Acknowledgments

Serendipity brought the two of us together as visiting fellows in the Department of Anthropology at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS) at the Australian National University in the winter of 1994. The idea for this volume arose casually in conversation while we were working there in what is probably one of the more challenging academic settings around. We had discovered complementary interests in the history of the discipline, on the one hand, and in a reflexive stance in the doing of social anthropology, on the other. It was equally serendipitous that we met the perfect sounding board for our ideas in the presence of a third visiting fellow, Simon Harrison, who criticized our ideas when he should and encouraged us when he could.

It was not until some months later that we decided to attempt to widen our discourse on the subject and organize a conference session. We placed a call for papers for the upcoming annual meeting of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) with the carefully negotiated title “Ethnography of Ethnography: Cultural Brokerage and the Generation of Ethnographic Statements.” The initial response was encouraging. We met first as a working session in Clearwater, Florida, in 1995, and again the next year as a symposium in Kona, Hawai‘i. Probably unduly encouraged by sun, sea, and sundry items, it was decided that our discourse should result in an edited volume. After a few years filled with doubts and rewrites, the results are in front of you.

Of course, it is impossible to successfully complete an edited volume on your own. First, we would like to thank the participants who—while they did much to aid the development from our first fledgling ideas to the present focus on the challenges of present-day fieldwork in the Pacific—have chosen not to contribute to this volume. They are Peter Black, Jane Goodale, Jane Fajans, Shane Solomon, and Douglass St. Christian. We extend our thanks and appreciation to the people who did contribute for their cheerful cooperation and collegial support throughout the several years it took us to bring this material to publication. They surely hated us at times for our continuous rewrites, but they never grumbled (at least not very audibly). Jonathan Friedman did not participate in the sessions but graciously accepted our invitation to write a concluding overview for the volume.

As much as various chapters in this volume reflect upon the structure of the ASAO sessions in the promotion of comparative research, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of this venue for scholarly research and the
encouragement of association members and officers in the realization of this project.

We would especially like to thank Niko Besnier and Michael Goldsmith who commented on various versions of the introduction to this volume. Deborah Gewertz and John Barker provided constructive suggestions at crucial points in the writing of this introduction, and our gratitude goes out to them both.

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