

of destruction and abuse that must be told in front of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal. As Barker recognizes, “Marshallese have become actively engaged . . . in redefining history to include their own experiences” (158). Nothing could be truer. Nevertheless, although they certainly include the counter-hegemonic story of abuse that Barker’s *Bravo for the Marshallese* inscribes for readers, histories are intricate and multifaceted.

The story Barker tells the world on behalf of the Marshallese is an incredibly important one for undergraduates who may need to begin to question the “Father Knows Best” image that the United States likes to project onto its international activities. But embedded in these Marshallese stories of the nuclear-testing era is a richer and more differentiated set of meanings. Viewers of O’Rourke’s *Half-Life* get some sense of this diversity by comparing the disgruntled stories of several Rongelap residents with the juxtaposed tales of American good will, such as the one quoted above. Indeed, a similarly diverse array of interpretative histories exists throughout the northern Marshall Islands today. While Barker presents one viable Marshallese rendering in order to demonstrate the considerable abuses Marshallese have suffered as a result of US nuclear testing, it is a view that flattens the multi-perspectival landscape.

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The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea; The National Biodiversity Report of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, by the Team of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Santa Clarita, CA: St Hildegard Publishing Company, 2000. ISBN 982-9045-02-1; 345 pages, figures, maps, tables, glossary, bibliography, index; written in English, Marshallese, and Latin. US\$45.00.

Includes *The Republic of the Marshall Islands’ Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan*, by the Republic of the Marshall Islands Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Team. Santa Clarita, CA: St Hildegard Publishing Company, 2000. ISBN 982-9045-01-3, 24 pages, tables.

Increased awareness of global warming trends and the impact of sea level rise on fragile coral reef ecosystems led the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to sign the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity at the Earth Summit held in Brazil in 1992. With funding from the Global Environmental Facility of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), based in Suva, Fiji, the RMI Ministry of Resources and Development, through the Environmental Protection Agency, created a National Biodiversity Team to compile data from both traditional and western sources and to formulate a plan for conserving national resources. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is the first Pacific nation to complete a project of this scope and produce a comprehensive biodiversity report (Preface, Romulo Garcia, UNDP Resident Representative).

The biodiversity team worked collaboratively and inclusively. Nancy Vander Velde, the primary author of this report, is an American researcher, writer, and artist who worked closely with Marshallese cultural experts, chiefs, government ministry and agency representatives, as well as with residents of six atolls where workshops were held to seek contemporary information from locals. The team's goal, as expressed in the acknowledgments, was to "compile and preserve important knowledge about the biodiversity of the Marshall Islands in a way that will be accessible to many people." The collective research process and the goal of the report are significant because this text is one of the first locally produced, Marshall Islands-centered resources available for students and educators in the Marshalls and beyond.

The authors' attempts at accessibility are successful in many ways. They note that much of the information that is compiled in the series of comprehensive tables listing flora, fauna, and marine life was previously unavailable to typical Marshall Islanders. The authors have made the content of the tables even more accessible by including three background chapters. These are written in a non-scientific, straightforward style and serve to introduce Marshallese readers to the foreign terminology used in global discourses of conservation. Unfamiliar terms are explained clearly with examples drawn from the atoll environment. Although it relies heavily on such terminology and employs a western-centered framework of ecological analysis, the report attempts to balance this dominant western

discourse with numerous examples of Marshallese environmental knowledge. An obvious respect for Marshallese skills and knowledge is evidenced in the inclusion of Marshallese *jabon kennan* (proverbs) concerning characteristics of various fish and birds and their habitats, the explanation of the culturally significant conservation concept of *mo* (taboo), and the representation of traditional fishing methods (the chart on page 320 includes nearly one hundred). Other key contributions to making the report user friendly are the use of atoll maps, almost one hundred black and white drawings, and five colorful panoramic scenes with keys to identify species by their Latin and English names. Unfortunately, Marshallese names are not included.

The first third of the report (approximately one hundred pages) consists of three background, framing chapters. The first relates Marshallese ecological and geological history, historical exploitation of resources, and the settlement patterns of diverse species. The second chapter introduces western terminology and the various ecosystems and biological resources existing in the Marshall Islands. The third chapter encourages conservation practices and explores contemporary threats to biodiversity. Here a too-brief discussion of the impacts of the US nuclear testing program in the Marshalls is perhaps one of the most relevant and critically useful inclusions. Information about the ways radiation contaminates flora and fauna is not readily available to Marshallese students (or the general public), and here it is presented clearly for nonspecialists. No other resource puts

information into the hands of Marshallese citizens in a meaningful way.

Each chapter's primary narrative is complemented by a series of significant sidebars that often include reference to Marshallese traditional knowledge. However, this format makes the cultural information appear subordinate to the primarily western-oriented discussion, whereas it might have been better integrated into the text. Besides offering equality in representation, such integration would aid readability, because the sidebars often interrupt the narrative flow of the chapters.

Following the background chapters and the identification keys are nine tables of flora, fauna, and marine life, organized according to Linnaean classification, listing English and Marshallese names (where available), and including status or habitat, traditional uses, fishing methods, and often the source of the information. In the majority of these tables, Marshallese names are missing—acknowledged by “NNK” (name not known). While the authors do note that in some cases Marshallese domains conflict with Latin typologies, seeing page after page of “NNK” leaves one asking whether Marshallese people were persistently left out of this aspect of the research process (because the tables are compilations of foreign research reports), or worse, they do not know their environment so well after all. At the very least, a note describing the limitations of the foreign-based sources of the compiled data would be useful for a local audience who will question the too-obvious omissions. As it stands, “NNK” undermines the authors' efforts to express respect for

Marshallese knowledge, which is such an asset in the first three chapters.

This leads to my single general complaint about the report: Marshallese terminology is treated as supplementary rather than as essential to the text. Marshallese words are placed within quotation marks and often have incomplete diacritical marks. Further, the lack of Marshallese identifiers limits the usefulness of the lovely panoramic drawings as well as the accessibility of the tables. A single cross-referenced table that privileges indigenous Marshallese taxonomy and terminology would help Marshallese speakers locate useful information much more easily. Because the current tables privilege Latin terms, Marshallese are marginalized even in their own national report.

Overall, I am deeply impressed with the Marshall Islands National Biodiversity Report. Rather than another shelf-sitting technical report and action plan, this publication is creatively fashioned. It emerged through a collaborative process, meeting many if not all of its accessibility aims. It fosters an appreciation not only of the Marshalls' coral atolls but also of the skills and specialized knowledge of Marshallese people who call them home. With its evocative artwork and comprehensive and visual documentation of biodiversity in this coral atoll nation, the report constitutes a valuable resource for Marshallese and non-Marshallese students with interests in coral reefs, environmental hazards, impacts of nuclear testing, and traditional cultural knowledge. For specialists, the bibliography and Latin taxonomy will serve as a useful quick reference.

The title of the National Biodiversity Report evocatively conveys its content: *Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*.

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People and Things: Social Mediations in Oceania, edited by Monique Judy-Ballini and Bernard Juillerat. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2002. ISBN 0-89089-616-X, xi + 363 pages, tables, figures, maps, photographs, summaries, notes, bibliography, indexes. Cloth, US\$60.00.

This collection offers eleven chapters together with chapter summaries, brief contributor biographies, thoughtful indexes, and both photographs and drawings (quite helpful, given the focus on objects). Noting that English- and French-speaking anthropologists working in Oceania “are somewhat cut off from each other” (xi), this book aims to promote engagement by providing English translations (mostly by Nora Scott and Helen Arnold) of works originally appearing in French from 1994 to the present. All the contributions (Barbara Glowczewski’s excepted) are previously or soon-to-be published book chapters or journal articles; only a couple of these have been revised for this volume.

Judy-Ballini and Juillerat’s introduction, “The Social Life of Objects,” begins by distinguishing nonhuman “behavioral” exchange from “organized, intentional” exchange among

humans, who “use . . . objects as identifying or communicational signs” (3). Asserting that the social/symbolic functions of objects are actualized when objects play “mediating” roles, the editors propose that object-mediated exchanges “put what cannot be entirely expressed by body language and speech alone into more tangible form” (4). But because this provocative point is unelaborated, their concepts of “mediation” and “objects” (and their opposites: “direct relations between people,” including sexual intercourse, fighting, talking) remain unclear.

Throughout the introduction a sharp distinction between “traditional” exchange (or “gift economies”) and “commodity economies” (or a “capitalist logic”) is asserted, again without explication. However, while the editors’ implied notion of commodity exchange is unitary and oddly undynamic, their discussion of gift or traditional exchange emphasizes diversity and complexity. They draw readers’ attention to several striking variations evident in the chapters to come: exchange valuables may reinforce conventional significations or else enable people to escape them; the efficacy of objects may be reinforced by their reusable or their perishable materiality; one community may value deferred reciprocation and another may fear it.

Judy-Ballini and Juillerat associate “accumulation in itself” (9) with “capitalist” logics of prestige and power. In contrast, in many Pacific societies, “an object stored once and for all is of little value”: its circulation is key. But this emphasis is only apparently familiar. The editors warn

The excellent document "The Marshall Islands Living Atolls Amidst the Living Seas"™, gives a colorful and serious scientific base upon which the Strategy and Plan have been built. The Strategy and Plan reflect closely the outcomes of atoll and national consultations and point to a strong awareness in Marshall Islands that community resource management, formal and non-formal education, and recognition of traditional culture and practices, are the key to sustainable management of biodiversity. What comes next for the Republic of the Marshall Islands? All of us who were involved with this project are very appreciative of the support and assistance that was given by the United Nations Development Programme/Global Environmental Facility in Suva, Fiji. The Biodiversity Heritage Library works collaboratively to make biodiversity literature openly available to the world as part of a global biodiversity community.

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The Marshall Islands, officially the Republic of the Marshall Islands (Marshallese: AolepĀn AorĀkin á'ajeá, ·), is an island country and a United States associated state near the equator in the Pacific Ocean, slightly west of the International Date Line. Geographically, the country is part of the larger island group of Micronesia. The country's population of 58,413 people (at the 2018 World Bank Census) is spread out over 29 coral atolls, comprising 1,156 individual islands and islets. The capital and