authenticity and the authentication of people and things is a type of valuation. According to Charles Lindholm’s account of Trilling’s view (1972), the concept of authenticity grew out of the more modest virtue of sincerity in sixteenth-century postfeudal European society, when stratified and sanctified social order became fragmented and individualistic (Lindholm 2008: 3). Authenticity is particularly attributed by people to people and things. In Vanuatu, within increasingly sensitive settings of appropriation and ownership of valued things and combined with an increasingly global economy and cultural differences in regimes of value between gifts and commodities (Appadurai 1986; see also Myers 2001), authenticity and authentication is becoming increasingly important in the form of conceptions of “the real.” Moving from villages to galleries and auction rooms, the authenticity of objects is regulated by the tastes and desires of producers and consumers.

Concerns about authenticity, Fred Myers has noted (2001: 56), are usually centered on ideas of static culture. Notions of authenticity and authentication, however, can also be agents for change and inventiveness in revitalizing a past that is seen as unchanging and real. Myers talks of “culture making” (ibid.: 56, 60), what I will return to in this book as “making authenticity,” which is primarily done by local people who authenticate and evaluate what they do, for themselves and for audiences, for sale. Unlike Bourdieu, who rejects the idea of what he calls “the direct effect of demand on supply or of supply on demand” (1984: 241), I define the buyers as those who create the market. Like Simmel, I argue that the value of an object lies in the degree to which a buyer wants it (Graeber 2001: 31).

Authenticity in the making of things, in the style, in the materials used, are things that, to a certain degree, can be controlled by the maker. Purity, beauty, and reality form in people’s minds and, ideally, are subject to change. As Graeber noted, perfect value lies in the fact that “Most of us are accustomed to describe things as ‘realities’ precisely because we can’t completely understand them, can’t completely control them, don’t know exactly how they are going to affect us, but nonetheless can’t just wish them away” (2001: 51–52). “It’s what we don’t know about them that brings home the fact that they are real” (ibid.: 52).

The authentic native is one imagined by visitors and locals alike. He, and particularly he, is one dressed up in local costume, wearing parapher-

nalia such as pig tusks and leaf and flower decorations and showing his traditional “nakedness.” There is a nuance in the authenticity attributed by local people to themselves, however, which is accomplished by linking oneself to ancestors who were important in culture history and to indigenous claims for ownership of rituals and objects. In revived ritual sequences, men dress up to perform aspects of their ancient culture, but for them this is only one layer of the meaning and value they attribute to their revived culture and objects. The local and the global meet, however, at least in what is put on for the audiences. Underlying sensibilities, such as who has the right to perform what kind of dance, song, or ritual sequence, do not always surface in performances and are interpreted only by local audiences.

Authentication of people and things in the context of performances and cultural festivals generates value and, again, authenticity, real or perceived. Local people ask higher prices for authenticated items, whether or not they are considered truly authentic (danced, performed) or made just for sale. Buyers are not always aware of this nuance. There is a paradox here as well: making things authentic can be seen as forging them, making them into something that in reality they are not to make them saleable and to achieve a better price. On the other hand, each tangible thing is a real thing (it is physically there), but producers and consumers often refuse to see it this way. While “the real” is preferably not sold, “the fake” is made authentic for sale.

When local people sell that which their family members and neighbors consider to be the real, problems and disagreements and disputes begin. Yet, what buyers really want is the real, even though they can also be disappointed that they are in fact able to buy the thing, for buying the real equals diminishing its authenticity. Tourists, for example, are not easily tricked anymore into buying a recognizable item of tourist art. Authentication through performance, through dance and usage, convinces potential buyers who witness the presentation of the thing they will buy afterward, and they will buy precisely for this reason. This is an innovative strategy developed by local people in order to counteract the process of (supposed) loss of authenticity. Performance, usage in dance, enhances authenticity.

Engagement with authenticity does not end with the authentic native in local contexts. In globalized settings of galleries and museums, it is the acknowledgment of being exhibited in a white gallery space in Paris or New York or a museum or a private living room that generates value and authenticity for objects. In all these spaces, visitors consume in order to establish their own authenticity. They do this self-referentially, by establishing themselves as a person of taste, along the lines of “I am a person

of knowledge” or “I can distinguish beauty.” In relation to art collectors and tourists in specific places, this can be added to “I know this place.” In *Distinction*, Bourdieu focused on taste, or distinction, and class, saying, “There is a fairly close homology between the fields of production in which products are developed and the fields (the field of the social classes or the field of the dominant class) in which tastes are determined” (1984: 241).

In contexts of galleries and museums, they meet in a kind of harmony. In Bourdieu’s intranational frame, it is because of someone’s upper middle-class academic background that it is his or her taste to consume avant-garde experimental literature and it is somebody else’s, who shares the same social condition, to produce that literature. He calls it a “quasi-miraculous correspondence prevailing at every moment between the products offered by a field of production and the field of socially produced tastes” (1984: 231). Producers in Vanuatu are not structurally homologous with consumers in Paris, of course, but they have developed a sophisticated understanding of the tastes of the Westerner. In globalized settings, aesthetic objects take part in systems of taste, or distinction, through people, centered around markets and connoisseurship in different hierarchies of value (Myers 2001: 55).

In Vanuatu society, in which property and exchange have for a long time played important roles in the construction of social identity, ownership and indigenous copyright are central problems in the commoditization, valuation, and authentication of objects. Rights to reproduction, use, and ownership of certain artifacts and designs are stretched and now include rights to produce items for sale. Revival, cultural performances, festivals, and customary arts are in many cases entwined with tourism and the market and infused by competition in tastes and desires. In places where people revive past rituals and dances and reproduce the ritual artifacts that go with these performances, art collectors and tourists follow, as paying audiences and buyers. In some of these places they are welcome visitors; in others they are carefully kept out of interaction.

Buyers do not just create the market but also shape it, in the sense that an Ambrymese or any other sculptor in Vanuatu today creates according to the tastes and desires of the Paris or New York auction room goer, a taste the sculptor has come to know and to accommodate. The local is one step ahead, however, supplying what the buyer desires: “the real,” “the authentic,” or often the “made real” or the “made authentic.” These are meaningful distinctions: they produce value (cf. Sahlin 1976: 213–14). Some consumers form their taste in isolation, in their homes, determining on their own what to them is a beautiful, well-crafted artifact. At each end of the long chain of distribution, actions of connoisseurship are generated

by individuals who, by doing so, increase the object's monetary value as well as its other, inherent values. In this process, the disguise of money can work well on some levels and less on others.

Methodology

I carried out the ethnographic fieldwork for this book in Vanuatu in November–December 2006, November 2008, July–December 2009, and November 2010 to February 2011. The 2006 trip was a prospective one and by invitation by Ralph Regenvanu, then director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, whom I had met shortly before at a Pacific Arts Association Meeting in Cambridge, United Kingdom. During that first Vanuatu trip, I attended the conference *After 26 Years: Collaborative Research in Vanuatu since Independence*, held at the Cultural Centre in Port Vila (6–8 November 2006). During the trip, I traveled to Wala, one of the small islands off the coast of Northeast Malakula, to witness the arrival of the P&O cruise ship *Pacific Sun*. I thought, at that stage, that cruise ship tourism was going to be central to my research. After all, by then I had seen an image of a slit-drum being bought by cruise ship tourists and dragged onto a ship at Ranon in North Ambrym in the 1990s in Knut Rio's 1997 M.A. thesis.

I did not make it to Ambrym on that first trip but knew, if I was to continue research in Vanuatu, that this island, as one of the prime places for art in the archipelago, was going to at least be on my itinerary. In 2008, as a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Melbourne, I returned to Vanuatu to do archival research at the Cultural Centre. In July 2009, I departed for Vanuatu to do longer term fieldwork. By that time, my aim was to research the meaning and value of material culture and the arts.

I worked in several locations throughout the archipelago and one outside: Paris, where I retraced the paths of the drums and *bwerang* I started this book with—those I had seen leaving the shores of North Ambrym upon arrival to the island. Working in different places typifies what George Marcus and others have termed “multisited ethnography,” which focuses on a world system rather than just a local context (e.g., Marcus 1995, 1998). Objects and festivals drew me to Ambrym and later to Southeast Malakula and the Banks Islands in Northern Vanuatu. Ambrym and Malakula are important places for the revitalization of *kastom*, made visible each year in competitive listings of festivals, often at concurrent dates. Each year, the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO) distributes a festival calendar to hotels and other tourist venues in town. Of all the festivals in 2009, for which I provide an overview in Chapter Three, I attended

the Back to My Roots Festival in Halhal Fantor, North Ambrym (26–28 August 2009) and the Malakula Festival on Uliveo or Maskelyne Island in the Maskelynes Group of Southeast Malakula (2–4 October). That I only made it to two festivals on the calendar was due to the concurrent dates and to competition in *kastom* but also to chaotic, last-minute organization and communication and to the inaccessibility of many of these places. On Ra, in the Banks Islands, I attended the Saint Andrew’s Mini Arts Festival, which was not announced on the calendar. It was held outside of the dry, festival season, from 28 to 30 November, Saint Andrew’s Day. The Third National Arts Festival took place in Port Vila from 2 to 6 November. I provide detailed analyses of the Back to My Roots, Malakula, and Third National festivals in Chapter Three.

The research project was approved by the relevant ethics committee at the University of Melbourne. Upon arrival in Vanuatu in July 2009, it was also approved by the Vanuatu National Cultural Council. During fieldwork, I was confronted with ethically difficult situations that I had to negotiate as a novice fieldworker. Early on, I was drawn into negotiations over art for money, by local people as well as tourists. By the time of my stay on Uliveo, in October 2009, tourists knew that I was “an anthropologist with a research interest in art” and approached me and asked me to be their mediator in negotiations (on their behalf, by interpreting and translating for them). They were yachties, as local people call them, people traveling on their own sailboats or yachts, reaching the otherwise difficult to reach locations with relative ease. Yachties will be an important tourist category throughout the book. They are the prime buyers of art objects.

Because of my questions about the sale of objects, local people often asked me if I was an art collector. Although most people know that they receive far less than they could in distant markets, they still seem to like collectors and were often disappointed that I was not one. My explanation that I was looking at the sustainability for local people in the business meant that I got more involved, talking on their behalf. While to some locals I was a threat, others saw in me an access point to cash. Yet others called me an art promoter. The longer I was in the field, the more I was assumed to be acting as a middleman and a participant in the commerce of artifacts, arranging deals and setting prices. This role had both advantages and disadvantages, as it affected how people engaged with me. An advantage was that I became an insider to some transactions; a disadvantage was that I was seen as partisan by some people.

It is Cultural Centre policy that the researcher agree to the guidelines governing cultural research policy. The researcher submits a research proposal that outlines the general research objectives of the project, the field sites, and the possible outcomes for local communities. Per the procedure,

the researcher is then assigned to a *filwoka* (fieldworker) of the location where he or she will be working, accommodated by the *filwoka* family. *Filwokas* are local men and women trained by the Cultural Centre to work on topics of *kastom* in their home locations. I will return to the workings of the Cultural Centre's *Filwoka* scheme in following sections and in the next chapters, even though I operated largely outside of this network.

In all field locations, I collected data by way of participant observation and by interviewing people and taking field notes, always with the consent of the interviewee. Some interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and transcribed. During more informal social moments, I took notes only, or just talked, for example during nightly kava sessions.³

Field Sites

Central to the methodology for the book is that it is multisited. As I have noted, it was the arts and cultural festivals that brought me to different places in the archipelago and the trajectories of objects that brought me to Paris. Upon arrival in Port Vila in July 2009 for my long-term fieldwork, I signed the research agreement to ensure that the research and field sites were approved by the Cultural Council. I departed for Ambrym in mid-August 2009. From Ambrym, I traveled to Malakula and later Port Vila and Ra, in order to attend festivals. Ra is a tiny coral island connected by a reef and a lagoon to the southwestern tip of the island of Mota Lava in the Banks Islands. In the Banks Group, I also stayed in Vureas Bay on Vanua Lava, where the Vanua Lava Cultural Festival of 2009 had taken place not long before my visit, on 1 September (while I was still in North Ambrym, attending the Back to My Roots Festival). I traveled to all these locations and back to Ambrym on Air Vanuatu Domestic planes, connecting to local motorboats or canoes in most places. As North Ambrym does not have an airstrip and is cut off from the rest of the island by the volcanoes at its center and by the huge calderas they created over time, the only way to reach this part of the island is by motorboat from West Ambrym. Later in my fieldwork, I traveled on several cargo ships that service the islands. As this is the cheaper way of travel for most local people, traveling on the ships turned out to be an excellent opportunity for additional fieldwork. Traveling between the different islands, I found myself being in transit and outside of the orbit of any particular "field." This was an interesting interstice of and addition to my multisited ethnography.

That I chose North Ambrym and specifically Fona as my main field site has to do with the pile of slit-drums and tree fern figures to be shipped to France that I found lying there on the beach upon my first arrival. Fona is

the only place I witnessed such a scene. In addition, it is the village where the supervisor for my Ph.D. research at the University of Melbourne, Mary Patterson, was based during her long-term fieldwork on the island from 1968 to 1971 and afterward. In Fona, I was welcomed by Chief Johnson Lengkon Koran and his family, the family into which Patterson was adopted over forty years ago and with which she has maintained connections since. Staying with Johnson and his family gave me the opportunity to work outside of the *filwoka* scheme. This was a privilege that I was granted by the Cultural Centre in the person of Ralph Regenvanu because of Patterson's strong connections to the place.

However, this also meant that I was firmly tied to the people and the area of Fona. This became particularly clear when I left Ambrym with the Back to My Roots performance group in November 2009 to attend the National Festival in Vila. By then, I had come to know different members of the performance group and had decided to travel with them, departing from Olal, on the northernmost tip of the island, on the cargo ship *Halice*. The ship was chartered by the Cultural Centre to pick up dance delegations in the islands. In Fona, this meant that my hosts were worried about my safety and about whether or not they were going to lose me as a source of income to their competitors in *kastom* of the Magam-Olal-Neuiha area in the extreme north of the island. It became increasingly clear that I was Johnson's man and that I was supposed to operate as middleman to a local middleman, a position, as I have noted, that was problematic. On the other hand, I collected field results I would have otherwise not collected, walking with tourists, showing them the sites.

Outside of Ambrym, I stayed with several local people and with *filwokas* and their families in the Maskelyne Islands of Southeast Malakula, in Lamap in Southeast Malakula, and on Vanua Lava and Ra in the Banks Islands. On Uliveo, in the Maskelynes Group, I stayed with a local family in the village of Lutes during the Malakula Festival. From Uliveo, I traveled with a fellow anthropology student whom I had met during the Malakula Festival, to Avok, a neighboring island in the Maskelynes, where both of us were accommodated by the *filwoka* for the area, Chief Andrew Nakel. Later, we also traveled to Lamap, Southeast Malakula. Lamap is an important place for the revival of culture on Malakula and in Vanuatu. In Lamap, we stayed in the hamlet of the family of Marcellin Abong, former director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. We were accommodated by Marcellin's twin brother Herna, whose *kastom* name and graded title is *meleun*. Herna Abong is a revived Big Man as well as a *filwoka* for his area. During my time on Vanua Lava, I was accommodated by long-serving *filwoka* for his area, Eli Field, in a house in his hamlet in Turmalau, in Vureas Bay. During visits to Mota Lava and Ra, I stayed in the local business,

Paradise Bungalows on Ra, owned by Father Luke Dini and his wife Rona. On Ra, I was regarded by the locals as being in some sort of in-between space between anthropologist and tourist: I talked with them and spent my time in the village, I had nightly communal kava with them in the village *nakamal*, but I also stayed in a bungalow on the beach.



Figure 0.5. Map of Vanuatu. Province names are abbreviated island names: for example MALAMPA for Malakula, Ambrym, and Paama (source: www.nationmaster.com).



Figure 0.6. The house used by the anthropologist in Fona, North Ambrym. It was built a couple of years ago with the financial assistance of Mary Patterson (photograph by the author).

On Language

I conducted the fieldwork for this book in Bislama, Vanuatu's national language and a pidgin language that has evolved since early contact and trade history. Bislama is the language mostly used in the urban contexts of Port Vila and Luganville, where people from different islands live and work together. In the islands, it is spoken among people who come from other islands, for example by marriage or for work, mainly as schoolteachers. Among each other, villagers speak their respective vernacular languages, of which there are over a hundred in Vanuatu.⁴ In addition to Bislama and one or more local vernaculars, many local people also speak one of the former colonial languages, French or English. In all locations, I learned some daily speech and some words that specifically relate to my research (for example, the names of rituals and objects and certain indigenous concepts) in local vernacular language.⁵

In most places, former Francophone and Anglophone influence is very much still felt today. Johnson Koran, my Fona host, often expressed the desire to communicate in French. As a former police officer for the

Gendarmerie française in colonial days, he clearly misses the French language and culture. This meant that during my time in Fona I sometimes conducted fieldwork in French, talking to Johnson and his fellow Francophones in formerly French-influenced villages in North Ambrym. On the other hand, Herna Abong in Lamap does not speak French anymore, “for reasons of *kastom*,” he said, in order to “resist the influence of colonialism.” In the Banks Islands, during my stay in Turmalau, Vureas Bay, Vanua Lava, the importance of local language was made particularly clear to me by Eli Field, my Turmalau host and Cultural Centre local *filwoka*. *Lanwis* (language), Eli Field said, “is identity.”

Book Outline

The book aims to address key questions on authenticity in relation to indigenous copyright, ownership, and the broader context of global art markets and museums. In Chapter One, I distinguish the main study areas with which the book deals: those of art history, the anthropology of art, and the anthropology of tourism. I provide an overview of Vanuatu ethnography, collectors, collections, and exhibitions, and discuss policy and the *filwoka* scheme of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. I go on to discuss the important concepts of *kastom*, copyright, Christianity, and respect, and I introduce the notion of a second kind of copyright that has recently emerged in Vanuatu as a way around rigid copyright prescriptions.

In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of the historical context of production and consumption of objects, with additional material from my fieldwork. I introduce the problem of terminology, of art/artifact, and, briefly, the politics of museums, a topic that I return to in more detail in Chapter Six. I then discuss the roles of ethnologists Felix Speiser and A. B. Lewis in the archipelago in the early twentieth century, setting the frame for a hundred years of collecting in the islands. The core of this chapter is a focus on what I call the protagonists of a collection history for Vanuatu and on the so-called masterpieces of that history. Protagonists are the much collected *atingting*, or slit-drums, and *bwerang*, or tree fern figures, from North Ambrym and the *rambaramp* funerary effigies from Southeast Malakula, while masterpieces are rare, even unique, things. In the chapter, I discuss the main collection locations in the archipelago, consisting of the geographical regions of North-Central and North Vanuatu—primarily Ambrym, Malakula, and the Banks Islands. The chapter also examines notions of authenticity by demonstrating that objects were always offered for sale and that the authentic token of culture, the truly authentic thing, was always one entwined with money and the market.

In Chapter Three, I shift from the historical context of Ambrym, Malakula, and the Banks Islands, to the contemporary setting and my own fieldwork. This chapter deals with the usage of objects and how this is interpreted by locals as well as visitors. In analyses of the Back to My Roots Festival, the Malakula Festival, and the Third National Arts Festival, I discuss the different kinds of use, from “real use” over “making authenticity” to “copy use” and making objects that are “just for sale.” In a section on Malakula, I return to the issue of copies and copy use and I reintroduce the second kind of copyright. I discuss what it means to “walk artifacts for sale” and what it means to sell things that are considered authentic or real.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the issue of sale after usage. In both Chapters Three and Four I treat festivals and tourism as loci of art production and consumption. In Chapter Four, I focus on the visitors: art collectors and tourists, both of whom buy objects at festivals after use. At festivals, also, views are challenged among locals and visitors alike about what *kastom* is or should be and about the meanings of authenticity. Local people claim property rights to the objects they sell, whether these are supposedly real or copy. Usage, of any kind, authenticates the object. In this chapter, I argue that the authenticated object is not just an object of cultural revival but also one of commerce, a kind of tourist art that replicates “authentic primitive art.”

In Chapter Five, I discuss *kastom* disputes and mistakes. I return to the historical context and to one object in particular, the *lengnangulong* sacred stone of Magam village, North Ambrym, now kept in a museum in Paris while in its original place it is regarded as alienated and highly contested property. Objects that were collected a long time ago belong not only to history but also to present-day society and local communities. Disputes over contested material culture items do not terminate with old objects reclaimed as family property. They also increasingly revolve around money and *kastom*. In the final section of this chapter, I contrast the context of art buying and art buyers in Vanuatu with that in Europe. I discuss the types of valuation in an art gallery setting in Paris, the *Parcours des Mondes*, the abovementioned tribal art fair in Paris.

In Chapter Six, the book returns to the museum settings of the West. I discuss trade, theft, repatriation, and the role of museums. I return to the history of collecting and to the complex life history of the *lengnangulong* sacred stone and examine recent examples of collecting and exhibiting the arts of Vanuatu. I highlight one exhibition and what it means to donate highly valued, “real” artifacts, those also desired by art collectors and museums, immediately after their production and usage. This brings the creation of authenticity and of authentic art into a museum context and raises questions of representation.

In the final chapter, I conclude by summarizing the main arguments of the book. Based on the fieldwork that was carried out, I reassess issues of the meaning and value of Vanuatu arts in local and global settings of commoditization, trade, and the market.

Notes

1. Ghent University holds collections of materials from Africa, Oceania, South-east Asia, and the Americas. The larger part of its Oceania collection consists of a donation in the early twentieth century of Melanesian materials by the Berlin Museum für Volkerkunde of their “doubles” from former German New Guinea (Northeast Papua New Guinea, Neu Pommern [New Britain], and Neu Mecklenburg [New Ireland]), collected in the late nineteenth century and formerly part of the Franz Hernalshausen Sammlung (named after the trader who lived in the area and Micronesia between 1875 and 1880), added with several objects of the former Neu Guinea Kompagnie.
2. See, for example, the *Mankind* special issue “Reinventing Traditional Culture: The Politics of *Kastom* in Island Melanesia,” edited by Roger Keesing and Robert Tonkinson 1982.
3. Formerly a ceremonial drink reserved for men, kava is a mild narcotic made of the roots of the kava plant. It is now drunk by almost all men, and in the urban centers and in some locations even women, in communal houses called *nakamal*, after the ceremonial men’s houses of the past.
4. Vanuatu has the highest number of languages per capita in the world. Tryon (1996) lists 113 languages, many of them with only a few speakers left.
5. For most locations, I take over orthographies from the existing literature. For the orthography of all North Ambrymese words, I use Michael Franjeh’s notation. Franjeh conducted the research for his Ph.D. in linguistics in Ranvetlam village at around the same time that I was based in Fona. He is the first linguist to concentrate his research solely on North Ambrym language. The Presbyterian missionary linguist Paton wrote a dictionary of the Lonwolwol language of West Ambrym (published by Australian National University in 1971 [Paton 1971a]), a language similar to North Ambrymese. Mary Patterson, in her published work, follows the orthography as developed by Paton for North Ambrym language.