

Resources

Creating an Archive for Rotuma: A Personal Account

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Researchers who have compiled firsthand information from field studies among various populations are under increasing pressure to archive field notes collected in conjunction with their research. This is especially the case for those of us who did research during colonial times, prior to the changes wrought by globalization and the dispersal of so many once relatively stationary populations. Such field notes often contain precious and increasingly rare or unique accounts of traditional customs, social mores, language use, folklore, and other aspects of experience that have not yet made their way into publications. However, field notes by themselves, when isolated from other sources that have a bearing on the circumstances in which the notes were recorded, can be quite misleading insofar as they fail to provide sufficient context for in-depth ethnographic and historical understandings (see Mauthner, Parry, and Backett-Milburn 1998 for a discussion of the epistemological issues involved). When materials from other sources—from archives, museums, newspapers, magazines, published and unpublished missionary and explorer accounts, among others—are added, they can greatly enrich collections and make it much easier for members of studied communities as well as scholars to gain insights into social and cultural histories.

But the contexts of archives, particularly the motivations and aims behind collections, must also be considered, because they influence what are considered appropriate materials for archiving as well as the form archival collections take. For example, a good case has been made that governmental (or quasi-governmental) archives established during colonial times were shaped to conform to the colonial project (Stoler 2002). They were often intended as repositories of information of value to colo-

nial administrators for the purpose of guiding decisions regarding governance. Materials for archiving were selected accordingly.

University archives, in contrast, have long been justified on the basis of knowledge preservation and have primarily involved the collection of physical documents of various kinds in support of scholarly projects. In recent decades, there has been a growing awareness of who does and does not appear in archives, of what is and is not preserved, and of the need to establish alternative archives (Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009). Meanwhile, universities have also established collections of field notes from ethnographers and others, which include unpublished information from particular Pacific societies. Some, like the Tuzin Archive for Melanesian Anthropology, focus the majority of their energy on unpublished ethnographic materials; others, like the University of Hawai'i–Mānoa (UHM) Pacific Collection, collect archival and manuscript collections as part of a larger mandate to collect all material, published and unpublished, related to the Pacific Islands region. The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, headquartered at the Australian National University, has been duplicating archival and manuscript materials for the last five decades and distributing it to member libraries worldwide, initially as microfilm and now in digital form. In addition to specific institutions that house archival data from particular researchers or societies, the Anthropological Fieldwork Online database contains field-note collections from ethnographers who have done research in the Pacific Islands, such as Raymond Firth, A M Hocart, Charles and Brenda Seligman, Margaret Mead, and Reo Fortune. And, recently, a great deal of energy has been put into archiving—and issues around archiving—Pacific languages data and metadata. Notable examples include the Kaipuleohone Language Archive, the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Engaged Cultures (PARADESIC), the Pangloss Collection, and the UHM Pacific Collection's recent "Making Pacific Languages Discoverable" project (see Kleiber and others 2018). (The URLs for these and other websites mentioned in this essay are listed in table 1.)

As laudable as I consider the goal of preserving knowledge regarding Rotuman culture and history for access by outsiders, that is a secondary concern for me. My primary goal is to make readily available documents, both published and unpublished, to the Rotuman people with whom I have done research for nearly sixty years. What has made this possible is the presence of the Internet and the ease with which documents can be digitized. Whereas consulting archived physical documents requires traveling to the site where they are housed, digitized documents can be accessed

Table 1 Websites Mentioned in This Essay

Website	Host	URL
Anthropological Fieldwork Online	Alexander Street	https://alexanderstreet.com/products/anthropological-fieldwork-online
Kaipuleohone Language Archive	UHM Department of Linguistics	http://ling.hawaii.edu/kaipuleohone-language-archive/
Making Pacific Languages Discoverable	UHM Hamilton Library	http://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/pacific_language
Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Engaged Cultures (PARADISEC)	PARADISEC	http://www.paradisec.org.au/
Pacific Collection	UHM Hamilton Library	https://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/c.php?g=447018&p=3054399
Pacific Manuscripts Bureau	The Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific	http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/
Pangloss Collection	Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale (LACITO)	http://lacito.vjf.cnrs.fr/pangloss/
Photograph Collections	Pitt Rivers Museum	https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/photographs
Rotuma Archive	UHM Hamilton Library	https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/58852
Rotuma Website	Alan Howard	http://www.rotuma.net
ScholarSpace	UHM Hamilton Library	https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/
Tuzin Archive for Melanesian Anthropology	University of California–San Diego Library	https://library.ucsd.edu/research-and-collections/collections/special-collections-and-archives/collections/melanesian.html

from anywhere in the world via the Internet. (Regarding the impact of digital archival collections on historical research, see Sinn 2012; Sinn and Soares 2014.)

My hope is that access to a wide range of historical documents, including field notes, will encourage the current and future generations of Rotumans to reflect on their historical and cultural legacies in the interest of enriching their cultural identities, and will also make it possible for Rotuman scholars (among others) to construct their own historical accounts as part of an ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation of the nature of their cultural legacy. As a number of scholars have pointed out, archival data are not unambiguous facts but are subject to interpretation that depend on a variety of contextual considerations—the point being that the meanings derived from archival data are the result of selection and interpretation both by those who create archives and those who access the materials (see, eg, Atkinson 1992, Hammersley 1997). It is with this in mind that my wife, Jan Rensel, and I have done our utmost to provide as much contextual information as possible, both with regard to our field notes and relevant historical documentation. (Please note, however, that what can be considered “relevant” context is itself a matter of interpretation.)

It is in the spirit of such a “repatriation” project that I present here an account of Jan’s and my experience in compiling field notes recorded in Rotuma and among Rotumans abroad and compulsively collecting materials related to Rotuma from every source we have been able to identify and access. Our reflections on the processes of collecting and organizing relevant materials have been foregrounded for us because we are in the process of creating a Rotuman archive in the library at the University of Hawai‘i–Mānoa (UHM).

I first headed to Rotuma in 1959 to do dissertation research for a doctorate in anthropology. At the time, Rotuma was administered as part of the British Colony of Fiji, so getting to my destination required a stopover in Fiji. Unfortunately, the stopover dragged on for two months as a result of two unforeseen circumstances: An ill-fated, government-sponsored land commission had been hostilely rebuffed by the people of Rotuma, leading the colonial officials in Suva to rescind my permission to do research on the island. At the same time, a racially oriented colonial government required “whites” traveling on boats to do so in cabins. Overcoming the first problem required a period of negotiation with the colonial administration, including visiting the governor and gaining approval from the

Rotuma Council of Chiefs, which took a couple of weeks. Having received permission to go, my attempt to book passage to Rotuma on the next boat was unsuccessful. I was told that it would not be possible to do so because the few cabins aboard the boat had already been booked. I insisted that I would happily travel on deck, like most other passengers. “No,” I was told emphatically, “Europeans are not allowed to travel on deck. It would set a bad example.” As a result, I was not able to book passage for Rotuma until two months later.

This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, archivally speaking. I spent much of my spare time in Fiji searching out and acquiring documents concerning Rotuma. In the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission, I was assisted by the archivist, A I Diamond, who kindly provided me with duplicate copies of government reports having information about Rotuma. He also allowed me to read through record books containing documents such as minutes of the Rotuma Council of Chiefs and letters from district commissioners assigned to the island dating back to Rotuma’s cession to Great Britain in 1881. There were no copy machines available at the time, so I copied passages of interest by hand in a notebook set aside for that purpose.

I was also blessed by the generosity of the Reverend Allan Tippett, who was posted at the Methodist Mission station at Davuilevu. He offered to have his secretary type passages from publications in their library that included information about Rotuman culture and history. The material they provided, especially the writings of early Methodist missionaries to Rotuma, was extraordinarily valuable for comprehending Rotuman history. Thus began a passion for acquiring archival and published materials about Rotuma that has persisted to the present day.

During the year I spent on Rotuma (December 1959–December 1960), I tried to collect data as systematically as possible. In addition to my field notes, which I typed up with compulsive regularity on my portable Hermes typewriter—I made it a rule not to let more than two days go by without typing my notes, which included observations, interviews, and theoretical speculations—I hired two young Rotumans, Amai Sakimi and Rejieli Mejieli, who conducted a complete census of the island under my supervision. This process included interviewing some seventy individuals regarding their life experiences, as well as some fifty mothers regarding their child-rearing strategies. And in exchange for my giving talks to the teachers on the island, I asked the teachers to fill out a questionnaire regarding their teaching strategies. Along with my field notes, the teacher

questionnaires and demographic information obtained from the census (including birth, marital, and residential histories for virtually all of the adults on the island) formed the core of my initial field data from Rotuma. I also collected comparable demographic data and field notes during a subsequent six-month period of research in 1961 among Rotumans in five urban areas in Fiji: Suva, Levuka, Lautoka, Tavua, and the gold mine at Vatukoula.

I did not return to Rotuma until 1987, when I visited with my wife, Jan Rensel, who had recently completed a master's degree in anthropology. The visit was brief—only two weeks—but it was sufficient to inspire Jan to conduct her own PhD research on the island. Thus began a new cycle of collecting field data and archival materials from multiple sources. We spent three months on Rotuma in 1988 and returned for each of the next three years—for six months in 1989 when Jan received a Fulbright grant to support her research, for two months in 1990, and for a week in 1991. We went again for two weeks in 1994 as part of a three-month excursion during which we also visited Rotuman migrant communities in Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand. We have continued to visit Rotuma on a regular basis: in 1996 when we attended the 150th anniversary of the Catholic Mission on Rotuma; in 1998 when we also visited Rotuman communities in Australia and New Zealand; in 2001, 2003, and then in 2004, when we accompanied Vilsoni and Jeannette Hereniko to show their movie, *The Land Has Eyes* (which was filmed on Rotuma). In 2012, we spent two weeks working with teachers and students at Rotuma High School.

In addition to field notes and journal entries detailing our day-by-day experiences on each of these visits (among Rotumans abroad as well as on Rotuma), we organized and supervised an island-wide household census on Rotuma in 1989, which allowed us to make demographic comparisons with the data from 1960. In 1994, with the aid of the Reverend Jione Langi, we collected household data from families in New Zealand containing Rotuman members. These materials, acquired during periods of fieldwork spanning more than fifty years, constitute one major component of our archival project.

The second part of our project is to archive all of the additional materials we have acquired regarding Rotuma. During the years since renewing our research in 1987, we have visited museums and archives around the world, making copies of historical documents and photographs, with appropriate permissions. These institutions include the Bishop Museum in Honolulu;

Alexander Turnbull Library (the National Library of New Zealand) in Wellington, New Zealand; Mitchell Library in Sydney, Australia; British Museum in London and Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England; Marist Archives in Rome, Italy; the Fiji Museum and the Fiji National Archives. With the permission of the district officer, we also typed up information from historically significant documents that were at the government station on Rotuma. These materials have supplemented our own fieldwork in publications regarding Rotuma since 1989. Although we have produced more than forty published book chapters or journal articles and a book, *Island Legacy: A History of the Rotuman People* (Howard and Rensel 2007), there remains much more that could be reflected on, responded to, or written about, drawing on the archival texts and information we have managed to collect. Many of the materials we have accumulated are available on the Rotuma Website, which I created in 1996 and continue to maintain.

COLLECTING DOCUMENTS

The Bishop Museum provided us with a copy of 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. Shortly before his death, he deposited his field notes at the museum. I 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 behind such publications was to record "cultural traits" that could be compared with other Oceanic societies so as to unravel prehistoric connections.

In exchange for copies of Macgregor's notes, I entered into an agreement with Bishop Museum to edit and publish the notes with the object of rendering them accessible to Rotumans and interested scholars. Bishop Museum was to have right of first refusal when they were ready for publication. However, I later decided to publish the notes, along with my notations, on the Rotuma Website, where they would be freely accessible to Rotumans. 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 digitized Macgregor's notes and readily

provided those files for uploading to the website. (For a discussion of the practical and ethical issues associated with this project, see Howard 2002, 31–36.)

Another windfall came from the Turnbull Library in the form of photocopies of A M Hocart's field notes from a six-week visit to Rotuma in 1913—copies of which the library had been kind enough to send me at the cost of their reproduction. The notes were handwritten, but once we shared them with Hans he was motivated to type them out (his knowledge of the Rotuman language was a considerable boon in this regard, since Hocart recorded a significant portion of his notes in his version of Rotuman orthography). Hocart was an extraordinary field worker; his notes amounted to over 800 pages of handwritten notes (454 typed pages), covering a wide range of topics in addition to extensive genealogies and data concerning physical measurements of a number of Rotuman men and women—taken again in the context of anthropological interests of the time. Hocart's notes are not included on the Rotuma Website, but digital and printed copies of the typed notes will be deposited in the Rotuman archive at the UHM library. We will also provide the Turnbull with a digital version of Hans's transcription.

Neither Macgregor nor Hocart published anything about Rotuma other than a handful of short articles from their field notes, but what they did publish is also included in our archival collection.

On a visit to Suva in 1998, we went to the office of the *Fiji Times* newspaper, where we searched for and obtained copies of all the published articles they had on file concerning Rotuma. We also visited the Fiji National Archives, which turned out to be a disappointment; we were told that because of a lack of space they were unable to retain many documents and had little of value concerning Rotuma.

During a visit to Sydney in 1991, we spent several days at the Mitchell Library, assisted by Saumaru Foster, a Rotuman expatriate on the staff there, copying various missionary documents and miscellaneous historical correspondence concerning Rotuma. And during a visit to London, England, I obtained documents from the National Archives of the United Kingdom pertaining to Rotuman participation in the negotiations relevant to the granting of Fiji's independence in 1970. In addition to visiting archives in various cities, as the Internet developed we searched for relevant items online, aided by Google and an extensive bibliography on Rotuma compiled by Antoine N'Yeurt, Will McClatchey, and Hans Schmidt (1996).

ACQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE FIELD

In the course of our fieldwork and visits to museums and archives, we came to appreciate the value of photographs as historical documents worthy of preservation. Already in our possession were the approximately 750 photos I took during my 1959–1961 fieldwork in Fiji and Rotuma, including black-and-white photos and colored slides. Unfortunately, I was unable to share the photos with people on Rotuma at the time because exposed film had to be sent off-island to be developed. So I sent the film to my home in California to be developed, with the prints and slides stored there for safekeeping. After returning from the field, I donated a selection of my black-and-white photos to the Bishop Museum archives; they were processed by George Bacon from negatives into 8" x 10" prints, and I was given a duplicate set. During our 1987 revisit to Rotuma, Jan and I used the photos as a means of reconnecting with people I had known, while also showing some of the younger folks images of their parents, grandparents, and other family members. As we encountered individuals with connections to people in the photos, we gave the prints away as gifts (*tē fakhanisi*). By the time we left, two weeks later, we had distributed all of the prints.

During our 1987 visit we took only color photos, mostly as a record of our experiences there, but in our visits to Rotuma in 1988, 1989, and 1990, during which time Jan was doing dissertation research, we had a more ethnographic focus in mind. For that period, we took two cameras along, one for slides, the other for color prints. We accumulated a total of 314 slides that we categorized as follows: “houses” (47 slides); “boat days” (14); “visit of the *Fairstar* tourist ship in 1989” (31); “environmental problems” (20); “work” (17); “weddings” (19); “social life” (20); “food production” (20); “ceremonies (*kato‘aga*)” (28); “other events” (14); “activities of women and children” (14); “friends” (19); “children in school” (31); and “Jan and Alan” (20). The slides were supplemented by color prints (uncategorized) of people, events, and scenery. Among the special events we photographed were the 150th anniversaries of Wesleyan and Catholic missions, in 1989 and 1996, respectively.

The photos and slides were taken to provide visual reminders of our experiences on the island, as supplements to our field notes, and as potential illustrations for publications and lectures. At times Rotumans specifically requested or instructed us to take particular photos, especially at ceremonial events. Interestingly, they never asked for copies of the photos;

they just wanted to be sure we were photographing the important things from their point of view.

On our 1990 trip, in addition to a still camera, we brought along a video camera. Besides videotaping special events like weddings and birthdays, I spent several days shooting scenes from everyday life, including people caring for their children, preparing food, making mats, planting taro, feeding pigs and chickens, and so on. All together, we brought back thirteen hours' worth of video, portions of which I have edited to present such aspects of Rotuman life as plantation management, food preparation, mat making, ceremonies, church services, school activities, athletics, and interviews with prominent individuals. I have uploaded forty-five of these edited clips to YouTube with links from a list on the Rotuma Website.

The Rotuma Website also provided a venue on which to post many of the photographs we had taken, as well as snapshots sent to us by Rotumans and acquaintances who had been to Rotuma. It started off as a modest project with only a handful of photographs, categorized simply as "scenery," "social events," and "interesting things." Mindful of bandwidth limitations at the time the website was created, we restricted the size of each photo to less than 40KB. At this size and in such low resolution (72 dpi), the photos were not suitable for printing, so for all practical purposes they were limited to viewing on computer screens.

In 1998, following visits to Rotuma and Rotuman communities in Fiji, Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington, San Francisco, Florida, and England, we posted photo montages of people in each of those locations. The montages were larger images, but still were less than 100KB in size. By then we had switched to a digital camera and so were able to take a virtually unlimited number of photos without having to worry about processing.

Photographic contributions to the website followed in subsequent years by Peace Corps volunteers and shorter-term visitors to Rotuma. For example, Richard Mehus had served as a Peace Corps volunteer from January 1972 to December 1974. He sent us a CD with a digitized set of photos he had taken during his stay on the island. Most of the photos were taken at Rotuma High School, where he taught, but he was also present when Hurricane Bebe struck Rotuma in October 1972 and took a number of photos of the devastation.

To make at least a portion of my 1959–1961 photos available online, I uploaded a photographic essay in seventeen segments, accompanying the photos with an account of my experiences. We were gratified to receive

messages from Rotumans who found in this collection the only photos of their parents or grandparents they had ever seen.

ACQUIRING HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In 1961, Dr H S Evans provided me with a set of fifty black-and-white photos he had taken on Rotuma in 1940. He later served as the island's district officer in 1943 and 1950. Evans was interested in cultural diffusion and saw Rotuman culture as derivative from Sāmoa. Thus he took multiple photos of artifacts that he related in his notes to Samoan equivalents. He also took a number of photos of events such as weddings and sporting competitions (wrestling, spear throwing). He made a habit of creating panoramas by joining two or more photos to display a scene, giving a good sense of events from a distance.

But it was not until Jan and I decided to write a history of the Rotuman people that we embarked on a concerted effort to collect historical photos. As a first step, we posted a request on the Rotuma Website asking for old photos, which we promised to preserve and, if necessary, restore before returning them to the sender. This netted not a single response, so we brought along a portable scanner on a subsequent visit to Fiji and Rotuma, which yielded modest results, as we were able to copy and return people's photos immediately. However, we decided to make a concerted effort to obtain photos from archival and museum collections as a prelude to writing our book.

We began by obtaining a few photos of artifacts from the Auckland War Memorial Museum and a somewhat more extensive collection from the Fiji Museum, but our real bonanzas were from the Turnbull Library in Wellington and the Archivio Padri Maristi (Archives of the Marist Fathers) in Rome. It was at the Turnbull Library that we found a collection of twenty-six photos taken by Hocart on Rotuma in 1913. Aside from a few pictures of scenery, most of Hocart's photos are of people carefully posing (a result, no doubt, of camera limitations). To accompany his physical measurements of people, several of the photos were of people's heads, presumably to show their shapes. The photos were toned gelatin silver prints; most currently exist in sepia tones, possibly as a result of deteriorating pigments. The Turnbull charged us NZ\$13.05 (US\$8.92) per photo, which they digitized and provided on a CD.

Our excursion to the Marist Archives in Rome was something of a shot in the dark. We were accompanied by Father Tom Splain, a Jesuit priest

who was then teaching anthropology at the Gregorian University in Rome. Father Splain acted as our translator with the archivist, Father Carlo-Maria, whose initial response to our request for photos from Rotuma was that they didn't have any. However, in response to our obvious dejection, Father Carlo-Maria brought out the albums of photos from Fiji for us to look through. We quickly discovered a number of photos from Rotuma interspersed with those from Fiji. In all, we found ninety-one photos taken in Rotuma, mostly during the 1920s and 1930s. We sat for hours in the sweltering archives, writing out explanations of all of these photos. The archivist, who was very pleased to have them identified, offered to scan them, put them on a CD, and mail them to us free of charge. They include a range of subjects, including Father Gustave Griffon with one of the first motor vehicles (if not *the* first) on the island; group photos of priests, nuns, and parishioners; church buildings; and ceremonial activities.

In addition to the museums and archives, we attempted to obtain photos from the National Archives of Fiji, the *Fiji Times*, and the Fiji Ministry of Information in Suva, with only limited success. We were disheartened when we were told that, because of space and personnel limitations, photos from many notable historical events had been discarded. However, we did find at the Ministry of Information photos from the opening of the council house in Rotuma in 1971 and the centennial celebration of Rotuma's cession to Great Britain in 1981. These we were allowed to digitize using our portable scanner.

One of our most interesting discoveries occurred quite serendipitously. While in the process of archiving accounts of visitors to Rotuma in the nineteenth century, I happened to be glancing through an account by C F Wood, who had stopped in Rotuma on a yachting cruise in the South Pacific in 1871, when I came across the following passage: "On Monday morning, Mr. Smith went on shore with all the pomp and circumstance of photography, and caused no small excitement. The men carrying tents, cameras, etc., formed quite a procession, and I watched them from the vessel winding away amongst the cocoa-nut groves that fringed the shore. The party did not return till evening" (Wood 1875, 9-10). Since, to our knowledge, these would have been the earliest photos taken on Rotuma, we were eager to know if they were archived somewhere. An Internet search revealed that Wood's materials were archived at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England, and an exploration of the museum's website revealed that a photographic collection was indeed part of Wood's archive. The museum's online database included numerous listings for

photographs of Rotuma, among them a photo attributed to A M Hocart, but at that point only one of these images was available online.

We therefore arranged with Philip Grover, the museum's assistant curator for Photographs and Manuscript Collections, to visit Oxford and view the photos in person. We were accompanied on our visit by a longtime friend, Mrs Loraine Rigamoto Tizard-Varcoe, a Rotuman elder residing in Surrey. Mrs Tizard-Varcoe had a sharp eye for detail and was able to point out details we might have missed, such as the women's penchant for covering their legs with blankets when being photographed.

It turned out that, of the Pitt Rivers collection, seventeen photos were from Wood, eleven others were taken by Hocart during his 1913 visit to Rotuma, and three additional photos, taken on Rotuma circa 1890, were attributed to Graham Balfour. Mr Grover was more than accommodating; he took the trouble to digitize all the Rotuman photos while we were there and added them to the museum's online photographic database, from which they can be downloaded. An added bonus to this online database is the background information the museum provides for each photograph. Mr Grover also gave us permission to provide links directly to the individual photos from the Rotuma Website (see http://www.rotuma.net/Images/Pitt_Rivers_Museum2.htm and click on each image to link to the Pitt Rivers website).

None of the costs involved in collecting photos have been covered by grants; all costs have been paid by us out-of-pocket. However, we feel we owe it to Rotumans to make historical photos accessible to them because, in our experience, visual history is at least as important to them as verbal accounts, if not more so. Our sense of obligation in this regard is fueled by gratitude for the generosity and support the Rotuman people have shown us over many years of fieldwork. Indeed, we think of our entire archival project primarily as a form of preserving, and making available, historical materials for present and future generations of Rotumans.

THE PROCESS OF ARCHIVING

It should be clear from the above account that an archiving mentality is worth nurturing early in one's career. In my case, aside from a compulsion to accumulate all the materials I could find regarding Rotuma as supplementary to my fieldwork, I was disconcerted that Rotumans seemed to have so little knowledge of or concern for their own history (during the colonial period only European history, and to a lesser extent

Fiji's history, were taught in the schools). My conclusion was that, to a great extent, the problem was that Rotumans had little or no access to documentation concerning their history, in addition to the fact that they were systematically deprived of their history by colonial administrators who did not consider indigenous figures as worthy of inclusion in historical accounts (Howard 1993; 1994b, 651–652). This realization fueled my desire to remedy the situation by copying and repatriating as much historical material as possible, in addition to writing a biography of Wilson Inia, a Rotuman schoolteacher who played a significant role in fostering Rotuma's successful adaptation to the modern world (Howard 1994a). My initial plan was to explore the possibility of establishing a physical archive on Rotuma. With this in mind I contacted UNESCO and was assured that money would be available if a proposal was submitted. However, the proposal could not come from me; it had to come from an indigenous person. So, in collaboration with the Rotuman district officer, who enthusiastically supported the idea and went so far as to commit land at the government station for a suitable building, we drafted a proposal, which he submitted for approval to the bureaucracy in Fiji, where it apparently languished and ultimately was lost. Though disappointed, I was not completely dismayed because I realized that the likelihood of paper documents, photographs, and other materials surviving indefinitely on the island was slim if not completely impracticable given the climate, absence of air-conditioning, and lack of professional staff to care for them. The development of digital media and the Internet afforded another, more practical opportunity.

We are currently in the process of transferring our collection of documents to the UHM Hamilton Library, with the guidance of senior Pacific Collection Librarian Stuart Dawrs. Our procedure is to digitize copies of documents we have in hard copy and to print copies of documents we have only in digital form. The hard copies will be preserved in the Pacific Collection, as part of our archive of Rotuma materials. Meanwhile, the digital version of the archive will be shared via the library's online repository, ScholarSpace. With the exception of materials that are copyrighted by others, the only items in our archive that we do not plan to make freely available online as soon as possible are our personal field journals and our more recent field notes. Because these journals include candid observations of recent events on Rotuma, they will require permission to consult while Jan and I are alive, and we will ultimately decide on a reasonable embargo period during which they may not be accessed after our passing.

(For an extensive discussion of my views regarding ethical issues raised by repatriation, see Howard 2002.)

A significant part of the digital archive will be the Rotuma Website. I plan to continue updating it for as long as I am able, after which it will be permanently archived. (UHM librarians already regularly capture the website as part of a larger effort to archive Pacific-related websites. For more on this project, see Kleiber 2014.) The website's archival value lies in the documentation of Rotuman history and issues of concern to the now-global Rotuman community. All of the historical photographic collections mentioned above are available for download in high resolution from the photo section of the website. There is also a month-to-month archive of news items from (mostly Fiji-based) newspapers and reports from correspondents on Rotuma and from Rotuman enclaves abroad, dating back to 1996. The website's online forum, which was established as a place for people to express their views on matters of concern to Rotumans, now contains fifty-two topical forums. These can be roughly grouped into four major categories: political issues; aspects of Rotuman identity; the economic development of Rotuma; and problems confronting Rotumans on the island. Submitters have ranged from professionals to office workers to housewives and students.

A number of other sections of the website have archival value, particularly for persons with Rotuman ancestry. There are sections on Rotuman music, biographies of prominent Rotumans, the accomplishments of contemporary Rotuman artists and athletes, and recipes for Rotuman dishes, as well as pages on Rotuma's history, geography, archaeology, language, population, culture, economy, religion, land tenure, political organization, arts and crafts, and myths and legends.

Ultimately, our goal is to make the information about Rotuma and Rotumans that we have acquired through these many years freely available to Rotumans worldwide as a form of repatriation, as well as to all scholars interested in pursuing research on the island or among the diasporic community. This has required a degree of discretion regarding what is likely to be useful versus what is too intimate or is otherwise culturally inappropriate to place online. In some cases, we have excluded detailed personal data collected during surveys in favor of summaries or discussions of those data. Our hope is that the materials we have included in the Rotuman archive will be well used and will contribute to the perpetuation of Rotuma's historical legacy.

As of June 2018, we have provided the University of Hawai'i Library

with six boxes of archival materials, as well as our collection of books containing relevant information about Rotuma and Rotumans. The contents of these boxes include file folders labeled according to topics. To provide a general sense of what the archives contain we offer the following condensed categorization of the materials:

- Our Field Notes and Journals;
- Missionary Reports and Letters;
- Accounts of Early Visitors to Rotuma (1791–1880);
- Published and Unpublished Research Reports (on topics such as archaeology, botany, linguistics, migration, and medical conditions);
- Documents relating to Rotuma's cession to Great Britain in 1881;
- Documents relating to Rotuma's association with Fiji;
- Colonial Administrator's Reports (letters, annual reports, Rotuma Council Minutes);
- Ethnographic Documents (including J Stanley Gardiner's publication from his visit in 1896, A M Hocart's field notes from 1913, and Gordon Macgregor's field notes from 1932);
- Demographic Documents (censuses, registry information from 1903–1960, migration analyses);
- Published and Unpublished Writings by Rotuman Authors;
- Magazine and Newspaper Articles;
- Government Reports on general and specific topics (eg, politics, agriculture, economy, development);
- Rotuman Art and Artifacts (documents and illustrations);
- Rotuman Music and Dance

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Abstract

This essay is an account of the author's experiences in collecting and assembling cultural and historical materials related to the island of Rotuma and to Rotuman communities in diaspora. The resultant archives are to be housed at the University of Hawai'i's Pacific Collection in both physical and digital forms. They include field notes dating back to research begun in 1959 that has been ongoing to the present as well as an array of published and unpublished documents collected from libraries, museums, and archives from around the world. A major goal of establishing the archive, particularly in its digital form, is to provide optimal access to persons of Rotuman ancestry as a form of repatriation that will encourage them to explore their cultural and historical heritage in the interest of adding substance to their cultural identity, and to provide enhanced opportunities for Rotuman scholars to assess the materials so that they can generate their own accounts of the Rotuman experience.

KEYWORDS: Rotuma, field notes, archives, repatriation, photographs, Rotuma Website