Filmmaker to Filmmaker: Robert Gardner and the Cinematic Process

RODERICK COOVER
Temple University

ABSTRACT Choices made in the reissue of many of Robert Gardner’s groundbreaking films—including Dead Birds (1964), Rivers of Sand (1973), and Forest of Bliss (1986)—on DVD demonstrate how new media tools can reinvigorate questions generated by the original works and how they can provide new insight into a filmmaker’s praxis. The juxtaposition of differing media and the integration of commentary track conversations in many of these works with media makers and scholars such as Stan Brakhage, Robert Fenz, Ross McElwee, Akos Ostor, and Lucien Taylor provide unique vantage points from which to view the original documentaries and reconsider the lessons they yield. Gardner’s concurrent publication of his diary and production notes in the book Impulse to Preserve (2006) contextualizes and personalizes these works, showing how they fit together in a career of innovative ethnographic production that has spanned over 50 years. [Keywords: documentaries, Robert Gardner, ethnography, film, Stan Brakhage]

An ethnographic film is almost never a summation of research; most films can offer only a particular view of a subject. A film is a linear form constructed out of original footage, background research, interviews, editing-room decisions, critical feedback, and the unpredictable occurrences of fieldwork. In almost all documentaries, far more is left out than is included. Through a flurry of recent book and DVD publications of and about his groundbreaking works, filmmaker Robert Gardner offers something of a corrective to this dilemma.

Gardner received a lifetime achievement award from the Society of Visual Anthropology in 2005. His documentaries include the now canonized titles Dead Birds (1964), Rivers of Sand (1973), Deep Hearts (1981), Forest of Bliss (1986), and Ika Hands (1988), among others. All of his films explore the resonant signification of objects and ritual practices on the collective consciousness and demonstrate how formal choices of composition and editing can reveal and conceal patterns of recognition that bind subject and object. Drawing his methods from the fine arts, humanities, and anthropology, Gardner creates films that articulate fundamental questions about how humans in differing cultures express common and inchoate conditions—such as those of mortality, gender difference, and the human predilection toward violence—through the performance of daily life and ritualized action. His films have stirred controversy among some anthropologists in large part because of the challenges the films raise about uses of voice and aesthetic technique in social scientific representation. Many of his films resist exposition and vocal explanation in favor of evocative audiovisual means of interpretation; this choice is consistent with Gardner’s endeavor to use film to evoke the ways that images affect and are imprinted on the imagination and the ways that cultures use visual objects and action to outwardly represent ever-fluctuating tensions of social life.

For those familiar with Gardner’s work, what makes these releases particularly exciting is how they function as metatexts on Gardner’s original films. The books and DVDs carry reader-viewers back to the original moments of production and bring the films into a contemporary discourse. They also provide insight into Gardner’s way of working and his process of judging the works he made. The book, The Impulse to Preserve (2006), is the broadest of these works and provides notes complementing 40 years of ethnographic production. The DVD rereleases layer multiple views and conversations about the works from differing moments in time on the material object—the cinematic image. While The Impulse to Preserve gives readers valuable background details about his many cross-cultural films, the DVD materials do something more; they open the original films to new forms of interpretation, as demonstrated in the rerelease of Dead Birds on DVD in 2003.

A canonic work in the field of visual anthropology, Dead Birds (1964) was recorded during the Peabody
expedition of 1961 that included Gardner, Karl Heider, Michael Rockefeller, and Jan Broekhuysse. The film concerns ritual warfare among the Dani in Papua New Guinea. It is constructed around the narratives of two characters and the images of reoccurring motifs, such as birds and watchtowers. The violence Gardner records on the battlefield also permeates daily life, and it is reflected in other ritualized forms of violence, such as the ritual severing of women’s fingers when men die. The DVD helps bring forward Gardner’s process of transforming his experience into film, and it also brings attention to how his understanding of how the reasons he made the film have changed over time.

Any film is an amalgamation of several moments in time, what might be considered time elements. In Dead Birds, for example, these time elements include: (1) the research and fieldwork before any shooting occurs, such as the collecting of diary notes, building of contacts or friendships, archival research, and fundraising; (2) the lengthy period of shooting a film that covers events of daily life; and (3) the editing of that footage in Cambridge and the subsequent recording of a narration and sound effects. After initial private screenings, Gardner then reedited the film into a very different work, so at least two versions of the film exist, one being little known. The DVD points to this through the inclusion of outtakes—some from that original version—and it highlights a third variation; the DVD includes the first few minutes of a rarely screened black-and-white print of Dead Birds. The DVD also includes a slide show that was developed in the 1960s as a presentation about the fieldwork. Then, there is a section of a roundtable discussion about the film recorded in 1973 almost ten years after Dead Birds was released but 30 years before the publication of the DVD. Finally, there are conversations between Gardner and other filmmakers that function as commentaries on the work layered on the various original materials; these commentaries with Harvard filmmakers Ross McElwee and Lucien Taylor were recorded shortly before the DVD release. In this way, the DVD offers a dialogical construction in which differing materials and conversational viewpoints from differing moments in time layer upon, and intersect with, each other.

As an example of the use of DVD technology, Dead Birds is not unusual. The DVD employs conventions, such as linked outtakes and commentaries, that are commonplace in the short history of DVD, and many interesting items are left out, probably because of disc space. The inclusion of outtakes is selective, and while Gardner provides a 4:32-minute example with commentary of a black-and-white version of Dead Birds, the whole black-and-white version is not included. Nor does Gardner include any of the vast critical material that the film has generated. Even so, the DVD goes beyond just making the remarkable digital transfer of the film available. It also allows viewers insight into a filmmaker’s intentions and evolving views of cinematic, ethnographic praxis in a way that is quite different from the lessons one can learn from his book, The Impulse to Preserve, or, indeed, from other recent books that discuss Gardner’s project, such as Susan Meiselas’s attractive image-driven collection, Encounters with the Dani (2003).

Gardner’s DVDs and his book, The Impulse to Preserve, are complementary. The book presents journal notes that set the stage for the production of the film. The book offers an evocative day-by-day account of his fieldwork experiences among the Dani. He is witnessing the end of a cultural practice. While he waits to see, understand, and record the rituals of their warfare, the national police are attempting to restrict it, as he recounts on the entry of May 24, 1961:

On the 11th of May a police patrol made a visit to our neighborhood. On several subsequent days, patrols were sent to warn warriors that if they fought any more they would be taken off to jail in Wamena. For days the effect was dramatic. Fearless warriors came to ask me if they were going to be put in chains. I thought not but said I did not know for certain. [Gardner 2006:45]

For the time being, the battles go on and the filmmaker continues to gather materials about the wars, the victory dances, and the pathos of deaths caused by raids and battles. But Gardner is acutely aware of the fragility of this culture and questions if even his team’s own role in studying this culture is changing them. On July 15, he writes,

They crave many of our belongings and appurtenances and then give vent to their craving by begging and even stealing. We are really not so different from the missionaries in long-term effect on the Dani. We cannot leave with clean hands . . . I’ve come to see that the young boy named Uwar is among the brightest and most corrupted. He is frighteningly adept at getting himself the little things he wants. An inevitable result of lost innocence may be humiliation. Many have not reached this point yet, but are we gentle enough to preserve their dignity as we undo their culture? [2006:63]

The answer is “evidently not,” as he discovers on a return visit years later, which is recounted later in the book. Gardner revisits the Dani in 1989, and then again in 1996, by which time the central two individuals from the original Dead Birds, Pua and Weyek, had died. Ironically discovering that the past way of life is as much preserved in its own foreign film as in any local ritual, Gardner encounters a culture torn from its past in every detail from daily activities to their distinctive dress:

On first encountering the Dani wearing his horim which, depending on personal taste, was straight or curved, long or short, narrow or wide, my reaction was partly disbelief. Here was an otherwise convincingly human being with an outlandish decoration perched on his penis, sticking up sometimes higher than his shoulder. . . . It was not worn to protect vital anatomy but to assert dignity and maintain masculine pride. . . . In adopting Western clothing though edict and other pressures, the Dani male has lost his horim and cannot feel other than humiliated as a result. [2006:325]

Gardner has changed also. A night of festivities held in his honor grows too long, which is recounted later in the book. Gardner revisits the Dani in 1989, and then again in 1996, by which time the central two individuals from the original Dead Birds, Pua and Weyek, had died. Ironically discovering that the past way of life is as much preserved in its own foreign film as in any local ritual, Gardner encounters a culture torn from its past in every detail from daily activities to their distinctive dress:

On first encountering the Dani wearing his horim which, depending on personal taste, was straight or curved, long or short, narrow or wide, my reaction was partly disbelief. Here was an otherwise convincingly human being with an outlandish decoration perched on his penis, sticking up sometimes higher than his shoulder. . . . It was not worn to protect vital anatomy but to assert dignity and maintain masculine pride. . . . In adopting Western clothing though edict and other pressures, the Dani male has lost his horim and cannot feel other than humiliated as a result. [2006:325]

Gardner has changed also. A night of festivities held in his honor grows too long, and he realizes that his days of participant-observation had probably ended some time ago. Now, he writes, "I listen and watch less to be informed by what I hear and see than to search for personal meaning" (2006:328).
Like the DVDs, the book intends to present insight into the intentions of a filmmaker and his process. In this regard, however, the book is a little less forthcoming than the films, perhaps because of the singularity of voice. While the book is limited to materials from Gardner's cross-cultural films, many of the most remarkable moments of the book are segments about films not made or ones that might be made, one-page commentaries on filmmakers and photographers whose work has moved Gardner, and odd notes from unfilmed travels. Where the book provides contextual materials that surround the works, the DVDs provide new means of interpreting the works as records not only of Gardner's fieldwork but also of his evolving views and process. A hybrid between the book and DVD, Gardner's reissue of his masterful film *Forest of Bliss* (1986) was originally released in a book, *The Making of Forest of Bliss* (Gardner and Östör 2002). The film concerns ritual practices surrounding the ceremonies and economies of death in the Indian town of Benares on the River Ganges. Gardner made the controversial choice to build the 1986 film, *Forest of Bliss*, without any voice-over or translation, offering an alternative to the authoritative voice-over of many documentaries. Rather, the filmmaker uses repetition and variation in image and sound and cross-cutting to tie together visual and sound elements of the urban landscape in the montage-driven genre of the “city symphony,” in the tradition of Alberto Cavalcanti’s *Rien Que Les Heures* (1926), Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin, Symphony of a City* (1927), and Dziga Vertov’s *Man with the Movie Camera* (1929). Only gradually disclosing the symbolic significance and material uses of its various subjects over the course of the film, *Forest of Bliss* invites viewers to build a network of associations. Death takes on a resonant presence in all aspects of the riverside world of Benares from ritualized bathing to the economy of preparing wood for the pyres. In the end, it is the viewers who must do the speaking, naming what they saw; perhaps such viewers may also be compelled to research what is not explained.

The commentary is somewhat different from those of the other DVDs. Viewers join the filmmakers in a screening room with the film projected behind them (see Figure 1). As the filmmakers watch *Forest of Bliss* and discuss it, the projection is full size, filling the viewer's screen. However, this conventional viewing process is interrupted as the filmmakers frequently halt the screening to analyze stills and close ups. In some instances, sequences of stills are pulled together to supplement visual analyses in demonstrating poetic and rhetorical relationships concealed in the original montage. The sudden interruptions are surprising, reminding viewers of Gardner’s compositional precision, and they allow viewers to dwell on connections often missed in the insistent forward motion of film.

The most recent addition to Gardner’s oeuvre being released on DVD is his remarkable film *Rivers of Sand* (forthcoming b), which depicts relations between and among the sexes among the Hamar, who live in the scrubland of southwestern Ethiopia (see Figure 2). Envisioned under the working title “Creatures of Pain,” the film reveals how
violence—in this case, a cultural pattern of misogyny—hides thinly beneath the surface structure of social relations. For the filmmaker, the project raises delicate questions about how to position oneself observing practices one might find abhorrent. Although Gardner does not interfere with Hamar cultural practices, he also does not back away from the topic of misogynistic violence, and, as with Dead Birds, he looks for signs of how the outward acts of violence permeate other aspects of daily life, such as in the differing ways Hamar men and women decorate themselves. The gentle and elaborate process of preparing a man’s hair is contrasted with the painful yet “decorative” scarring of a woman’s flesh. The film also shows direct manifestations of violence: beatings. Here Gardner’s approach is hovering on the necessity to understand and a desire to turn away.

The methods of this film lie somewhere in between those of Dead Birds and Forest of Bliss. The documentary integrates an evocative visual language with other forms of information, including an interview with a female informant. In the commentary, Gardner focuses attention on the challenge of retaining an observational distance to the culturally established patterns of violence toward women. For the filmmaker, the question “What does one shoot?” is inseparable from “How does one shoot?.” He shifts back and forth between gendered perspectives, social practices, and practices of self-decoration: If violence occurs directly between the sexes among the Hamar, it is also refracted within ordinary activities, reinforced within the patterns of daily life and cultural rituals. In the DVD commentary with filmmaker Robert Fenz, Gardner cites filmmaker Luis Buñuel’s proposition: that life is not the best of all possible worlds, and it is the filmmaker’s task to show this. Such a proposition pointedly suits a discussion about such a challenging film. The commentary reminds audiences that each film is an expression of the choice making that occurs both at the moment of ethnographic production and during the development of a synesthetic work.

All these new publications make Gardner’s ground-breaking ethnographies accessible in the digital age. They invite a new generation of filmmakers into the discourse on the evolving challenges facing cross-cultural filmmaking, and they allow viewers to probe the relationship between a filmmaker’s intentions, methods, and results. They do so by asking viewers to consider not only the question of why to make a film of others but also how. And, all three films—Dead Birds, Forest of Bliss, and Rivers of Sand—tell viewers something about how Gardner uses film in an interpretive process to explore common questions in one context and then another. The films exploit the relationship between temporal sensorial means of making sense of the world and the imagination’s process of connecting such experience to fundamental issues, particularly those of death and violence that do not seem adequately quelled by talk alone. As he explains in commentary to Dead Birds, he hoped the Dani might teach him something about the violent expression of human tension that no less permeates Western popular culture and seems to regularly lead his own nation, the United States, into wars of a far more ghastly, deadly kind.

Perhaps Gardner fails to expand more on the cultural research that went into his original films. The works are more about preserving original materials and viewing them in new contexts than revisiting the conditions surrounding prior paths. The book and DVD rereleases serve above all as lessons of praxis geared toward a new generation of filmmakers. His groundbreaking films continue be contentious because they resist documentary conventions—particularly those conventions that offer the viewer a conformable and passive observational distance from the film’s subject—and because of how they continue both to inspire production across various disciplines by blurring distinctions of artistic and ethnographic sensibility. While some documentary films integrate expository and cinematic methods—a practice that can diminish the power of spontaneous sense making by placing pictures in the service of words—Gardner’s films do not.

The result is an approach that is less likely to provide answers to issues raised in the past than to ask new questions about how to use film and other audio-visual media to learn means of interpreting and articulating culturally diverse expressions of the human condition. For Gardner, interdisciplinarity does not necessarily mean employing all methods at once but, rather, understanding the value of differing approaches and building bridges between them. Where Gardner’s films raise fundamental questions about audiovisual forms of knowledge and employ innovative methods to offer sensorial interpretation, the DVD commentaries carry these goals further. They shed light on how to bridge practical and intellectual processes of creating ethnographic media works and how to employ interactive tools to unfold the temporal constructs of the cinematic image and its contexts. Thus, the reissues of these works offer provocative models for media makers today with the intent of furthering the discourse through production of critically engaged works. As Gardner says to Fenz in the DVD commentary while Rivers of Sand (2007b) is being loaded: “I don’t want to try to dig below the surface to the subtext of something that I am not even sure is in the text itself, but let’s see if we can inform ourselves or anyone who might watch this about this as a film as filmmakers. Are you willing to give it a try?”

REFERENCES CITED
Cavacanti, Alberto, dir.
Gardner, Robert
Gardner, Robert, dir.
1964 Dead Birds. 85 min. Documentary Educational Resources. Watertown, MA.
JOANNA COHAN SCHERER
Emerita Anthropologist, Smithsonian Institution

This book is a case study demonstrating a methodology for using historical photographs as primary documents to obtain multiple cultural readings of images. It focuses on anthropometric portraits (yes, those awful paired front and profile photos that were intended to explicate issues of race and acculturation) and fieldwork portraits taken by Beatrice Blackwood in August 1925 of the Kainai people on the Blood Indian Reserve in Alberta. Thirty-three of Blackwood's images, housed in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, form the substance of this book.

Although Blackwood took other photos of Native Americans, African Americans, and non-Indians in Canada and the United States from 1924–27, this book focuses exclusively on the Kainai images. The photos are described in Blackwood's field notes, diaries, lectures, and demonstration talks and are thus extremely well documented from the anthropologist's point of view. Between 2001 and 2004, Alison Brown and Laura Peers took Blackwood's photos and associated documentation and shared them with the descendants of the Kainai. The authors then brought together in this well-written book a description of how Blackwood used the photographs, the ideological system she worked under, and what can be learned about them from the Kainai today. Not surprisingly, the Kainai people saw in the photographs the ideological system she worked of identifying by name each individual in the photos to prevent them from becoming generic Indian images. That these pictures depicting Kainai lives and ancestors, made by Blackwood in only two days, are valuable to the Kainai today is an interesting and integral part of the story. In the text, Brown and Peers distinguish between the surface reading of photos by scholars and indigenous reading of photos. Scholars may note such details as what people are wearing, where the pictures were taken, and an emphasis on "important" individuals, all of which tends to put these portraits into objectifying categories of outsiders versus indigenous. Indigenous readings of the same photos reveal the importance of kin-based history, their reaction to change, and, most importantly, their survival and ability to maintain Kainai ways and identity despite tremendous material changes. Importantly, such readings tend to return control of the images' interpretation to the indigenous community.

This book provides a clear example of how research on historical pictures can be encouraged to share their visual resources with the community of origin. The importance of archival collections to indigenous communities brings a new meaning to visual repatriation projects. In this process of working more closely with the community than most researchers have in the past, Brown and Peers have clearly shown the benefits that can be reaped in using this methodology to extract new levels of understanding from old pictures.

The temptation to use historical photos and the visual information they contain but not to do the homework necessary to reconstruct the historical context is all too common. The richness of information brought to Blackwood's photos by this project exemplifies how to do research on historical pictures. However, similar care was not brought to the non-Blackwood image that appears on page 69 (figure 2.4) labeled "Ethnologist measuring a Blackfoot man, Macleod District, Alberta, ca. 1910–20 from the Glenbow-Alberta Institute." The documentation for this image appears to be based on information by Brock Silversides (1994:90). I spent a number of years tracking down agreement they signed in November 2001 with the Kainai community that became the foundation for the project. The Kainai responses to the photographs are quoted extensively and show the meaning the images have for them as both family and community history and the vital importance of identifying by name each individual in the photos to prevent them from becoming generic Indian images. That these pictures depicting Kainai lives and ancestors, made by Blackwood in only two days, are valuable to the Kainai today is an interesting and integral part of the story. In the text, Brown and Peers distinguish between the surface reading of photos by scholars and indigenous reading of photos. Scholars may note such details as what people are wearing, where the pictures were taken, and an emphasis on "important" individuals, all of which tends to put these portraits into objectifying categories of outsiders versus indigenous. Indigenous readings of the same photos reveal the importance of kin-based history, their reaction to change, and, most importantly, their survival and ability to maintain Kainai ways and identity despite tremendous material changes. Importantly, such readings tend to return control of the images' interpretation to the indigenous community. Brown and Peers also describe ways that archives and repositories of historical photos can be encouraged to share their visual resources with the community of origin. The importance of archival collections to indigenous communities brings a new meaning to visual repatriation projects. In this process of working more closely with the community than most researchers have in the past, Brown and Peers have clearly shown the benefits that can be reaped in using this methodology to extract new levels of understanding from old pictures.

The temptation to use historical photos and the visual information they contain but not to do the homework necessary to reconstruct the historical context is all too common. The richness of information brought to Blackwood's photos by this project exemplifies how to do research on historical pictures. However, similar care was not brought to the non-Blackwood image that appears on page 69 (figure 2.4) labeled "Ethnologist measuring a Blackfoot man, Macleod District, Alberta, ca. 1910–20 from the Glenbow-Alberta Institute." The documentation for this image appears to be based on information by Brock Silversides (1994:90). I spent a number of years tracking down agreement they signed in November 2001 with the Kainai community that became the foundation for the project. The Kainai responses to the photographs are quoted extensively and show the meaning the images have for them as both family and community history and the vital importance of identifying by name each individual in the photos to prevent them from becoming generic Indian images. That these pictures depicting Kainai lives and ancestors, made by Blackwood in only two days, are valuable to the Kainai today is an interesting and integral part of the story. In the text, Brown and Peers distinguish between the surface reading of photos by scholars and indigenous reading of photos. Scholars may note such details as what people are wearing, where the pictures were taken, and an emphasis on "important" individuals, all of which tends to put these portraits into objectifying categories of outsiders versus indigenous. Indigenous readings of the same photos reveal the importance of kin-based history, their reaction to change, and, most importantly, their survival and ability to maintain Kainai ways and identity despite tremendous material changes. Importantly, such readings tend to return control of the images' interpretation to the indigenous community. Brown and Peers also describe ways that archives and repositories of historical photos can be encouraged to share their visual resources with the community of origin. The importance of archival collections to indigenous communities brings a new meaning to visual repatriation projects. In this process of working more closely with the community than most researchers have in the past, Brown and Peers have clearly shown the benefits that can be reaped in using this methodology to extract new levels of understanding from old pictures.

The temptation to use historical photos and the visual information they contain but not to do the homework necessary to reconstruct the historical context is all too common. The richness of information brought to Blackwood's photos by this project exemplifies how to do research on historical pictures. However, similar care was not brought to the non-Blackwood image that appears on page 69 (figure 2.4) labeled "Ethnologist measuring a Blackfoot man, Macleod District, Alberta, ca. 1910–20 from the Glenbow-Alberta Institute." The documentation for this image appears to be based on information by Brock Silversides (1994:90). I spent a number of years tracking down agreement they signed in November 2001 with the Kainai community that became the foundation for the project. The Kainai responses to the photographs are quoted extensively and show the meaning the images have for them as both family and community history and the vital importance of identifying by name each individual in the photos to prevent them from becoming generic Indian images. That these pictures depicting Kainai lives and ancestors, made by Blackwood in only two days, are valuable to the Kainai today is an interesting and integral part of the story. In the text, Brown and Peers distinguish between the surface reading of photos by scholars and indigenous reading of photos. Scholars may note such details as what people are wearing, where the pictures were taken, and an emphasis on "important" individuals, all of which tends to put these portraits into objectifying categories of outsiders versus indigenous. Indigenous readings of the same photos reveal the importance of kin-based history, their reaction to change, and, most importantly, their survival and ability to maintain Kainai ways and identity despite tremendous material changes. Importantly, such readings tend to return control of the images' interpretation to the indigenous community. Brown and Peers also describe ways that archives and repositories of historical photos can be encouraged to share their visual resources with the community of origin. The importance of archival collections to indigenous communities brings a new meaning to visual repatriation projects. In this process of working more closely with the community than most researchers have in the past, Brown and Peers have clearly shown the benefits that can be reaped in using this methodology to extract new levels of understanding from old pictures.

The temptation to use historical photos and the visual information they contain but not to do the homework necessary to reconstruct the historical context is all too common. The richness of information brought to Blackwood's photos by this project exemplifies how to do research on historical pictures. However, similar care was not brought to the non-Blackwood image that appears on page 69 (figure 2.4) labeled "Ethnologist measuring a Blackfoot man, Macleod District, Alberta, ca. 1910–20 from the Glenbow-Alberta Institute." The documentation for this image appears to be based on information by Brock Silversides (1994:90). I spent a number of years tracking down agreement they signed in November 2001 with the Kainai community that became the foundation for the project. The Kainai responses to the photographs are quoted extensively and show the meaning the images have for them as both family and community history and the vital importance of identifying by name each individual in the photos to prevent them from becoming generic Indian images. That these pictures depicting Kainai lives and ancestors, made by Blackwood in only two days, are valuable to the Kainai today is an interesting and integral part of the story. In the text, Brown and Peers distinguish between the surface reading of photos by scholars and indigenous reading of photos. Scholars may note such details as what people are wearing, where the pictures were taken, and an emphasis on "important" individuals, all of which tends to put these portraits into objectifying categories of outsiders versus indigenous. Indigenous readings of the same photos reveal the importance of kin-based history, their reaction to change, and, most importantly, their survival and ability to maintain Kainai ways and identity despite tremendous material changes. Importantly, such readings tend to return control of the images' interpretation to the indigenous community. Brown and Peers also describe ways that archives and repositories of historical photos can be encouraged to share their visual resources with the community of origin. The importance of archival collections to indigenous communities brings a new meaning to visual repatriation projects. In this process of working more closely with the community than most researchers have in the past, Brown and Peers have clearly shown the benefits that can be reaped in using this methodology to extract new levels of understanding from old pictures.