Alan Howard

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www.repatriating__ethnography.edu / rotuma

2002. In Handle with Care: Ownership and Control of Ethnographic Materials, edited by Sjoerd R. Jaarsma. ASAO Monograph No. 20. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

For many years I have been concerned with the fact that people from the island of Rotuma have so little access to materials implicating their history. My concern was amplified when, in 1990, I discovered that few Rotumans expressed an interest in their history as a people. In Rotuman schools European history and to a growing extent the history of Fiji were emphasized. In part, I believe, this is a consequence of the unavailability of archival and published sources on the island (although other, culturally rooted processes also play a role; see Howard 1994). To remedy the situation, several years ago I began to explore the possibility of establishing an archive on Rotuma. I was prepared to make copies of the extensive materials I had collected over the years, but only if an appropriate repository was available. With this in mind I contacted UNESCO and was assured that money was available (the figure of 8,000 dollars U.S. was mentioned) if a proposal was submitted.

The snag was that the proposal could not come from me; it had to come from Rotuma. The district officer at the time enthusiastically supported the idea and went so far as to commit some land at the government station for a suitable building. The director of the Fiji Museum offered assistance in the

form of training and equipment. In collaboration with the district officer I wrote a proposal, which he submitted through bureaucratic channels, where it died an untimely death. Though disappointed, I was not completely dismayed. Indeed, even when my enthusiasm for the project peaked, I harbored doubts about its viability, having seen so many other idealistically conceived programs go awry. In truth, the likelihood of paper documents, photographs, and other materials surviving indefinitely on the island without professional care—something little Rotuma can ill afford—was slim in my estimation. So I dropped the project, but not the long-term commitment to making materials of historical import available to the Rotuman community. The development of the Internet afforded another, more practical opportunity.

This chapter explores the use of websites as vehicles for making available published and unpublished ethnographic texts pertaining to Pacific cultures. I present a description of a website for the island of Rotuma on which are posted complete texts of a number of classic nineteenth-century sources, as well as Gordon Macgregor's 1932 field notes. The website is frequented by Rotumans around the world who consult it for news (posted on a regular basis) and use other features, such as its bulletin board. I contrast the Rotuma case with my research among Hawaiian-Americans, where field notes consisting of personal data were destroyed to protect people's privacy. The comparison of the two cases highlights a variety of ethical, pragmatic, and methodological issues.

The Rotuma Website

Toward the end of 1996, enchanted by the possibilities of the Internet for anthropological, and particularly ethnographic, purposes, I began construction of a site for Rotuma.[1] My goals were modest at the time. I wanted to create an accessible space where Rotumans could find news and communicate with one another, as well as to provide basic information about the island's history, culture, and language for interested Rotumans and non-Rotumans alike. To these ends I incorporated an interactive message board, a news page that I continually update, maps, information about recent publications, and a set of essays on population, history, economics, politics, myths, and other cultural topics. I also scanned a number of photographs and created a digital photo album. The positive feedback I received from Rotumans via e-mail and personal encounters encouraged me to invest more of my energies in the website and to add new features. One such feature was a proverb of the week, reflecting a project Jan Rensel and I had

been working on with Elizabeth Inia, a Rotuman sage, to publish a book of Rotuman proverbs (Inia 1998). Another addition was an interactive on-line dictionary whereby a visitor could enter an English word and find Rotuman equivalents or vice versa.[2] More important for the topic of this volume, I decided to scan and make available the most important nineteenth-century publications on Rotuma. Doing so at least makes available to the Rotuman community materials that are vital to their recorded (as opposed to oral) history. Publications now on-line include

• An account by René Lesson, naturalist aboard the French corvette *Coquille*, which visited Rotuma in 1824. Lesson's account is entitled "Observations on Rotuma and Its Inhabitants."

• Peter Dillon arrived at Rotuma in 1827 and wrote an account, *Narrative of a Voyage in the South Seas*.

• George Bennett, a physician aboard the *Sophia*, visited Rotuma in 1830. His observations on "The Island of Rótuma" were published in 1831 in the *United Services Journal*.

• Robert Jarman visited Rotuma aboard the whaling ship *Japan* and wrote an account of his visit in *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas* (1832).

• Edward Lucatt's report of a visit to Rotuma in 1841, from his book *Rovings in the Pacific* (covering the years 1837 to 1849), published in 1851.

• Litton Forbes's account of his visit to Rotuma in 1872, from his book *Two Years in Fiji*, published in 1875.

• J. W. Boddam-Whetham's account of a short visit to Rotuma in his book *Pearls of the Pacific*, published in 1876.

• W. L. Allardyce, who was acting resident commissioner on Rotuma for a short period during 1881, the year the island was ceded to Great Britain, provides a general account of Rotuman society entitled "Rotooma and the Rotoomans," published in 1885–1886.

• Reverend William Allen was a Methodist missionary on Rotuma from 1881 to1886. This account, simply entitled "Rotuma," was a paper read at a meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science at Brisbane, Australia, in January 1895.

• J. Stanley Gardiner's "The Natives of Rotuma" appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* in 1898. Gardiner was a naturalist who visited Rotuma in 1896. His account is the most extensive and valuable record of nineteenth-century Rotuma.

Gardiner's publication alone, comprising over one hundred pages of descriptions, drawings, and tables, is a most valuable source of data on the

early contact culture. I regard these postings as a form of repatriation in the sense that virtually all these materials have been buried in publications that for all practical purposes made them inaccessible to the broader Rotuman community.

More germane to issues of concern here, however, was my decision to edit and post Gordon Macgregor's field notes from his 1932 field trip to Rotuma. Macgregor spent six months on the island and interviewed a number of Rotumans about a wide range of topics, but published only a few short papers as a result. Shortly before his death he deposited his field notes at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu. I, of course, was delighted to have the opportunity to consult his notes and was impressed with their coherence. It was apparent that he had organized them with an eye toward producing a standard issue 1930s Bishop Museum monograph, one oriented toward determining Polynesia's history of settlement. The idea was to record "cultural traits" that could be compared with other Polynesian societies so as to unravel prehistoric connections.

In exchange for copies of Macgregor's notes (borrowed and eventually returned), I entered into an agreement with the Bishop Museum to edit and publish the notes with the object of rendering them accessible to Rotumans and interested scholars. The Bishop Museum was to have first rights of refusal when they were ready for publication. That was more than ten years ago, but for a variety of practical and personal reasons I placed the project on hold until recently. The development of the Rotuman website reinvigorated my interest in pursuing the matter, however, since I felt it would provide a more appropriate medium for making these valuable materials available. As a website publication, the notes are likely to be accessible to a much broader audience, without cost. Anyone can now download the notes and print them out for their personal libraries. If the printed copies are borrowed by a friend or relative and not returned (a frequent fate of loaned materials), they can be easily reaccessed and reprinted. The Bishop Museum agreed to the arrangement, provided appropriate credits and guidelines for citation were posted. My task was made easier by the fact that Hans Schmidt, a linguist who has worked on Rotuman language, had typed Macgregor's notes onto a computer, so scanning was unnecessary. I completed editing the notes in August 1997 and posted them on the website.[3]

Macgregor's Notes: Some Considerations

The first ethical issues I had to confront involved Macgregor's own intentions. How would he have felt about having his field notes exposed to

public view? Did I have the right to make them available to public scrutiny? Many anthropologists seem to regard their field notes as personal, confidential memos to themselves and would certainly not want them exposed to others, including colleagues and the people they studied. Jackson (1990) suggests that anthropologists on the whole do not seem to concern themselves with the disposition of their field notes after their deaths, since the notes are often regarded as mnemonic devices to prod their own memories and are expected to be indecipherable to others. She also notes that many anthropologists regard the quality of their field notes as an indicator of their ability to do good fieldwork.

Macgregor, however, by the act of donating his notes to the Bishop Museum, must have perceived them as having archival value. Indeed, they are well organized and have been "worked" (typed from original handwritten notes) with the likely purpose of incorporating them (virtually verbatim in many instances) into the Bishop Museum–style monograph he never completed. Having a clear template and theoretical framework benefited him in comparison with many contemporary anthropologists who are ambivalent about, or may even despise, their field notes. Data were apparently unproblematic to Macgregor because his theoretical goals were clear and dictated what constituted appropriate information. Thus, although many anthropologists are reluctant to share their field notes for what they might reveal about themselves, Macgregor evidently had no such anxiety. Indeed, his field notes reveal him to be thoroughly professional, meticulous, and thoughtful. My own assessment, therefore, was that posting his field notes does him no disservice, but rather retrospectively enhances his professional reputation.

Macgregor's notes are essentially "transcriptions" rather than "inscriptions," a distinction made by Clifford (1990). Transcriptions refer to recordings from indigenous consultants in the form of verbatim texts concerning cultural events, procedures, beliefs, and the like. At their best, they are devoid of interpretation, translation, or editing. Unedited photographs, films, and videos, or observations recorded in words also qualify. Transcriptions are like snapshots of a culture at a point in time; in that sense they are integral to a culture's history. By contrast, inscribed field notes include the fieldworkers' interpretations, guesses at meaning, theoretical speculations, and personal reactions to what they have seen and heard. Clifford eloquently spells out the advantages of transcribing:

> The photograph of an ethnographer doing extended textual work with an
> indigenous collaborator reveals a kind of writing in the field that is often

not a matter of catching "passing events" of social discourse as much as it is a process of transcribing already formulated, fixed discourse or lore. A ritual, for example, when its normal course is recounted by a knowledgeable authority, is not a "passing event." Nor is a genealogy. They are already inscribed. The same is true of everything paradoxically called "oral literature." A myth recited and taken down, a spell or song recorded in writing or on tape—these involve processes of transcription and explicate translation. I have suggested elsewhere the difference it makes when transcription and indigenous forms of writing are moved toward the center of ethnography (Clifford 1983, 135–42). For example, if writing in the field is not seen as beginning with inscription, then the ethnographic writer less automatically appears as a privileged recorder, salvager, and interpreter of cultural data. Greater prominence given to transcribed materials can produce a more polyphonic final ethnography. (Clifford 1990, 57)

Macgregor's field notes in fact are polyphonic insofar as he identifies a number of different consultants, each of whom is a source of specified items of information. This presented me with another dilemma. Should I identify Macgregor's informants on the website, or should I follow the anthropological custom of keeping purveyors of information anonymous? The issue was complicated somewhat by the fact that Macgregor not only identified consultants by name, he had in his files an assessment of each one, including, in some instances, his opinion of their veracity. In addition, I was able to identify most of his consultants in my demographic files, making it possible to place them genealogically as well as spatially (which district they were from). My decision to include the names of Macgregor's consultants, along with his assessments and my registry information, was based on three considerations. The first was that they were all now deceased and therefore were beyond embarrassment. It is possible, of course, that some of their descendants might be teased for what they are reported to have said, but teasing is endemic to Rotuman society and, in my opinion, essentially harmless. Besides, the material is generally not of an embarrassing nature.

A second consideration was the fact that the information on consultants allows knowledgeable Rotumans to place them not only in time and space, but genealogically as well, and since such contextualization of information is central to Rotuman epistemology, it seemed appropriate to include it. Finally, there is the issue of credit. In fact, the information contained in the notes "belonged to" Macgregor's consultants, and I believe they should be given proper recognition. The way the notes are structured, a viewer can click on the name of a consultant (attached to each entry) and

find a brief biographical note composed of Macgregor's comments and my registry data.

What results from these decisions is a rather postmodern (decentered, heteroglossic) perspective on Rotuman "traditional" culture. It is rather ironic that notes that were originally oriented toward producing a standard, homogenized monograph should turn out this way. On virtually every topic multiple voices are in evidence, providing divergent, sometimes contradictory information.

I also feel compelled to comment on my decision to edit Macgregor's notes, since this means that my interpretations of them are part of the final mix. I tried to keep editing to a minimum, a goal made easier by the fact that Macgregor had typed most of the notes from his original handwritten versions (which were also included in the Bishop Museum Archives). Still, some of the notes were cryptic and required interpretation or, more frequently, grammatical correction. For example, in a section on beliefs, Macgregor included the following note:

If a person fell off a tree, they would put a white mat under tree where person fell, and wait for something to fall on mat and this quickly gathered up and rushed to injured person and thus his soul is brought back. Nothing on mat meant man would die.
1. if he dies, his soul went / won't return to the spot.
2. if he lives never fall again.
two reasons for using mat.

After editing this note appears on the website as

If a person fell off a tree, they would put a white mat under the tree where the person fell, and would wait for something to fall on the mat and this would be quickly gathered up and rushed to the injured person and thus his soul is brought back.
If nothing had fallen on the mat, it meant that the man would die.
1. If he dies, his soul went and won't return to the spot.
2. If he lives, he would never fall again.
These are two reasons for using the mat.

In order to facilitate understanding of decontextualized information, I included a column adjacent to Macgregor's notes where I made interpretive comments, translated key Rotuman terms, or added information I thought

relevant. Thus the above note is accompanied by a comment stating that this ritual is called *hapagsu* in Rotuman. It appears in the following format:

Category: Beliefs (2)
Topic: Accidents
Consultant: Undisclosed

Macgregor's Notes	Comments
If a person fell off a tree, they would put a white mat under the tree where the person fell, and would wait for something to fall on the mat and this would be quickly gathered up and rushed to the injured person and thus his soul is brought back.	This ritual is called *hapagsu*.

If nothing had fallen on the mat, it meant that the man would die.
1. If he dies, his soul went and won't return to the spot.
2. If he lives, he would never fall again.

These are two reasons for using the mat.

Macgregor's transcription of Rotuman words was somewhat erratic, and I took it upon myself to introduce uniformity, consistent with contemporary Rotuman orthography (although because of network browser limitations I was unable to use proper Rotuman diacritics). For instance, he began spelling Malhaha, the name of a district, in the orthodox way, but switched to Malha'a after interviewing a consultant named Tavai from the district. His notes read:

Malha'a is spelled thus and not Malhaha.
It means sacred place, which is in accordance with the fact that the district is, if not the oldest, the one in which the earliest events took place, and where the earliest migrants landed and where the Hanlepherua made the island from the baskets of earth.

Macgregor's note appears on the web page as written, but is accompanied by the following comments:

Today most Rotumans spell the name of the district "Malhaha," so
we have used this spelling although Macgregor used "Malha'a" in his notes
after talking to Tavai.
Hanlepherua are mythical figures who played an important role in the
story of Rotuma's founding.

In only a few instances did I decide not to reproduce notes, mostly because
they were too cryptic to be interpretable. For example, one note, accompanied by a drawing, consisted of three apparently unrelated words: *Vau,
armea,* chiefly. I have no way of knowing what these referred to (*vau,* a type
of fish or bamboo; *armea,* a type of bird or tree; or *'armea,* a type of fish).

I did not include Macgregor's sketches because they were generally too
crude to scan, and reproducing them would be too time consuming. Texts
accompanying drawings were also omitted if they relied on the drawings for
comprehension.

Finally, Macgregor included some genealogical material in his notes,
although he did not take down genealogies systematically. Where his notes
were clear enough I incorporated them into the website, but in some instances, where they were too cryptic or confusing, I omitted them. Given
the importance of genealogies for Rotumans in litigation over land and
chiefly titles, I was particularly cautious in this regard. Although I believe
that placing genealogical information in context by identifying who provided it minimizes unrealistic claims to exclusive authenticity, I saw no good
reason to post information that required questionable doctoring to make it
intelligible.[4]

In a way, I am pleased that the notes are not reproduced in their complete, unaltered form, since I believe serious scholars making use of the
notes for publication should consult the originals at the Bishop Museum.

The page introducing Macgregor's notes includes an instruction that
states: "Any electronic replication or publication of significant portions of
this material must receive clearance from the Bishop Museum." At the same
time, the material is now available in a comprehensible form for Rotumans
interested in learning more about their ancestors' views about Rotuman
culture.

Other Repatriation Projects

Several other repatriation projects are underway. In October 2000 I
posted on the Rotuma website all the journal articles and book chapters
that Jan Rensel and I have published about Rotuma. To date, that amounts

to thirty-one texts, published between 1961 and 1998. This makes most of our writings about Rotuma available to the global Rotuman community in an accessible form.[5] We intend to post additional texts following their publication.

Another project is to post our registry data (births, deaths, marriages, and divorces, dating from 1903 to 1960) in a form that will allow Rotumans to construct their pedigrees back a number of generations. But perhaps more germane to this volume, I would like to post A. M. Hocart's field notes from his visit to Rotuma in 1913 and my own field notes from 1959 to 1961. Both pose problems of sorts. Hocart's notes are in the form of a continuous stream of transcriptions amounting to over 500 pages of text. Breaking them up into usable segments—a necessity for practical website accessibility—is a daunting prospect.

This problem draws attention to discrepancies between archival, published, and electronic material that is far from trivial. Archival materials retain the form of their original production, whether as cards, notepads, or scraps of paper with scribbles. They may range from a continuous stream of prose, unbroken into units of any kind, to cryptic notes on index cards. Books are printed on pages, divided into chapters, topics, and subtopics. They are also edited for spelling, grammar, and style. Protocol for websites is still evolving. Faster downloading via newer technology (such as cable modems) makes it possible to construct web pages equivalent to several hundred published pages, allowing one to mimic archival material. This is especially the case if the information is presented as pictures rather than as text (essentially as a photograph of the original document).[6] The assumptions one makes regarding how materials will be used is therefore relevant to the way they are presented. The great advantage of electronic publishing is the use of hypertext, which allows users to follow links to related materials and permits searching for specific words or phrases. This makes it tempting to produce documents of limited size or page length, relying on linkages to make connections. Thus a rather different set of contingencies is involved in "editing" materials for electronic media.

My own notes are of a different kind from Hocart's, more inscriptions than transcriptions. Also, I was more interested in the culture of the day than in customs past, so I feel compelled to examine my notes carefully for the possibility that some entries might be offensive or misleading. In this case my elder (hopefully more mature) self would be reinterpreting and monitoring my younger self. At present I am inclined to entertain the possibility of altering, correcting, and omitting some of the notes before posting them.

Who Has Access?

The issue of repatriation inevitably raises the question of who ultimately has access to repatriated materials. If they are put in national archives, they are accessible to a different range of people than if placed in schools—or on a website. So whom do I expect to reach by website postings? Can Rotumans on Rotuma access the Internet? As yet, no, although the technological capability does exist. Last year Rotuma was outfitted with a satellite dish, and a phone system was installed that can accept direct-dial international calls. The current limitations are the excessively high cost of a web service provider and the cost of computers. But it is only a matter of time before these limitations will be overcome. More to the point, however, is that approximately 80 percent of Rotumans now live in urban centers abroad—in Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and Europe. A rapidly increasing number of these people has Internet access, and if reports I have been receiving are accurate, those with access often download materials from the Internet (especially postings on the Rotuman news page) and share them with others in their local communities. I therefore believe that repatriation of materials via the Internet, if not an optimal solution now, will be so in the near future.

In contrast to an archive of hard copies, the Internet allows for interactivity, so that Rotumans, or other interested parties, can post their own responses, corrections, and opinions to repatriated materials. Their responses then become part of the total record; their voices can be heard. To facilitate this possibility I inaugurated a Rotuman forum—web pages on which individuals can post their own versions of Rotuman history, customs, and cultural dilemmas brought on by change, or address any issue on which they wish to state an opinion. And given the organic nature of information on the Internet (the fact that it can be added to, subtracted from, or changed), the possibility of correcting errors and adding caveats provides an attractive alternative to words cast in concrete (or, more accurately, inscribed on parchment). This is not to imply that one can be frivolous about posting doubtful information, or that webmasters can post information they think might be offensive with the understanding that they can remove or correct it if people respond negatively. As participants in the session leading up to this volume rightfully pointed out, once information is on the Internet, it can be downloaded, copied, and circulated, giving it a life of its own. It might not be possible to undo harm once done. My point, rather, is that factual errors and misspellings can be corrected, alternative views can be added in re-

sponse to those already made available, and, if discovered, offensive information can be removed to minimize damage.

To Repatriate or Destroy? Notes on the Dilemma of Notes

The discussion at the ASAO session that gave birth to this chapter was the liveliest I have participated in during recent years. The multiplicity of viewpoints represented underscored the complexity of ethical issues surrounding the repatriation of intellectual property. The lesson I drew from this discussion was that no set of abstract principles can be drawn up that will prove satisfactory, and that all ethnographers will have to decide for themselves what, when, and how field notes should repatriated, if at all. Every case is different. In some instances the decision may seem relatively clear-cut. I am reminded here of my decision to destroy all the information my research team and I had collected during a three-year study of a Hawaiian-American community from 1965 to 1968. The nature of the information made this an easy decision at the time. Whereas Macgregor's notes on Rotuma are mostly transcriptions of Rotuman custom, and hence were regarded as public knowledge by the Rotuman people, field data from the Hawaiian-American community were garnered from individuals and families and were explicitly expected to be treated as confidential. They included a great deal of personal data, for instance, answers to personal questions, financial information, reports of conflicts, and questionable activities. There is no way this information could have been made public without causing a great deal of harm, whereas possible benefits would have been small. The only justification I could think of for preserving it was the possibility that another social scientist might be able to use it to test hypotheses I had not considered. But this was a feeble argument compared to the covenant I felt had guided the research: that the personal and familial information people provided would remain confidential.

Field notes of a more general kind were also recorded during the three years of research and were destroyed along with the personal data. I do not rue their loss, however, since I do not think they would have proved an asset to the community we studied. The mandate for the study came from a Hawaiian welfare organization, the Lilioukalani Trust, which was dismayed by a report showing persons of Hawaiian ancestry to be overrepresented on a myriad of negative social indicators, including a high incidence of people living in poverty, of school dropouts, of criminal indictments and incarceration, and of spouse and child abuse. The focus of our research, therefore,

was on social problems, and much of the data we collected would have given a very skewed picture of the community were it made public. Instead, prior to any academic publications, we published a book of articles—free of jargon, addressing issues of concern to the community—and presented it to them at a public gathering, so that they would be the first to know our findings (Gallimore and Howard 1968). Our presentation acknowledged the problems while pointing out the many strengths present in the community. This may be regarded as a kind of repatriation, in the form of our general findings along with our interpretation of them. I seriously doubt that turning over our field notes in their raw form would have done anyone in the community comparable, or additional, good.

My own field notes from nearly forty years of fieldwork among the Rotuman people constitute a much more ambiguous array. From 1959 to 1961 I studied Rotumans on Rotuma and on Fiji. I returned with my wife, Jan Rensel, in 1987, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1994, and 1996. Jan did her doctoral research during these return visits while I focused on the changes that occurred since my initial visit. In the course of our fieldwork we have accumulated a significant body of field notes, survey and census data, journal entries, and miscellaneous bits of data. I would like to make much, if not most, of this information available to the broader Rotuman community. However, since our notes are a somewhat ad hoc mix of transcriptions and inscriptions, I do not think it would be appropriate to make the entire corpus available as is.

While, in a certain sense, the subjects of study are the true "owners" of transcriptions, their claims to ownership of inscribed field notes are more problematic. Inscribed field notes bear the stamp of ethnographers to a greater degree, and they may be thought of as having at least as much right over them as the study population. This is not to imply that there is a clear case for all transcribed data being repatriated and all inscribed data being left to the discretion of the ethnographer. Some transcribed data, like malicious gossip or secret knowledge, may be quite harmful if made public. On the other hand, some ethnographers' musings may yield valuable insights into their perspectives and cast light on their interpretations as they appear in publications. One could argue that the subjects of our studies deserve access to our attitudes and biases, and how these evolved over the period of study. In response, one could argue that ethnographers are as deserving of the right to minimize embarrassment as the people they study. Ideally, ethnographers would make repatriation decisions in collaboration with a range of informed consultants, but that is usually impractical.

The practical solution is to screen the material for information that

would be of value to the community, leaving out ruminations and gossip that might prove embarrassing to anyone, including the ethnographers themselves. After all, fieldwork is a process of discovery in which one's early impressions are often erroneous and misleading. Such ruminations, like personal diaries, were never meant to be made public. Just because something is written down does not require it to be treated as precious archival material. Portions of our field notes are often nothing more than mnemonic devices to help us remember "headnotes" that guide our research.[7] Sifting through the mounds of material we have accumulated will require a major undertaking, one we likely will not get to for several years.

The Final Say: Who Should Decide?

I would like to conclude by addressing the issue of who ought to have the final say about the disposition of ethnographic field notes. In their eagerness to appear sensitive to the "native peoples" we study, some scholars have urged that ethnographers yield all decision-making powers concerning intellectual property over to the people themselves. While this is an admirable principle in theory, I believe that adhering to it mindlessly could do far more harm than good (a point also made by Bryan Oles, chapter 10).

First of all, judgments must be made as to whose intellectual property is whose when it comes to field notes. Does the mere fact that I wrote something down in a particular village make it the villagers' property? Suppose I included jottings about my family back home or idle reminiscences of my childhood. Who has rights to them? It is certainly not obvious to me that the villagers do. On the other hand, transcriptions of customs, rituals, and other aspects of local culture would surely seem to be the intellectual property of the people under investigation.

Second, anthropologists are prone at times to assume a uniformity of opinion among the people they study that is unwarranted. It is rare indeed that people anywhere agree about what should be done with intellectual property, who should have rights of access, and when and under what conditions it should be made available. My point is that no abstract principle, or set of principles, can substitute for a decision informed by thorough knowledge of a particular instance. I would argue that ethnographers themselves, assuming they make a sincere effort to gather and assess all relevant details and to consult with as many of the affected individuals as possible, are in the best position to judge which of their materials should be made public (or repatriated, as the case may be), when they should be turned over, and where and in what form they should be stored. This is a responsibility

each ethnographer must bear, lest we leave the dilemmas to archivists and librarians much less familiar with the relevant cultures and contexts and lacking the necessary knowledge to make informed judgments (see chapter 4). The latter will be forced to make judgments on the basis of ad hoc rules or abstract principles. My hope is rather that judgments will be based on well-informed assessments of the consequences of alternative actions.

Having offered these caveats, I would like to come down clearly on the side of repatriating materials whenever possible, even though some risks may be involved. In part this is the result of a political bias toward egalitarianism. Restrictions on information tend to serve hierarchy and differential power relations, whereas free access tends to promote egalitarian relations. Restricted access serves the status quo, while free access serves to foster competition and render social systems dynamic and subject to change.

It may well be that indigenous voices are raised in opposition to making information public, as in the case of the Mokilese (Oles, chapter 10). But Karen Peacock (chapter 7) illustrates the importance of taking steps to preserve important historical documents, even in the face of active opposition. While present generations may have little concern for historical records apart from their current political or personal implications, future generations will likely praise our efforts. I believe cultures follow a developmental trajectory with regard to their sense of history. In parochial island settings history is generally a family, lineage, or village matter, with little concern for the history of the broader linguistic or cultural group (stage 1). As group consciousness emerges and culture gets objectified as a result of outside experience and formal education,[8] an awareness of history develops, but initial concerns often focus on improving the present and looking forward (stage 2). It is the separation of people from their cultural roots, either spatially or temporally, that gives real impetus to a concern for societal and cultural history (stage 3).

Repatriation of historical materials in the first stage is likely to be of minimal interest to the people whose forebears produced the history; in the second stage they may prove embarrassing and disturbing (as in the case of the Mokilese). At the very least responses during this stage are apt to be mixed. But in the third stage I believe people universally cherish such historical documentation, and we must keep in mind that all the peoples we study will get to this third stage, and quite soon.

In some instances we need to go beyond merely making information that has been hidden from public view in archives or obscure publications available. Amy Stillman (chapter 8) makes an important distinction between repatriation and deinstitutionalization. Repatriation refers to mak-

ing information accessible, while deinstitutionalization involves reintegrating knowledge, often knowledge that had been "lost" or rendered inaccessible, back into the active stream of social, artistic, and political life. For such knowledge—and artistic knowledge comes readily to mind, but is not the only example—it is desirable to go beyond repatriation to deinstitutionalization. This requires advocacy and activism on someone's part, preferably by members of the communities affected. In addition to activism in institutionalized political arenas, the Internet may provide opportunities for reintegration of lost information into a community's mainstream.

I came away from our conference sessions thinking in terms of an equation that one might process in determining the fate of hitherto inaccessible information. The main consideration involves balancing probable benefits against probable harm that might result from repatriation. This is not quite so simple, of course, as soon as one adds the complexities of time and place. And, of course, there is the matter of good for whom and harm to whom. How much should consideration for others, beyond the immediate community, enter into the equation (humanity at large, overseas émigrés, part-ethnics, educated indigenes versus uneducated, researchers themselves)? There are no easy answers, but these are issues we must take into consideration.

For any given body of data one can identify a number of variables that will affect the equation:

1. Relevant units implicated by the field notes.

Individuals, families, lineages or villages, societies or nations. In general, the broader the social unit implicated the less likely information is to be harmful to individuals.

2. The extent to which accounts are monolithic (suggesting a singular coherent social reality) or heteroglossic (projecting a contested, multifaceted, social reality).

In general, heteroglossic accounts permit people a more active role in interpreting the material and a better possibility for defending their interests.

3. The degree to which the information is inscriptive or transcriptive.

Transcriptive information, especially in the form of verbatim texts from identifiable consultants, is prime material for repatriation, since it amounts to a transcription of knowledge already available (to at least some individuals). Inscriptive notes may include initial impressions, offhand value judgments, or other commentary not meant

for public viewing and needs to be evaluated accordingly. However, each type of information needs to be assessed for potential harm or benefit.

4. The expressed wishes of the community (including the original providers of information and their descendants).

Here it is important to keep in mind that views are likely to be mixed. We should do the best we can to assess the full range of opinions, past and present, before we arrive at an assessment.

5. The original disposition of the information: whether it is regarded as secret, belonging to specific individuals or groups, or as public knowledge.

In general, secret knowledge needs to be hedged with more safeguards and requires a continuous process of negotiation with its owners (if possible) regarding its disposition.

6. Applicable laws.

These include copyright and repatriation laws that might have a bearing, as documented by Nancy Guy and Mary McCutcheon (chapters 11 and 4 respectively).

7 The stage of a people's historical consciousness.

For some people (Mokilese, as described by Oles) the written word is authoritative; for others (Hawaiians) historical consciousness has developed to the point where outsider accounts are contested with accounts of their own, drawn from a broader array of sources than used by outsiders. In general, the more developed a people's historical consciousness the stronger the case for repatriating materials.

8. Our own independent assessment of the consequences of repatriating our ethnographic materials to specific individuals, institutions, or the public.

Who, in our view, is likely to benefit. Who might it harm?

I expect that as we plug into our equations the above variables, and more depending on particular contexts, we will find that in some instances the decision is fairly straightforward to repatriate or to withhold; in other instances (which likely will turn out to be the majority) there will be good deal of ambiguity—offsetting pros and cons—requiring us to make difficult decisions and to take responsibility for them.

Overall, I want to argue for anthropologists, archivists, and other schol-
ars taking an active role in preservation and repatriation, while remaining
sensitive to resistance and objections from the people they study. Indigenous
responses to repatriation must be taken into account as part of the equation,
but they should not necessarily be decisive. It may well be the case that this
view amounts to the imposition of Western values on peoples who may not
share them (at present). However, I have no problem with that if it will result
in the preservation of materials that will allow future generations of Pacific
Islanders to reflect on their pasts, employing a greater depth of information
than they might otherwise contemplate. Let us trust them to sort things out
for themselves, but make sure they have the materials to do a thorough job
of it (but compare Oles, chapter 10, page 192).

At the same time, we should have the confidence to destroy records that
are clearly likely to cause distress if disclosed with little likelihood of doing
good. We should not treat everything written down, taped, or filmed as
sacred. Some records were meant to be ephemeral, others have the potential
to do much harm. Let us take the time to sift through our ethnographic
records and sort the wheat from the chaff before leaving our legacies to
archives, museums, or other repositories.