National and Traditional Copyright in Vanuatu: A Progress Report.

In 1999, The Vanuatu Cultural Centre working with the Vanuatu government drafted a national copyright bill, in order to precipitate Vanuatu's entrance into the World Trade Organisation. This internationally guided document has been created with a particular generic and newly nationalised idea of traditional copyright in mind. This paper will examine this newly national notion of copyright in the context of the tracing of customary copyright for artefacts made for sale from Ambrym island out of the Nimangki grade-taking complex. Here, the developing commodity market for models of traditional carvings, the new idea of copyright, and genealogical legitimation of traditional status are all fusing to create an often contested socio-economic complex. This paper argues that ethnographic awareness of how copyright legislation is affected by the growth of local markets as well as by local tradition is vital to the protection and understanding of indigenous reckonings of property rights in national and international contexts.

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