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LOOKING TO SEE

Reflections on visual repatriation in the Purari Delta, Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea

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In a recent meditation on reading and writing histories (to which my title alludes), Dening (2001: 32) comments,

The first mark of my history, the first reading I make, are always shaped by the transience of the moment in which they were made. . . . It belongs to times that are so long or short or broken or continuous as the human experience that sustains it.

While of different ontological status, photographs, one of the marks of the intersecting histories on which I am working, share the same social embeddedness (Morphy and Banks 1997). Outside of the museum or archive and brought back to the field of their original production, visual repatriation (Fienup-Riordan this vol.) or photo-elicitation (Collier and Collier 1986) has emerged as another aspect of photographs' social lives (Appadurai 1986). Used productively to re-engage indigenous communities, visual repatriation can generate counter-narratives to the once monolithic, colonial and disciplinary histories that the photographs themselves often helped to create and sustain. In the process, visual repatriation helps untangle the knots that bind these histories, their narratives and the assumptions invested in them (Binney and Chaplin this vol.; Edwards 1994; Poignant 1996). In this chapter, I discuss the role of two photographic collections in eliciting narratives about past and present social transformations experienced by individuals and communities in the Purari Delta of Papua New Guinea and address what local communities receive from visual repatriation. Moving through a series of examples, I explore the range of responses, problems and mutual benefits in conducting such a project. In doing so, this chapter points to the productive ways photographs can be used to create new links between museums and host communities.

While the collections used in this project have distinct trajectories, both emerged out of the anthropological attempt to document the inhabitants of the Purari Delta during the first half of the twentieth century. Currently housed in the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (UCMAA), the first collection was created by Dr A.C. Haddon and his daughter, Kathleen Rishbeth, while in the Territory of Papua (hereafter Papua) for three months in 1914 (Rishbeth 1999). The second collection,

taken by F.E. Williams in 1922 during the eight months of his first assignment as Papua's governmental anthropologist, is held in the National Archives of Papua New Guinea (NAPNG), and the National Archives of Australia (NAA) (Young and Clark 2001).¹ Produced at the height of the region's popularity among European anthropologists, both sets of photographs became objects of distinction² whereby people, material culture and views were collected and later classified as part of a developing colonial visual economy (Edwards 2000; Poole 1997; Thomas 1991).

Following Edwards' observation that 'the mutability of [photographs'] meaning[s], contain their own future, because of the near-infinite possibilities of new meanings to be absorbed' (2001: 6); it is not surprising that these two collections continue to function as objects of distinction, albeit for local purposes. The photographs are currently being absorbed into an evolving critique of Malaysian industrial logging in the Purari and into negotiations surrounding the ambiguities of chiefly hierarchy, clan history and resource ownership. They have helped revitalize inter-generational communication by giving aspects of the past a new *presence*. In so doing the collections have become new loci for the transmission of stories, traditions and life histories (Binney and Chaplin, this volume; Poignant 1996: 5). This, however, is not a straightforward process, but involves personal as well as clan rivalries and is overshadowed by the threat of sorcery. Ownership, which has always been reckoned through one's ancestors' actions (glossed here as history), has become an arena of intense dispute because at its heart it is also a debate about identities. Not surprisingly, my role in bringing the collections did not escape local scrutiny and was framed as part of the return of a mythical lost younger brother's descendant. I will return to this facet of my experience by the way of a conclusion, because it highlights local expectations about what my research and potential partnerships with the collections' holding institutions can do for the Purari's communities.³

SITUATING THE PURARI: METHODOLOGY AND LOCAL REACTIONS TO VISUAL REPATRIATION

The Purari Delta comprises a 1,300 square mile area of channels and sago swamps and is located along the country's southern coast, 200 miles west of Port Moresby, PNG's capital. The inhabitants of the region's 20 villages, who number approximately 10,000 people, belong to six interrelated but self-described 'tribes': the Baroi, I'ai, Kaimari, Koriki, Maipua and Vaimuru (Petr 1983). Speaking dialects of the same non-Austronesian language (H.A. Brown 1973), they share a common bundle of cultural practices whose current configuration is the result of the interplay between local and foreign agents (missionaries, labour recruiters, anthropologists and government officials) over the last century. Like other coastal Papuan societies (Knauff 1993), each tribe is divided into *ravi* (longhouse), that form hamlets within villages and which are composed of several *airu* or *ava'i* (exogamous patrilineal clans) of various mythic origins. The province of men, the *ravi* before their abandonment in 1946 (see below), were a principal site for the reproduction of society and its associations with *imunu* (ancestral spirits) (Haddon 1919; Holmes 1924; Maher 1961; Williams 1923, 1924). While the *ravi* are now absent, they remain, alongside the clans, one of the primary units of identity within each tribe.

For this project I worked with 58 of the Haddon photographs and 76 prints from the Williams' collection, both sets constituting the full known range of each collection's images of the Purari. Given the random inclusiveness of photographs, and not knowing what type of image would provoke responses, I brought all the images I could locate, regardless of subject matter (Edwards 1994: 12). Both collections' visual content can be broken down into three overlapping categories:

- 1 snapshots or posed 'scientific reference' (Edwards 2001: 133–81) images of individuals or groups (sometimes containing Europeans);
- 2 photographs whose subject matter is material culture (architecture, canoes and portable objects);
- 3 landscape photographs which include villages, government stations, and or natural features.

These categories are of my own making and were not used as an organizing principle when presenting the collections. Indeed, as I soon discovered, much of what I thought was the principal subject of a photograph, turned out to be inconsequential details for locals. Both the Haddons and Williams were consistent with their geographic attribution, which made it possible to divide the photographs on the basis of village and tribal group. During interviews, unless asked, I presented images only from the interviewee's tribal group. This cut down on what would otherwise be an unwieldy number of photographs for people to process. I showed the photographs in a binder in no particular order and I took care to let viewers decide the rate at which images were viewed.

Each photograph was scanned directly from a study print or a laser photocopy and then printed from a computer. While I attempted to print each photograph only with its accession number, due to the inferior quality of some laser copies and a lack of time, I resorted to using scans of Williams' plates from his 1924 monograph with their original published captions. As captions too often influence how we see an image (Barthes 1977), by excising them I tried to provide villagers with the least mediated image possible. I created a separate index of published and unpublished captions for reference. The presence of these few captions had a definite effect on how the photographs were collectively understood. Early in my stay, while showing Paul, a retired agricultural officer of some social standing among the I'ai, the entire Williams' collection at his request, he noted the discrepancy between named portraits of Koriki men versus unnamed portraits of I'ai men (in each collection women if pictured make up a small fraction of the portraits).⁴ While in this case the presence of the captions was an artefact of my doing, the fact that Williams provided names of his Koriki subjects may reflect his greater familiarity with them.⁵ The difference in named and unnamed portraits, however, may also just as easily be a product of spoiled plates, the damage occurring either while attempting to take photographs or develop them.⁶ While I tried to explain these vicissitudes, Paul insisted that the fault for the anonymous I'ai portraits lay not with Williams but with the men themselves.

He understood the lack of names to be symptomatic of the long-standing fear among the I'ai of publicly disclosing their histories and, therefore, indicative of the men's lack of concern for their descendants' welfare.⁷ Sorcery, caused by jealousy of one's ancestral claims, stands as the greatest impediment to the I'ai's public assertions of histories. This

past and present inability, Paul concluded, lies at the root of their current problems receiving recognition by the two Malaysian logging companies, Turama Forest Industry (TFI) and Rimbunan Hijau (RH), operating in the Purari interior.⁸ In 1995, while I'ai clans formed Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs), the registered bodies through which customary resource tenure is legally recognized, they have yet to receive any of the royalty payments that began to flow to other tribes' registered ILGs in 1999. Owned by clans, history has always been a discourse about identity. Receiving money is seen as a national and international confirmation and legitimization of a clan's history and thus identity. This lack of recognition has compounded the normal regional contestation of history to the extent that the I'ai have been all but paralysed. Among the Koriki, it was asserted that having to form ILGs helped break down *vupu* (laws) about the public discussion of histories. As Koivi, a young man explained, the registry process 'showed us [the younger generation] how important history is'. Many Koriki elders viewed such statements cynically, arguing that history's new 'importance' for younger men relates to its perceived efficacy in obtaining money through the ILGs. In contrast, I'ai elders looking through the collections frequently expressed the need to overcome their longstanding problem and, as one urged, '[we] must reveal the whole hidden history because it may be the last time someone comes to record our ancestral history.' An elder added that if given 'correctly', then development would finally come to the I'ai.⁹

In what now can only be seen as an ironic twist of history given present preoccupations, an indigenous push for economic self-sufficiency following the Second World War led by an I'ai man named Tom Kabu, disrupted the cultural mnemonics through which chiefly hierarchy and clans' histories were principally reproduced (Connerton 1989). In the name of business, the Kabu Movement (1946–69) broke up villages and resettled people for cash cropping. In order for 'the light' to enter and so as to become like *urupu kape a'a* (white-skinned people), the *ravi* were abandoned, clay pots replaced by aluminium, carvings left to rot at the old villages, and rituals phased out.¹⁰ As part of this restructuring and signalling the movement's wider horizons, Kabu instituted European-style homes, adopted Hiri Motu as a *lingua franca* (Dutton 1985), and introduced the Baha'i faith. Through his business activities Kabu introduced new avenues for social advancement that helped erode the traditional hereditary leadership structures.¹¹ While unsuccessful in achieving its long-term goals, the movement created new structures of feeling that ushered in different perceptions of time and culture, which still have a deep resonance today (Maher 1961, 1967, 1984).

Paul's underlying insistence that the photographs were *proof* prefigured most reactions to the collections. With all the groups with whom I conducted visual repatriation, the photographs were equated with surviving ancestral heirlooms which, individually owned, have emerged as reinvigorated markers of identity, history and resource ownership (Bell 2001). As one young I'ai man remarked while showing me an ancestral *ua* (pig tusk), 'We keep this as our *eve uku* (hand mark), as I said earlier, evidence. We have evidence of what we say, not the word only.' Using similar rhetoric, Omaro, a middle-aged Koriki man, told me before I left his village following a visual repatriation session:

A lot of these photos are helping us prove who our *amua* [class of chief] are. Photos like this help us identify who the *amua* were, because now many people are claiming to be *amua*. If you have more photos like these, please bring them.

Alongside these heirlooms, the photographs are understood to be not only *from* the past, but also through their indexicality they are *of* the past, thereby providing evidence that supersedes otherwise contestable oral claims. As 'certificate[s] of presence' (Barthes 1984: 87) the collections give the past tangibility, a past for which most of whose material markers and thus verifiability have disappeared.¹² The collections' overseas origin also lent them an aura of power that complemented the heirlooms' mythic origins. The incorporation of the collections echoes Stewart's argument (1984: 184) that 'we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative.' Through their images of *koi* (stylized carved representations of ancestors), individuals (assumed chiefs) and the *ravi*, the photographs both generated and were invested with these narratives. However, the desire to claim the images as markers of the narrator's clan meant that I often had to preface their viewing with the photographs' geographic origin. However, as the project progressed, I became less concerned with truth registers, which at one level are, in any case, culturally specific, and realized that the collections' importance and value lay in their ability to inspire the public and private performance of oral histories (Edwards 2001).

People responded to the collections with overwhelming enthusiasm. As a result I typically had to carry out first a public, and often chaotic viewing of the images. During these meetings I handed photographs, as local protocol dictated, to male elders first, who then passed them to the gathered younger men, followed by the women and children. The cacophony of responses necessitated the reliance on taping sessions, which I later translated and transcribed. This allowed me to record some of these sessions' spontaneity. After these meetings, I moved to more controlled group interviews where elders gathered surrounded by interested individuals. At elders' request, I then set up individual interviews during which we discussed the photographs in a more private setting.¹³ What emerged during this process was the nature of public versus private historical discourses. In multi-clan settings, personal reminiscences and topics deemed appropriate for public consumption, such as rituals, songs and the construction/use of objects were discussed. Alone or surrounded by immediate family, discussions also consisted of the latter but incorporated genealogies and thus personal connections to land or chiefly status. Individuals whose identity was publicly puzzled over, in private were pronounced with much conviction. In these settings heirlooms were displayed alongside the collections, and individual photographs were more readily incorporated into personal histories.¹⁴ While recognizing the nuances of these two discourses, they both compose the 'plural frames of history' (Edwards 1994: 12) which the photographs provoked and participated in during their re-inscription.

People aged 65 and older responded the most enthusiastically to the collections, as they were the last generation to have experienced the *ravi*, its ceremonies, and the Kabu Movement. It is principally with these male and female elders that the most productive dialogues emerged. They were the only individuals capable of making cultural sense of the images. Photographs of individuals, such as Williams' *Three Iari Men* (in which men adorned in shell valuables, and holding bows stand in front of a backdrop) provoked various responses when publicly viewed. Principally addressing each other and then their audience, elders named each object worn, how they were made or obtained, their use and what status these objects conferred; thus restoring the objects to their former social, political and economic nexuses. Today such items, if they exist, are generally

relegated to the inside of a suitcase. Their cultural pride reawakened, many elders left the gathering, only to return wearing their own shell valuables and items of traditional adornment, much to the amusement of all. In very concrete terms, this photograph and others like it allowed elders to perform otherwise neglected aspects of their identity. For many, the pasts presented by the photographs overwhelmed them emotionally. Within the context of this image, one elder, Mailau, wiping his eyes remarked, 'I just saw olden time decorations and my eyes are forming tears.' For most, the photographs showed objects and scenes that had been absent for over 50 years. It was common to hear the lament *sori* (sorry) repeated under people's breath. Other concurrent discourses also emerged. Another elder, named A'ape, held up the same photograph stating, 'This is how our ancestors used to be! *Voa dipi dipi* [not very good].' Elders often invoked Tom Kabu, who, depending on the narrator's inclination, was either praised or vilified for destroying their traditional culture; an action that many attribute with causing the current state of confusion regarding resource ownership and chiefly hierarchy. In contrast, younger men openly laughed at this and other such photographs, commenting in regard to this particular image that the people photographed must be Africans. While the cultural distancing exhibited in this comment can be a common feature of visual repatriation (Niessen 1991: 420), in this context I believe the young men's remarks are not indicative of contemporary Christian concerns, but rather reveal the degree to which, for them, the past is a foreign country (Lowenthal 1985).

What is lost in this account so far is a discussion of how people physically engaged with the photographs. As I remarked earlier, images of personal adornment induced people to go find and wear their own such objects. Similarly, photographs of the *ravi* and particularly the *ai'ai'imunu* (mother ancestral spirits) masks prompted both male and female elders to sing. Worn by men, these masks were danced as part of an annual ritual that celebrated and renewed ties with the spirits. On more than one occasion elderly women demonstrated how, as young girls, they danced with their arms raised around their clan's *ai'ai'imunu* while mimicking the cries of their clan's *opa* (totems). Men, who as young adults wore the masks, related how they were worn and their personal experiences of dancing them. An image of the exterior of the *Pai ravi*, Aikavalavi, caused its male elders to recall in detail the building of the last *ravi*, which they witnessed in the late 1930s. They spontaneously began pounding the floor to the rhythm of the hand drums and performed the songs of the *ravi* opening, as well as the songs sung during the *ai'ai'imunu* festival. The photographs were also touched, with the outline of people and objects traced by fingertips and, in more private settings, held intimately while crying. Similarly, as in the case of a photograph of a re-modelled Koriki skull taken by Williams, Karara an elder of the village of Kairimai, lifted and held up the photograph for the assembled onlookers as he explained the lapsed memorial practice surrounding this object (Figure 6.1).

Viewers also reinscribed the photographs with former patterns of movement and relationality. Individuals spent a lot of time attempting to locate where a photograph was physically taken. This was pronounced while examining *A Scene in Iari*, the discussion of which revealed aspects of social geography alongside the histories inscribed in the relationship between the environment, objects and people. The photograph's foreground depicts several women closing off a creek with an *uru* (a fishing weir) while across the river, on the opposite bank, sits the village's government rest house, surrounded by trees. I thought that this photograph would stimulate discussion of colonialism and



Figure 6.1 Engaging with photographs in the Koriki village of Kairimai, 2001. (Photograph by Joshua A. Bell)

while people did talk about government patrols and regulations, these narratives were a secondary concern.

Older women focused on the photograph's foreground, revealing aspects of their social orientation to the environment and in food-gathering activities. Among other things (the creek's name, the height of the tide, etc.) they remarked on the shifting nature of fishing technology. Previously women's work, today fishing is no longer defined as such. Similarly, nylon nets that were introduced in the 1970s have largely replaced *uru*. This shift has brought with it subtle changes in the social aspects of fishing, specifically the movement away from communal to more solitary fishing practices. In contrast, the men focused almost exclusively on the photograph's background: the trees. Identifying individual trees, such as *kemu* (tulip, *Gnetum gnemon*) and *imara* (breadfruit, *Atrocarpus altilis*) the trees' owners were also named despite the 80 intervening years since the photograph was taken. Besides being a major food source, trees are the inherited property of men (women once married use the trees belonging to their husband's clan) and are an important marker of male status. Trees were and still are a major source for local material culture – canoes, houses, carvings, tools, rope, etc. (Williams 1924). The men also focused specifically on three *ipa'a* trees (erima, *Octomeles sumatrana*). They recalled each tree's personal names, as well as the names of their deceased owners, when each tree was cut down, by whom, and for what purpose, and also what was consumed at the ensuing feast. These are not just inconsequential details but are rather indicative of the multiple layers of people's engagement with their environment (Hirsch and

O'Hanlon 1995). Most large trees are believed to be the site of *iri imunu* (tree spirits), who must be appeased through feasting before their homes are cut down. Supernatural beings, *imunu* are likened to humans but dwell invisibly in the environment in trees or specific locations in rivers or the ground. When seen they are usually in the form of various animals (crocodiles, pigs, birds, cassowary), whose *ruru* (skin or covering) they can wear. Clans trace their origins to a specific *imunu* (Maher 1974).

The two collections' images of *ravi* interiors, besides eliciting similar details of movement to those elaborated while looking at *A Scene in Iari*, in the process also elicited ancestral narratives. Many of the traditional objects stored in the *ravi* were also types of *ruru* worn by *imunu*. *Koi*, one such object, were displayed as part of an accumulated ensemble of materials a clan kept in their section of the *ravi*. Individually named and owned by a clan's male members, *koi* were used to instruct initiates as to their clan's origins. Not only did *koi* represent ancestors, their stories and thus tracts of land and water, but they also represented their owners and their patrilineal lines of descent (Maher 1961; Williams 1924; cf. Beier and Kiki 1970). Alluding to these chains of significance, a Koriki woman named Varia had to excuse herself while looking through the Haddons' images of Koriki *ravi* interiors because, as she remarked, 'the sight of so many *koi* makes me feel sad for those that have died.' Her comments encapsulate local articulations of what many argue is a common Melanesian cultural theme, the intersection of people and the material world, such that people are understood to be composites of accumulated actions (Strathern 1988). With the return of the collections, these sets of relationships have now become rearticulated through viewing the photographs. The collections can be thought of as a new 'skin' in which the dead, spirits and their histories can dwell and circulate.

FRAMES FOR THE FUTURE: PHOTOGRAPHS AS CONTAINERS OF HISTORIES

My arrival in the region was framed as the current phase of a myth in which I was positioned as the descendant of an I'ai ancestral hero, Kairi Arikinumere. With his elder brother Mailau, Kairi descended from the sky and together they assembled the dispersed clans that would become the I'ai. However, in the course of giving these people *vupu* (laws), a disagreement arose between the brothers and Kairi left for the West. However, this was not before prophesying that either he or a descendant would eventually return to help the I'ai. My interest in history, as I described my research, but more importantly my possession of the two photographic collections, confirmed this genealogical connection for many. It was hoped that with the photographs I would help ensure their successful resource ownership negotiations and thus herald development's arrival (Bell 2001). As Luktehaus (1995) found during her research on Manam, such ancestral linkages prompted by photographs can help establish an intense relationship with people quickly, but it also surrounds one with an aura of strangeness and power (Niessen 1991). Using the pervasive Melanesian idiom of kinship, it raises the often uncomfortable question of what a researcher can and will do for their host community (cf. Kirsh 1996; Tuzin 1997). While the articulation of these expectations may make one personally uncomfortable, as they did in my case, I believe as researchers we need to take these relationships and their obligations seriously. This does not mean we should play the

role of a returning ancestral hero, but we do need to think about what we, and the institutions we represent, can do for host communities. These may not be easy questions but they are issues we must come to terms with. Of course, the return of photographs, in this case the very items that helped shape the construction of my genealogical connection to Kairi, is one way in which to re-engage with host communities. As the various chapters in this volume show, the benefits that can and do emerge out of this process of re-engagement are multiple.

As 'a third party' (Collier and Collier 1986: 105), the photographs allowed me to ask specific questions regarding objects depicted (their use, construction, names, etc.), which otherwise would have gone unasked because of their absence in the contemporary situation. It also gave me a visual frame of reference with which to understand narratives and then, in turn, use these to question informants about the specifics of their experience. This material will be incorporated within each holding institution's existing databases for the collections, as well as in the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery. Unfortunately, the combination of a lack of a cultural centre and the tropical environment's harsh treatment of paper, which rots in the humid climate, has meant that at present I have not deposited copies of the collections locally. Copies of my work will be available, however, as eventually will the photographs, once local storage conditions improve. Through these various levels, the material that evolved out of this visual repatriation project will be preserved and will hopefully become part of a sustained dialogue and resource for future generations in the Purari.

Locally, these photographs have become sites through which traditions were revisited, contested and publicly discussed, thus giving elders a chance to share unspoken aspects of their individual and collective histories. With their ability to inscribe landscapes, architecture, people and portable objects, the collections preserve these otherwise transient forms of historical inscriptions. Through giving the past a new presence, the collections have illuminated realms of experience that in the current environment may have otherwise gone unmentioned. Despite some elders' beliefs that the present generation's interest in the past revolves around its potential efficacy in achieving personal wealth available through the logging ventures, I feel that the discussions surrounding the collections went beyond being motivated only by politics. The density and range of the genres of oral histories, the different levels of their enactment – song, dance, dialogue, the display of heirloom and non-heirloom objects – and the excitement that they generated both in their narrators and in their audiences, point to the extent that these meetings were not just about histories but also about the celebration of cultural identity. Thus in the face of perceived cultural loss that has been internalized in the region's historical narratives and sense of self, the collections have provided a means for the expression of cultural identity which for many has been dormant. By helping elicit these elders' enactments of their histories, the two collections have created a space through which elders' memories and experiences could be channelled and illustrated for the present generation. Visual repatriation has given the elders something to 'hang' their stories on. In doing so, the photographs, like ancestral heirlooms, act as a proof of the past, supplementing and stimulating oral narratives. As one enthusiastic young I'ai man remarked after one session, 'I don't know about the rest of you, but I am learning. I have never heard such stories!' Both publicly and privately the collections have facilitated the transmission of histories and thus hopefully their continued reproduction.

Aptly described as 'a transforming experience' (Binney and Chaplin, this vol.), visual repatriation creates spaces wherein the host community, researcher and holding institution can revisit and rework intersecting histories as they are embodied and displayed in their various by-products. In returning photographs taken by our anthropological ancestors of their ancestors, both the fieldworker and host community can re-engage in dialogues that began long ago: dialogues which at the time they were begun may have been unequal because of existing colonial structures, and which have remained unfinished. The resulting conversations 'open up these objects' stratigraphy' (Seremetakis 1994: 7), enabling the critical reappraisal of how we have represented our mutually entangled histories, of which they are a product. The resulting collaboration can then be used critically to examine the genealogies of our narratives about host communities, the roots of which in the particular case of the Purari, partially lie in the photographs and the ideas they helped their authors generate (Haddon 1920; Williams 1923, 1924), and which still influence our constructions today (Knauff 1993; Maher 1961; Newton 1961). Visual repatriation is a step in the process of reinvesting host communities with a degree of agency and a voice in what we write about them.

Visual repatriation highlights how photographs, and indeed all ethnographic objects, are containers of histories (Neumann 1992: 16), not only of a biographical nature, but also in the sense of their ability to elicit and thereby contain within their frames multiple narratives, histories of the past, present and future. In discussing our relationship to objects, Wagner suggests that in learning to use objects, we learn to use ourselves in new ways; 'we admit into our personalities the whole range of values, attitudes, and sentiments – indeed creativity – of those who invented them.' Objects 'are "invested" with life . . . they partake in the self, and also create it' (Wagner 1981: 76–77). What I would like to suggest is that with visual repatriation, in the interchange that transpires as we meet to look and talk, in the process we are learning to see. By this I do not mean that we learn to see in the sense of the narrow confines of a photograph's contents but rather, as I have discussed throughout this chapter, we learn to see the wider sets of relationships not only within local communities between people, landscape and objects, but also the relationships that bind together the institutions we represent with the host communities with which we work. Visual repatriation enables the re-visioning of these relationships, their histories and, as such, the future direction of their partnership. In this sense, visual repatriation helps return to photographs some of the 'transience of the moment in which they were made' and thus helps us to look, see and write histories that do justice to the 'human experience that sustains' (Denning 2001: 32) them and their objects.

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UCMAA and Godfrey Waller of the Manuscripts Reading Room in the Cambridge University Library (CUL). In October 2000, with the help of travel grants from Dartmouth College and Hertford College, University of Oxford, I first went to the Gulf Province with Robert L. Welsch and Senior Technical Officer of the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery, Sebastian Haraha. Sharing his enthusiasm for the Gulf, Robert L. Welsch has graciously given me both practical advice on fieldwork as well as for my work. Sebastian Haraha's family generously shared their home, which helped ease transitions between the Purari and Moresby. During my initial trip in 2000 I began working with copies of the Haddons' collection. Before returning to the Purari, the staff of both the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and the National Archives of Papua New Guinea (NAPNG) helped me obtain copies of the Williams' collection. Field research for my dissertation resumed in March 2001 and finished in November 2002. A 2001 Crowther-Beynon grant and a dissertation grant (GR6700) from the Wenner-Gren Foundation provided funding for this phase of my research. I am grateful to PNG's National Research Institute (NRI) and the National Museum and Art Gallery for helping facilitate my research and for providing in-country affiliation. As my project has unfolded, my supervisors Michael O'Hanlon and Elizabeth Edwards have given me insightful feedback that has helped me tease out different nuances of my field material. I am also grateful to the editors of this volume for asking me to submit a chapter and then for dealing with the various difficulties that arose in its long-distance editing while I was in the field. My greatest debt is to the communities of the Purari, particularly the villages of Mapaio, Kinipo, Kairimai and Baimuru, whose residents took the time to sit, look, see and discuss the Haddons' and Williams' collections and the histories they found in them. I am grateful to the Rove and Aukiri family for their acceptance, hospitality and support. *A'ai ovara miki.*

NOTES

- 1 The Haddons' photographic collection is housed in the UCMAA, while their notes are in the Haddon papers kept in the CUL. I did the majority of my work with the F.E. Williams' notes in the NAPNG where the originals exist (copies exist in the Mitchell Library, Sydney) and primarily worked with the photographs from the NAA collection.
- 2 I have adapted this term from Fabian's term 'commodities of distinction' (1998). Primarily the term is meant to highlight photographs as *objects* (cf. Edwards 1999a, 2000, 2001) and thus move away from the tendency to see them merely in terms of what they visually signify. It also foregrounds how, as objects constituted by anthropological notions of the ethnographic (Fabian 1983), photographs helped map differences (both real and imagined) onto the region.
- 3 The interviews carried out for this research were conducted in a variety of languages – principally I'ai (each tribe refers to the vernacular by its own name), Tok Pisin and English. While Motuan is still widely used in the region, its use is declining in the Purari Delta and elders, those most conversant in Motu, preferred that I speak with them in their vernacular. I am indebted to Kaia Rove for teaching me the nuances of I'ai and for helping me in its translation. When used in the text, I'ai terms are italicised followed by their glossing in English.
- 4 Williams took 24 portraits while in Purari. While only eight of the 14 Koriki portraits are named, no record remains of his eight I'ai subjects' names. In comparison, I could only locate references to the identities of one group photographed in the Haddons' set of 14 portraits, specifically of two of the native police force that accompanied the Haddons.
- 5 From his field notes, it is possible to reconstruct that Williams worked in I'ai villages for approximately 31 days from 13 April to 20 May 1922. Over the course of three trips (25 May–13 June; 3–14 July; 9–24 August 1922) he worked for 48 days with the Koriki.

- While the difference in time spent between the two groups is 17 days, more significant is that Williams worked among the Koriki towards the middle and end of his fieldwork, presumably when he was in a better situation to understand the local social situation. This is reflected in his field notes by the greater density of ethnographic details (genealogies, relationships between participants in initiations, etc.) that he gathered on the Koriki in comparison to the I'ai.
- 6 Williams is unfortunately silent regarding when and where he developed his photographs and only infrequently referred to his photography.
 - 7 In I'ai oral histories surrounding Williams it is narrated that men at the time feared telling him all their traditions, practices and histories because they believed that if they did, they would be removed from the village and punished. This may have been a result of the presence of at least one Papuan policeman, who served as Williams' guard, cook and translator (Williams 1924: 119, 236). In his field notes, Williams does remark on a reluctance to discuss certain topics, particularly headhunting and the meanings of certain objects, but this reticence was widespread and not particular to the I'ai.
 - 8 The Purari's west bank falls under TFI's jurisdiction, while RH operates on the river's east bank.
 - 9 The new forms of wealth – the ability to consume store-bought food, dinghies, money, outboard motors and water tanks – made accessible by the logging are frequently talked about as development.
 - 10 The Kabu Movement affected the customs of the region's tribes differently (Maher 1984). Its long-term impact is complicated by the presence of religious missions, such as the Seventh Day Adventists and the Pentecostal Christian Revival Church.
 - 11 Consisting of two classes, *mari* and *amua*, leadership was a combination of ascribed and achieved status. The sphere of the *mari* was the *ravi*, wherein he oversaw the efficacy of ritual objects and practices. The *amua* ensured the various practical steps necessary to accomplish these activities and oversaw the organization of raiding parties and of feasting (Maher 1961, 1967, 1974; Williams 1924).
 - 12 I do not mean to understate the importance that features in the landscape (i.e., stones, trees, waterways) play in the narration of history and in its reproduction (Rumsey and Weiner 2001). As I argue below, photographed landscapes emerged as one of the principal vehicles for the inscription of histories. However, like heirloom objects, landscapes can and have changed or disappeared over the successive years of resource exploration and as part of the Purari's naturally shifting delta environment (Petr 1983).
 - 13 While presented as a smooth process, this pattern of meetings emerged organically as a result of local anxieties about histories. For example, I quickly learned that discussions of ancestral things, and thus the photographs, could not be done at night because it was precisely during these times that sorcerers most frequently roamed. All my meetings were thus confined to the day.
 - 14 Despite their perceived similarities, some people differentiated between the photographs and heirlooms. Ropo, an old I'ai man, commented in private 'I have *eiri* [dog's teeth] and *ua* [pig's tusk]. What I brought is *history*. I thought what you had brought was older but it isn't. What I have is *eni'i miki omoro* [lit. old real talk]. What you brought human beings were doing, but what I know is [from] *imunu* [ancestral spirits] time.'