

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Recent commentaries on anthropological writing have argued that ethnographic texts involve a formidable sense of allegory. The genre is said to tell us significant things about ourselves, our modes of constructing “otherness,” our idealizations and self-deceptions, our gender and class biases, our times and historical positions. These arguments are undoubtedly true in a general way, but it is also true that an ethnography is something more than a Rorschach test of writing conventions, intellectual fads, and tacit prejudices. An ethnography is a report of a unique experience. It is about the dialogue of sensibilities implicated in encountering and depicting a people and place. The work and the writer are thus specifically accountable not just to the interpretive preoccupations of scholarly readers, but to that people and place, and to the need for incisive honesty in their depiction. That depiction situates ethnography as an account of a specific yet indefinite encounter, something at once empirically brutal and interpretively subtle. This dynamic creates numerous ironic mysteries for an author, and no less for the people who are trying to figure out what the author is up to. But in the end an ethnographer’s accountability for depiction is more than an accountability for representation; it is an accountability to other human beings whose lives, desires, and sensitivities are no less complicated than his or her own.

Thoughts on doing and writing ethnography are appropriate to open this edition, both to foreground new readings of this book and to context the practices and events which led to the new portion added here. The publication of *Sound and Sentiment* in 1982 coincided with a return visit to the Kaluli people. A copy of the book arrived while I was working in Bosavi, and over the next months I attempted to translate sections of it for my close Kaluli assistants and friends. Suddenly engrossed in discussions of its story

with them, I began to focus on how the Kaluli imagined my task and my writing, and on how the meanings of my work changed both over time and over the course of relationships that grew deeper. The process of evaluating Kaluli interpretations of my interpretations led to an essay, "Dialogic Editing: Interpreting How Kaluli Read *Sound and Sentiment*," published in *Cultural Anthropology* in 1987, now revised and expanded for inclusion here as a Postscript.

One hope that accompanies this new edition is that *Sound and Sentiment* can now be read more historically, not just as a book with a newly unhinged back cover, but as a project reinvigorated by new field research that incorporates dialogic criticism and reflects on issues of accuracy and accountability. Put somewhat more grandly, what is illustrated by the Postscript is an explicit contemplation of how an ethnography is always partial, in two sense of the word. It is partial as a fragment, a momentary scan that fixes an enduring image. And it is partial in its point of view, selecting and privileging particular methods of scanning. Of course the paradox of this framework, of ethnography as partial, is that the discipline of anthropology is deeply entrenched in the ideal of holism. One might even argue that holism has achieved the status of ethnography's representational master trope. I think the only resolution to this paradox is an admission that holism is an idealistic metaphor, one that is mindful of the complex dynamics of social life, while partiality is a critical metaphor, one that is mindful of how research and writing are always signs of specific unavoidable investments. Ethnographic writers and their readers are forced to live with a dialectic of holism and partiality, and I hope the placement of a Postscript in this edition will illuminate how that dialectic permeates the style and substance of *Sound and Sentiment*.

Renewal of a book also entails a renewal of thanks. I begin with my great debt to many Kaluli people, and particularly Jubi, Kiliye, Kulu, Agale, Aya-silo, Ulahi, Gigio, Faile, Gaso, Ganigi, and Hōnowō, for they have collaborated closely with me. Without their engagement and interest the reality and pleasures of understanding Kaluli imagination would be greatly diminished. My Bosavi *nado*, Bambi B. 'Babi' Schieffelin, and my *nabas*, Edward L. 'Bage' Schieffelin, also continue to have a unique relationship to this book; they were there with me during a good part of the original trip, have been back with me since, and have shared many comments, crayfish, and chloroquine over the years. I'm also happy to thank Charlie Keil here for years of hard questions about virtually everything I've written about the Kaluli, much to its improvement I feel, and Don Niles, for help facilitating my field research in Papua New Guinea. For financial support of additional fieldwork in 1982

and 1984, and analysis over the last ten years, I am grateful to the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the American Philosophical Society, the University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation, and the University Research Institute of the University of Texas at Austin. Finally, many thanks to my readers for their questions and requests for further installments, to Shari Robertson for the photograph that accompanies the Postscript, to Laura Long for her editorial eye, and to Patricia Smith of the University of Pennsylvania Press, for the enthusiasm that made a second edition viable.

Austin
June 1989