



Material Explorations in African Archaeology

Timothy Insoll

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How people engaged with materials such as clay or stone, why people dug features such as pits, why they decorated their bodies, or treated their dead in certain ways, were all meaningful in the African past. However, these are subjects that have been generally neglected by archaeologists working in Africa until recently. *Material Explorations in African Archaeology* examines materiality in African archaeology by exploring concepts of material agency and material engagement and entanglement in relation to their manifest presence in persons, animals, objects, substances, and contexts. It investigates the magnificent and complex world of past African materiality by considering a range of case studies. These include, for example, why standing stones were erected, the potential meanings of bodily alteration practices such as scarification and dental modification, and why, recurrently, Africans in the past gave ritual importance to objects, materials, and locations thought of as exotic or different. Adopting a multidisciplinary focus, the volume draws not only on archaeology but also, among other areas, ethnography and history, discussing themes such as bodies, landscape, healing and medicine, and divination, as well as concepts such as memory and biography, transformation, and metaphor and metonym.

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