

## Book and Media Reviews

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and migration. The impact of nuclear testing from a Marshallese perspective is emerging in both poetic and prose forms as enlightened commentary on issues that have remained hidden and unexplained in Marshallese terms for so long. Relations between the Marshall Islands and other Pacific nations, such as neighbors Pohnpei, Kiribati, Nauru, Chuuk, and Saipan could be explored in further detail. The same could be said for changes in Marshallese well-being, both spiritual and physical, that are a current concern because of the high rates of diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. An expansion of the text in this area would be useful for a greater understanding from both a historical as well as a medical perspective. All these topics can be developed in the proposed second edition, starting from this volume's coverage and an expanded bibliography.

The orthography of Marshallese words as used in this volume highlights the official form of the written version of the Marshallese language as distinct from forms in more general usage. As indicated in the preface, the contributors have used the standardized orthography and spellings, with macrons and other diacritic marks that have been officially in school usage since 1994 (ix). Confusion persists, however, since after almost twenty years government and official documents have yet to adopt this orthography. For instance, the Bikini Atoll Town Hall still uses the long-familiar spelling of their atoll name over their portal, but the atoll is referred to as "Pikinni" in this text. Clearly the question of standardized orthography of indigenous languages

will continue to be widely debated, but a detailed history of the dictionaries that have recorded Marshallese language by various agencies would be a useful addition to the second edition of this collection. However, even as it stands, the current version of *Ettonan Raan Kein: A Marshall Islands History* is a valuable contribution to the growing number of histories of particular Pacific communities reflecting indigenous perspectives.

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*Tahiti Beyond the Postcard: Power, Place, and Everyday Life*, by Miriam Kahn. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011. ISBN cloth, 978-0-295-99101-6; ISBN paper, 978-0-295-99102-3 xv + 272 pages, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$70.00; paper US\$35.00.

Anthropologist Miriam Kahn brings her long history of researching issues of power, place, and identity in the Pacific to bear in this fascinating analysis of tourism in French Polynesia. In *Tahiti Beyond the Postcard*, she traces the roots of the industry back to European dreams of empire and romance, analyzes the transformation of natural-cultural sites into tourist sights, and studies the reconfiguration of these capital-infused places via Polynesian resistance. Drawing on archival research and long periods of fieldwork (1994–2010) in Raiatea, Huahine, Tahiti, and France, Kahn offers a dialogically structured examination of how peoples develop a sense of place and identity through everyday

engagements within contexts shaped by global contacts.

For theoretical ballast, she borrows Henri Lefebvre's triangular framework of *l'espace conçu*, *l'espace perçu*, et *l'espace vécu* (space conceived, perceived, and lived). For Lefebvre in France and Kahn in the Society Islands, space must be made, unmade, and remade through living practice. Lived space is thus formulated as opening a site of inquiry into the ways in which local places and senses of selves and others are reformulated over time, sometimes subject to what Pierre Bourdieu has called "symbolic violence." In juxtaposition to the French social theorists, and to give voice to the violation sensed by those living within these dominated spaces, Kahn also draws on the political poetics of Henri Hiro, Tahitian independence activist and poet of the 1950s–1980s, and Chantal Spitz, Tahitian poet and novelist of the next generation.

Starting with early contacts in the late eighteenth century, Kahn moves through the colonial period before focusing more concretely on the last fifty years of nuclear testing and tourist development. Relying on texts (poems, letters, and newspaper articles) and visual material (photos, drawings, postcards, tourist publicity, and craftwork) as well as her own ethnographic interactions at tourist locales and local festivals, she examines each period via the conceptions, perceptions, and "livings" of both Polynesians and Westerners: poet activists and political administrators, travel agents and everyday tourists, Tahitian youth and elders.

Focusing on how specific places

are mutually constructed and deconstructed, she first analyzes the Jean-Jacques Rousseau-inspired fantasies of Nouvelle Cythère, which resulted from Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's publication of *Voyage autour du monde* in 1771 and the portraits and landscape paintings of Tahiti and its women produced by the artists who traveled with Captain Cook. These images carried through into the twentieth century via art (Paul Gauguin); novels (*The Marriage of Loti*, by Pierre Loti [1880]); and mass-produced postcards. However, the latter emphasized not only the physical beauty of the new colony but also the empire's success at constructing urban order and industry out of primitive chaos, thus rationalizing the European ideal of imposing civilization on their exotic subjects.

Subsequent chapters explore how the conceptualized spaces rarely matched the realities perceived by foreign visitors or local residents. Tahitians conceived of their *fenua*—their islands' topography (mountains and lagoons) and the ceremonial structures called *marae*—in mythological terms, tracing the movements of their ancestors and planting the hopes of their progeny, for instance through the ritual burial of placentas and young trees. However, not long after the Second World War, the French began to violate this traditional space, planting poison in the *fenua* (73) by appropriating land for tourist hotels, killing coral and spreading cancer with nuclear testing, and solidifying the territory's incorporation into and dependence on a France-subsidized cash economy. Tahitians found a variety of ways to protest this remaking of their space, from potholes in

hotel roads to strikes and riots in the capital. Spaces created by the French to expedite colonial control—such as the international airport built to facilitate the nuclear test complex and the tourist industry—were reconfigured by Tahitians into sites of protest (eg, sit-downs on the runways). While constructed images of paradise were still working their way into unusual commodity niches (eg, the 1962 film production of *Mutiny on the Bounty* starring Marlon Brando spawned a line of candy bars), by 1995 the newspapers and the Internet were spreading images of flames and looting in the streets of Papeete. Meanwhile, the postcards of lovely lagoons are now photographed by people standing in trash-infested swamps, and the postcard models portraying seductive Polynesian vahine tend to be of European descent.

Despite these growing contradictions between fantasy and reality, state policy and capital investment have been all the more forcibly targeted toward building and maintaining images of Tahiti as a romantic tourist destination. Through participation, observation, and interviews, Kahn analyzes how tourist agencies and conferences in Tahiti and Paris commodify the islands with promotional materials (posters, travel brochures, and crafts), replete with photos directed toward specific foreign markets—for instance, ecotourism images for the British and lavish honeymoons for the Japanese. Kahn claims that a large majority of tourists to Polynesia desire what has been redundantly packaged for them by this now decades-old stream of consumer discourse. Focusing in one chapter on the world of high-end

resort hotels and cruise ships, she examines how tourists are “cocooned” within artificially engineered and decorated experiences of white sand beaches and blue lagoon bungalows, tiki bars and tattooed bartenders, pareu-clad dancers and other photographable “local” activities, including welcomes and farewells replete with hei (lei). And on Huahine, she traces the shaping of a single ceremonial *site* into a tourist *sight*: whereas residents originally sought to make a living community center with locals introducing visitors to the ongoing local significance of the site, territorial administrators succeeded in rebuilding the marae into an inaccurate but manicured and tourist-friendly “scientific information center.”

However, in the final chapters, Kahn explores not only how conflicting codes of managed romance and local authenticity are overlaid, but also how locals deal with administrative force by producing counter-spaces of resistance based on physical pleasure and social laughter (rather than violence). For instance, when women from Huahine were invited to bring their crafts aboard a state-owned cruise boat for sale to tourists (who bought little), they were offered as pay for this service access to the ship’s food buffets. With joyful flamboyance, the women managed their visits, which were otherwise hedged round with social difficulties, by stuffing plastic bags and bottles with pizza and soda to share with kin on shore. And in another event deftly captured by Kahn—a state-run reunion of island elders—the locals subverted the agenda in several ways. First, the women of Huahine offered a meal

cooked of local foods to the French and Tahitian dignitaries to contrast with the state-sponsored breakfast of canned meats and baguettes. Later, while the administrators spoke, the island elders ignored them or went out to play music in small groups and, once the dignitaries left, put on a show that in carnivalesque fashion parodied French culture.

Kahn's message is that spaces and places are endlessly conceived and alternatively perceived, shaped and reshaped through contact between individuals and communities. The violence done when some have more power than others cannot be easily undone, but the magic of space is that it is fluid and malleable and humans

work it for all it is worth. Additionally, space is subject not only to colonial rule but also to the ethnographer's theoretical gaze, not only to corporate manipulations but also to rooted local practices. She suggests that an understanding of tourism in exotic spaces requires attention to the models generated by local as well as Western minds. The only real critique I have of this book is that the locals' models are not as thoroughly researched or articulated as those of the anthropologists.

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