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978-0-521-87397-0 - Material Cultures, Material Minds: The Impact of Things on Human Thought, Society, and Evolution

Nicole Boivin

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Material Cultures, Material Minds

Material culture has been part of a distinctively human way of life for more than two million years. Recent symbolic and social analyses have drawn much attention to the role of material culture in human society, emphasising the representational and ideological aspects of the material world. These studies have, nonetheless, often overlooked how the very physicality of material culture and our material surroundings makes them unique and distinctive from text and discourse. In this study, Nicole Boivin explores how the physicality of the material world shapes our thoughts, emotions, cosmological frameworks, social relations, and even our bodies. Focusing on the agency of material culture, she draws on the work of a diverse range of thinkers, from Marx and Merleau-Ponty to Darwin, while highlighting a wide selection of new studies in archaeology, cultural anthropology, history, cognitive science, and evolutionary biology. She asks what is distinctive about material culture compared with other aspects of human culture and presents a comprehensive overview of material agency that has much to offer to both scholars and students.

Nicole Boivin is senior research associate at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge. She is editor, with Mary Ann Owoc, of *Soils, Stones, and Symbols: Cultural Perceptions of the Mineral World*.

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Material Cultures, Material Minds

*The Impact of Things on
Human Thought, Society,
and Evolution*

NICOLE BOIVIN

University of Cambridge



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To my parents, Janet and Joseph Boivin

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Members of the Australian Aboriginal community are respectfully advised that this book contains reference to a deceased Indigenous person.

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