

RECOVERING VOICES

Seminar Series in Endangered Languages and Indigenous Knowledge



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National Museum of Natural History

presents:

The Paradoxical Nature of Early Museum Collections from Fiji

Wednesday November 9, 2016
12:00pm - 1:00pm
Rose Room (Room 337), NMNH



Used as primary sources, museum collections from Fiji that were constituted before the Cession of Fijian Chieftain Power to the British Crown (1874) bear testimonies of the circumstances that produced them. Set back in their historical and cultural contexts of making, they inform indigenous agencies as well as foreign agendas. Interestingly very few, if any at all, resulted from direct use of violence. On the contrary, early artifacts from Fiji may be regarded as objects of exchange, circulated in the same way as many ceremonial goods today. With special attention to NMNH's collections, this talk will discuss the original nature of early museum items, with reference to current conceptions of value and human interactions in Fiji. It will then confront these paradigms with the reality of museum practices today, seeking to understand diverging tensions that resulted in a paradox: objects meant to be circulated in order to foster relationships that have become quite dramatically immobile.

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An initiative by the National Museum of Natural History,
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